

A shore thing

Jane Corry tells ANNETTE SHAW about her new psychological thriller *I Made a Mistake*

Photo: Julia Hardy



Jane Corry loves living by the sea

The sea invariably crops up in Jane Corry's novels. A changeable, yet reliable character. It is calming, with that gentle rhythm of the waves, lapping onto sand like a persistent heartbeat that says: "I'm still here. Don't give up on me."

In a touching scene towards the end of her latest book, Stuart and Poppy, lead protagonists, try to salvage their marriage. They stand in silence at Ladram Bay, trying to make sense of a maelstrom of emotions, Stuart saying: "What I love about the sea is that it's angry sometimes and calm the next. A bit like life."

When I read a book for *Devon Life*, I analyse what it does to me. There's a list with this one. It messed with my head, trying to figure out who may be implicated in a death and how each person's previous life experiences contribute to their actions. I cried as Poppy's dad descended into dementia. And reeled at the speed with which women's worlds, packed with injustice, have changed from a 1960s husband being able to dictate where his wife worked to present day and Poppy running her own business.

PLAN B FOR LIT FEST

In addition to her own work, Jane is a co-founder and Writer in Residence of the Sidmouth Literary Festival. Working in conjunction with Winstone's bookshop, Liz Gordon (director of the festival) and the rest of the committee, she was very excited about this year's line-up. But, following Government guidelines about coronavirus it has been decided to cancel the event in its present format.

This is very disappointing. However, all is not lost as Liz explains: "We are looking to provide some alternative activities

throughout the year and will publicise details as soon as they have been finalised. Please keep checking our website and Facebook page for regular updates."

Some sessions will be online and the team is working hard to produce a Plan B for aspiring authors. Jane says: "Our USP is access, by arrangement, to key people in the publishing world which has proved invaluable in furthering literary dreams."

Last year, the opportunity to speak to an editor from Penguin was priceless for Lucy Willetts.

She runs Channel View Guest House in Stoke Fleming, has one book under her belt and is working on the next one.

"Holidaymakers wonder what I'm doing when I'm not cooking breakfast and cleaning! Out of season and when time permits, I write." Lucy submitted sample text in advance of the meeting. "Having professional comment and advice was incredibly helpful and enabled me to improve the narrative immeasurably."

Cross Killer by L E Willetts is published with Troubador. Paperback £9.99

Many of the speakers booked this year have already agreed to appear in 2021. One of these is



Photo: Nicky Johnston

Writer Ella Dove



The sea features in many of Jane Corry's books

Jane addresses so many issues, and when we met she was keen to explain why she also wanted to weave in, to coin a phrase, the sandwich generation – meaning caring for older parents and children at the same time.

“It pulls people in different directions,” says Jane. “These complex family situations don’t excuse what may or may not happen but I wanted to explore how the perfect storm is created and what pushes someone to have an affair.”

It takes a while for the reader to understand the manipulations of Matthew, an old flame from Poppy’s past, and to see he represents broken dreams. Jane’s superb ability to plot with precision, culminating

in a lengthy and gripping reveal, is impressive.

I asked how she keeps a clear head. “I have my creative routine and I can’t start the day without going to the beach with the dog.”

She writes about her feelings in an online blog. “I’ve always wanted to live by the sea but it took me several years to get here! I love watching the tide going in and out.

“Near my desk I have a sign that says ‘By the sea, all worries wash away’. The tides and ever-changing colours inspire my writing. A stroll along the shoreline does wonders for creativity.” ♦

***I Made a Mistake* by Jane Corry published by Penguin. Paperback £7.99**



I Made A Mistake is Jane Corry’s latest book

FEELING GOOD BY THE SEA

Jane’s instincts for the beneficial effects of being by the sea are backed up by research at the University of Exeter. The 2019 study was led by Dr Jo Garrett and suggests it is possible to boost moods and feel better by living at the coast. The paper, entitled *Coastal proximity and mental health among urban adults in England: The moderating effect of household income* is published in Health and Place. exeter.ac.uk/news/research/title_754908_en.html

Ella Dove talking about *Five Steps to Happy*. This is a beautifully written book, devastatingly sad, uplifting and inspiring in equal measure.

In 2016, when she was 25 years old with everything to live for, Ella set off on her usual Saturday run along the canal path in Stratford, East London. “I tripped and an excruciating pain ripped through my right leg. A man on the towpath did call an ambulance but he left me. Everything changed forever.” In fact, Ella’s knee had shattered leaving her with a life-threatening

injury as the blood supply was severely compromised, resulting in amputation.

Ella decided to write a fictionalised account of what happened to her.

“I did get fixated on the stranger who left. Trauma can do things to your brain but writing was part of an ever-shifting recovery process.”

She captures the characters in the rehabilitation unit to perfection and shows such sensitivity in the portrayal of ‘Dad’ with all the caring and tenderness for his little girl. I’m certain that readers will cry and then cheer. Ella is a

commissioning editor for *Good Housekeeping*, *Prima* and *Red* magazines and an ambassador for the Limbless Association and Barts Health’s Transform Trauma campaign.

Five Steps to Happy by Ella Dove is published by Trapeze. Paperback £7.99

For those of you who will use this time of self-isolation to catch up on their reading, don’t forget to support your local independent bookshops. Winstone’s Bookshop is offering free delivery within a two-mile radius.

winstonebooks.co.uk/sidmouth



Five Steps to Happy by Ella Dove