

FRIDAY FICTION

Dark secrets in the spying

POPULAR FICTION BY KATHERINE WHITBOURN



I THINK I LOVE YOU
BY ALLISON PEARSON
(Chatto £12.99)

FROM the author of the iconic parable of modern motherhood, *I Don't Know How She Does It*, comes this thoughtful, touching and entertaining look at that enduring social phenomenon, the teenage crush.

Set in Wales in the Seventies and liberally peppered with vivid period detail that will resonate with many readers, Pearson's second novel charts the fortunes of Petra, a soon-to-be-divorced music therapist.

Her youthful infatuation with the pop star David Cassidy continues to inform her life and relationships as an adult, especially as she is now the mother of a 14-year-old daughter herself.

Along with a plot that is pure, unashamed romantic comedy, Pearson gives the reader so much more: razor-sharp insights into the self-doubts, agonies and longing to conform experienced by many (or should that be all?) teenage girls; acute observations on the nature of friendship across the generations and a sharp and revealing look at the power of the media and those who produce it.

If you had forgotten what it's like to be 14 — or, indeed, are the parent of somebody who is — this is a novel not to be missed.

MEN FROM THE BOYS
BY TONY PARSONS
(HarperCollins £14.99)

FOR a male perspective on a similar theme — the highs and lows of raising an adolescent in the 21st century — who better to turn to than the best-selling Tony Parsons?

In this final episode of the trilogy that began more than ten years ago with *Man And Boy*, Parsons brings his fans up to date with the books' central character, Harry Silver, now approaching 40.

As the novel opens, life is good for Harry — he has a wife he adores, three great children and a rewarding job as the producer of a radio programme. But when the axe falls on his show and his ex-wife returns to London from living abroad to be closer to their son (who until this point has always lived with Harry),



SPIES OF THE BALKANS
BY ALAN FURST
(Weidenfeld & Nicolson £18.99)

IF YOU'VE never sampled the espionage thrillers of the incomparable Furst then this is a marvellous one to start with.

As delicately crafted as John le Carré at the height of his George Smiley years, it is a delight from first page to last. Furst has been called an 'addictive' writer and the tribute is entirely justified, for you simply never want his books to end.

This, his eleventh, takes us to Salonika in Greece in 1940, where a secret war is taking hold against the backdrop of intrigue, covert ambitions and half-truths in the city's darkest alleys, while the Italians invade and the Germans prepare to.

It is seen through the eyes of dashing former detective Costa Zannis who, almost by accident, launches an audacious scheme to smuggle Jewish refugees out of Germany by way of the Balkans to Greece and then on to Turkey.

Seductive, unexpectedly sexy — with a clandestine love affair that tears at the heart strings — it's told with an elegance that reverberates long after it's finished: it is quite superb.

CHILDREN'S BOOKS
BY SALLY MORRIS



PRINCE JASPER THE UNHELPFUL

THRILLERS
BY GEOFFREY WANSELL

STRIP
BY THOMAS PERRY
(Quercus £18.99)

THINK *The Sopranos* — but this is Los Angeles, not New Jersey — and Tony is transformed into lap-dancing club owner Claudio Lupak, who's protected by a select choice of muscle, including the dumb but tough Gaffney brothers.

Lupak is not a man to be taken lightly, but one night a masked gunman robs him as he's placing the cash receipts from his club — not to mention a good deal of other money he's laundering for select associates — in the bank's deposit box.

Lupak is out for revenge, but mistakenly settles on new-in-town drifter Joe Carver as the culprit. With Lieutenant Nicholas Slosser of the LAPD in pursuit, the robberies and mistaken identity escalate into a triple homicide, before Lupak and Carver finally begin to question their war against one another.

Exceptionally accomplished at creating vivid thrillers that aren't too brash or stereotypical, Perry reminds you just a little of James

M Cain and Tony Soprano

HITLER'S
BY KRIS RAUBAL
(MaxCrime)

BASED on a Führer Address with his y Raubal, w circumstances September he came to thriller w and haunt!

The U.S.-murder as then thro more than when a researche goes to vis Fritz Stech original c changed i

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Publisher is a little and won

write but this first title in a new series manages the delicate balancing act of combining a lively, funny story with clear, direct language.

Add an endearingly annoying main character in the shape of young Prince Jasper, whose idea of helping out around the palace drives his father to suggest he

hero doe long. Ch entertain drawings

TALL ST
BY CANDICE
(David Fi