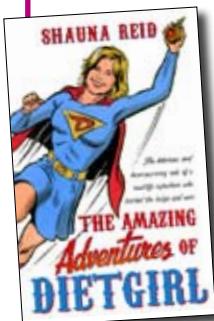


Read all about it

Got the post-Christmas blues? Then lose yourself in one of these great January reads selected by Rachel Malcolm

BOOK of the month

The Amazing Adventures of Dietgirl by Shauna Reid (Corgi, £6.99)



■ When you're wondering how you're going to lose those post-Christmas pounds, spare a thought for Shauna Reid, who at just 23 years old tipped the scales at no less than 25 stone.

Spurred into action by the sight of her larger-than-life knickers billowing in the wind on the washing line ("I have the biggest knickers in Australia"), Shauna headed for Weight Watchers. This is the chronicle of Shauna's emotional seven-year journey as she bares all about her very personal quest with disarming honesty and humour. Far more than a tale of losing weight, this real-life story reads like a novel as she falls off the wagon, forces herself to go to the gym, travels halfway around the world, tackles an uneasy relationship with her mother and, best of all, falls in love. You won't be able to put it down.

Candis VERDICT: A heroine you'll be rooting for from the start.

Reader offer Order the paperback edition of *The Amazing Adventures of Dietgirl* by Shauna Reid at £5.99, including p&p (rrp £6.99), by calling Bookpost plc on 01624 677237 and quoting the reference code CAN-AADG.

crime

Unspoken by Mari Jungstedt (Doubleday, £10.99)

■ A body is found in a pool of blood, with a hole punched in the back of its skull. But the victim was an alcoholic and police on the small Swedish island of Gotland assume a fight between two local winos got out of control. They investigate, nevertheless, and discover the dead man was leading a secret life. Less than a month later, a shocking second murder takes place. The victim this time is an isolated 14-year-old girl who may have been sexually abused. Suddenly it becomes a race against time for the local police to find the suspected double murderer. In this, her second novel, Mari Jungstedt skilfully allows the tension to mount until the last few pages will have your heart hammering in your chest as the danger gets closer and closer.

Candis VERDICT: You'll stay up late to finish it!



modern classic



The Descendants by Kauli Hemmings (Jonathan Cape, £12.99)

■ Matt King's safe, predictable life has gone into freefall. His two daughters are out of control, his wife Joanie lies in a coma after a speedboat accident and he has just discovered her affair with a local man. Set on the lush islands of Hawaii, *The Descendants* follows Matt and his wayward daughters as they set out to find Joanie's lover and ask him to say goodbye. At the same time, Matt must decide which bid to accept for his family's inheritance of Hawaiian land. Tempering the inevitable tragedy with flashes of humour and Matt's growing realisation that life will be simpler without his high-maintenance wife around, this book is quietly compelling. It'll take you into a different world, but the issues the characters face will resonate with many.

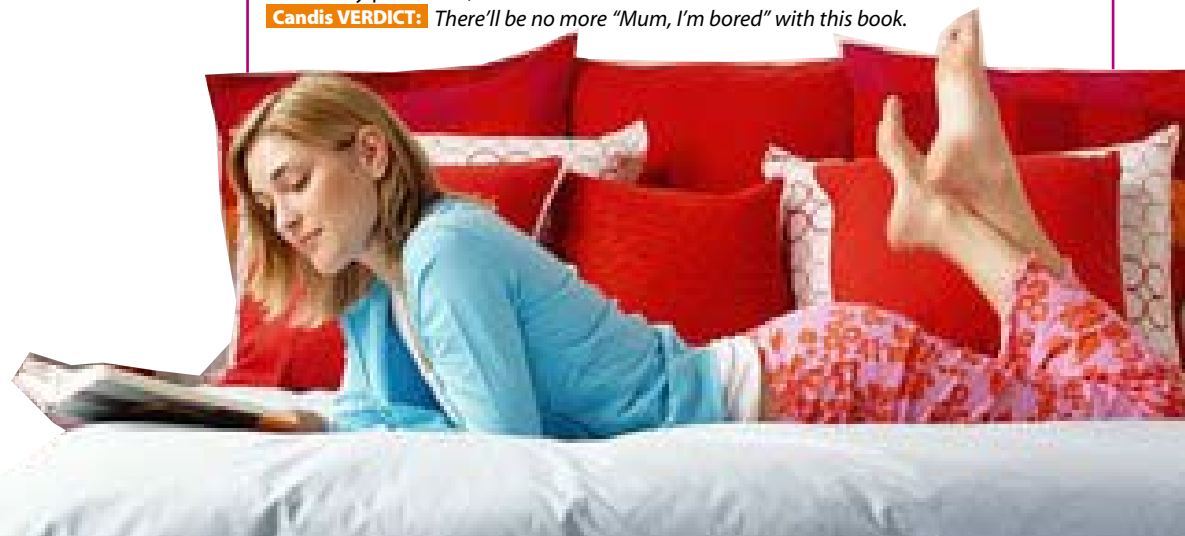
Candis VERDICT: A vivid portrait of a dysfunctional family

practical

Make, bake and celebrate... with Polly & Jago 2008 by Sarah Rowden and Joanna Vestey (Wigwam Press, £12.99)

■ This colourful compendium delivers exactly what the title promises. Packed with seasonal recipes and inventive craft projects, it encourages young families to celebrate the passing seasons and create traditions to hand down. Each month's activities are interspersed with intriguing facts and legends to spark curiosity in young minds accompanied by gorgeous illustrations and photographs. We loved the rainbow cupcakes to brighten up January, July's flower garland necklace and the easy-to-make leprechaun marionette for St Patrick's Day. Beautifully presented, it has a removable cover that folds out into a wall chart too.

Candis VERDICT: There'll be no more "Mum, I'm bored" with this book.



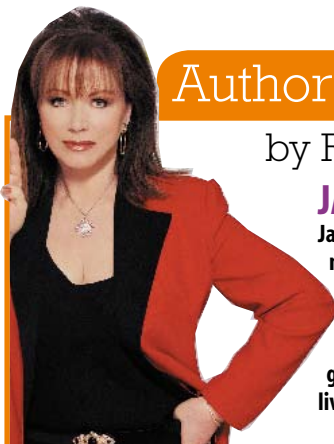
READER REVIEW



Lee Chidlow reviews *Earning money after you've retired* by Rosie Staal (White Ladder Press, £9.99)

I wish I'd had this book when I retired – it's invaluable. It proves that there's life after work and retirement is nothing to fear. As Rosie Staal explains, you can retire and enjoy a hobby, or take on a part-time job to add to your pension. I could hardly believe the many options available. The interviewees range from a security officer who became a grape picker in Italy to a bank manager who became a cake decorator. You can't get much more diverse than that! This book would make a great present for a soon-to-be-retired person. It's a mine of information from which you can glean some useful and certainly lucrative tips!

Author interview



by Richard Barber

JACKIE COLLINS

Jackie Collins has sold over 400 million copies of her raunchy novels worldwide. The 25th, *Drop Dead Beautiful*, is out now. The mother of three grown-up daughters, Jackie lives alone in Beverly Hills

Q Do you have any misgivings about writing bonkbusters?

"I'm not a literary writer. I'm a storyteller. Louis Malle [the late French film director] once described me as a raunchy moralist, a modern-day Proust. For every bad deed by one of my characters, there's always a payoff."

Q What do you think of your critics?

"I don't waste time thinking about them. I have so many loyal fans, they're much more important to me than one person's criticism."

Q What books do you read for pleasure?

"I'm obsessed with *The Godfather* trilogy, both books and films. Mario Puzo was a fabulous writer and the first two films are particularly brilliant. They speak to me because they're stories about real people. You can feel them, smell them."

Q What is your attitude to fidelity?

"I believe in it absolutely. Total fidelity is incredibly sexy. Look at Paul Newman and Joanne Woodward."

Q Sadly, your husband, Oscar, and fiancé, Frank, both succumbed to cancer...

"And I can't imagine living with a man again. I've been engaged or married all my adult life and while I regret the passing of the men I loved, I'm enjoying being single."

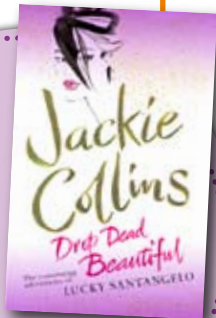
Q Is it more difficult for a woman with a public profile to find a man?

"In some ways, yes. However successful a man might be, he's unlikely to make more money than I do. And, unlike Oscar and Frank, most men don't like being referred to as Mr Collins."

Q Can you ever imagine retiring from writing?

"I could never stop. I enjoy it too much. Look, I'll still be writing raunchy novels when I'm a little old lady of 95."

Drop Dead Beautiful (Simon and Schuster, £17.99) is on sale now at all good bookshops



Cerly Images