

London Mums

FREE – Issue 46 • Winter 2025-2026

Star Mum!

Sparkle, skin tints
& strong mamas:
Lottie Tomlinson
talks life & love

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Dear London Mums,

Another year twirls to its sparkly close,
And here we are - glitter in our hair, tea in hand,
Juggling lists, wrapping wishes,
and dreaming of a nap before Christmas Eve (if only!).



But pause for a breath - this one's for you.
For the strong mamas and kind dreamers,
The ones who laugh through the chaos
And find beauty in the bedtime mess.

This festive issue is our gift of joy -
A little magazine magic tied with ribbon and love.
Inside, you'll meet Lottie Tomlinson, our Star Mum!
She chats beauty, babies, and bold confidence -
Proof that sparkle isn't just for the tree,
It's for the woman in the mirror too.

You'll find pages of inspiration and wonder:
Gifts that warm hearts, not just hands,
Books that whisper bedtime stories and big ideas,
From mindful alphabets to tree spirits that dance in the wind.

There's a giggly monster named Furbottom
And a *Strictly*-style adventure in a treehouse -
Proof that magic is very much alive (and sometimes rhymes!).

And when the tinsel settles, come travel with me -
To **Tuscya**, Italy's secret heart,
Where the shimmering **Lake Bolsena** mirrors the sky,
And I retreat each summer to write, dream, and swim.
There, the bells of the *borgo* sing at dawn,
Gelato drips joy in pistachio shades,
And at night, disco lights sparkle on the lake
While love songs float through the air like confetti.
It's my happy place - and I share it with you,
From my family to yours, with sunshine and soul.

So, mums - this season, remember:
You are the heartbeat of your home,
The keeper of stories, the bringer of light.
Take time to glow as brightly as the fairy lights,
To sip something warm, to laugh out loud,
And to believe, just like your children do,
That magic is real - especially at Christmas.

With love, gratitude and festive cheer,

Monica, Editor in chief, Founder of *London Mums*
& mum of 19-year-old Diego
Monica@londonmums.org.uk @londonmums

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The BIG interview
Lottie Tomlinson

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A full-page photograph of Lottie Tomlinson leaning against a brick wall. She is wearing a green short-sleeved soccer jersey with a white V-neck collar and red and white stripes on the sleeves. The jersey features a shield-shaped logo with the word 'MEXICO' and the Mexican flag's colors. She is also wearing a green ribbed crop top and light blue high-waisted jeans. She has long blonde hair and is looking directly at the camera. A small heart tattoo is visible on her left wrist.

STAR MUM!

**SPARKLE, SKIN
TINTS & STRONG
MAMAS: LOTTIE
TOMLINSON TALKS
LIFE & LOVE**

**FINDING BEAUTY IN THE
CHAOS OF MOTHERHOOD**
BY MONICA COSTA

IN THIS EXCLUSIVE CONVERSATION, LONDON MUMS MAGAZINE CHATS WITH LOTTIE TOMLINSON ABOUT CONFIDENCE, CREATIVITY, AND THE SPARKLE OF MOTHERHOOD. FROM PERSONAL REFLECTIONS TO FESTIVE INSPIRATIONS, SHE SHARES HOW TO NAVIGATE LIFE'S CHAOS WITH GRACE AND A TOUCH OF GLAMOUR.

MONICA: YOU'VE BUILT A STRONG CAREER AS AN INFLUENCER, MAKEUP ARTIST, AND ENTREPRENEUR. IF YOU LOOK BACK TO YOUR TEENAGE SELF, WOULD YOU HAVE IMAGINED THIS PATH?

Lottie: Definitely not! I always wanted to be a makeup artist, but content creation and social media wasn't even a thing back then.

I really wanted to work on a makeup counter, I used to go into stores and see people doing it and think it was really cool and loved the idea of doing make up all day. It's really cool that I still get to incorporate make up and beauty into what I do today!

YOU'VE NAVIGATED FAME FROM A YOUNG AGE THANKS TO YOUR FAMILY'S PUBLIC PROFILE. WHAT'S ONE LESSON ABOUT PRIVACY OR SELF-CONFIDENCE YOU'VE LEARNED ALONG THE WAY?

Self-confidence comes from within, it's took me quite a while to actually learn what that truly means, I used to think I'd be confident when I had the perfect skin and perfect clothes, perfect hair etc. I realised over the years through a long journey of self-discovery that truly accepting yourself for who you are will help you find confidence. My kids have been a huge part of that too, all those external things don't matter to them, they just love you for you and who you are inside. It's a nice feeling when you get that place within yourself.

YOUR STYLE IS ALWAYS EVOLVING — HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR CURRENT PERSONAL STYLE IN THREE WORDS?

Cool/casual/comfy.

WHAT'S YOUR ULTIMATE BEAUTY HACK FOR BUSY MUMS WHO DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME IN THE MORNING?

A good skin tint, gives your skin a bit of colour and glow. Also I've just starting using an ice roller in the morning, game changer!

BECOMING A MUM YOURSELF, HOW HAS YOUR APPROACH TO WORK AND LIFE BALANCE CHANGED?

I definitely prioritise being a mum and always will, the kids will only be small for a very short period of time, and I've spent years building my career, and can continue to do so at any time, they are my priority but also love to be able to show them that I have ambition and dreams and that you can still work hard. I am still very driven by career but I make sure that it works around me being a mum.

WHAT'S BEEN YOUR FAVOURITE MILESTONE WITH YOUR LITTLE ONE SO FAR?

I think as they start communicating it gets really special. I have little conversations now with my 3 year old Lucky and I'm just in awe of him and what he comes out with. It's so special.

DO YOU HAVE ANY DAILY RITUALS OR SELF-CARE PRACTICES THAT HELP YOU RECHARGE?

A good skin care routine every night is essential for me. Also, my cup of tea in the morning, it's only a small thing but it helps me get up in the morning, can't start my day without it!

As for with being a mum, I've found that having the right playlist on while I'm doing bed and bath time, really helps everything go smoothly. can't recommend the Johnson's Baby Soothing Sounds playlist enough, honestly!



**"I REALLY LOVE A
THOUGHTFUL GIFT,
SOMETHING THAT YOU
DON'T EVEN REALISE
THAT THE PERSON
KNOWS YOU LOVE!"**

IS THERE A WOMAN IN YOUR LIFE — FAMILY, FRIEND, OR MENTOR — WHO'S HAD A PARTICULARLY STRONG INFLUENCE ON YOU?

My Nan is the strongest person I know! She has supported us through everything we've been through and continues to show up every single day. She will forever be someone I look up to.

A SONG YOU CURRENTLY HAVE ON REPEAT?

Drake - *Which One*

LOOKING AHEAD, IF YOU COULD GIVE ONE PIECE OF ADVICE TO YOUNG WOMEN TRYING TO CARVE OUT THEIR OWN CAREER PATH, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Do it even if you're nervous, even if you have self doubt, don't wait to feel ready. Believe in yourself and you can achieve anything! Always be yourself.

WHAT'S YOUR MUST-HAVE CHRISTMAS TRADITION WITH YOUR LITTLE ONES?

Matching pjs is a must for us at Christmas. It's just such a cute and fun cosy little thing to do and I love it as much as the kids!

WHAT'S THE BEST GIFT YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED (OR GIVEN) AND WHY?

For me I really love a thoughtful gift, something that you don't even realise that the person knows you love! It means so much when you get a gift like that, where someone has noticed you like a certain thing and based a gift around that.

ANY HOLIDAY BEAUTY TIPS FOR MUMS JUGGLING PARTIES AND BEDTIME STORIES?

Stick to a simple yet consistent skincare routine. Having fresh and well looked after skin is the best way to start any look. I used to have such an extreme skin care routine with so many different products and since I've simplified it I find my skin is so much better.

YOUR GO-TO SPARKLE OR STATEMENT PIECE FOR A CHRISTMAS NIGHT OUT?

A statement earring is a good way to dress up a look.

LOOKING BACK ON 2025, WHAT'S BEEN YOUR BIGGEST "PINCH ME" MOMENT?

Having my daughter, Flossie! I can't believe that she's almost a year old it's gone so quick. She's made us feel so complete and we feel really blessed to have our little family.

ANY NEW GOALS OR DREAMS YOU'RE EXCITED ABOUT FOR 2026?

I have a few goals for 2026. I like to set goals and always be reaching for more. There's a few dream brands on my wish list that I'd love to work with. But above all, just continue to make special memories with my family.

IF YOU COULD SEND A CHRISTMAS CARD OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO ALL MUMS, WHAT WOULD YOU WRITE INSIDE?

I'd just remind me them how amazing all the mamas out there are! Unless you are a mum yourself no one understands the mental load you take on and the way we show up every day for our babies. It's the most incredible job but so tough at the same time. We are so strong!!

FAVOURITE CHILDHOOD CHRISTMAS MEMORY IN THREE WORDS.

Being with family.



**CELEBRITY PAGES BROUGHT TO
YOU BY *BEDTIME FOR ELLA* -
A GIGGLY FURBOTTOM ADVENTURE**



THE RISE OF PRELOVED: WHY SECOND-HAND IS THE NEW FIRST CHOICE THIS CHRISTMAS

By Julia Minchin, CEO of Hippychick

Christmas is a time to bring joy, give generously and spend time with the ones we love. This year, more and more parents are thinking differently about how – and what – they buy. Gone are the days when preloved toys and gifts were looked down upon; now we're seeing a real rise in people choosing preloved as their first choice for gifting. There's nothing more rewarding than giving a toy a second life and a second chance to be loved.

At Hippychick, we've seen first-hand how the love for preloved is growing. In fact, sales in the first half of this year were more than double compared to the same period last year. Our Preloved collection continues to go from strength to strength, and it's clear that parents want to save a little this Christmas without compromising on quality. So far this year, we've sold around 230 preloved items – almost triple last year's total.

Every toy and nursery essential we create is built to last – designed to be cherished, shared, and passed down through generations – and our preloved pieces are no exception. Because they're made to withstand years of play, the quality you get when you buy preloved is still fantastic.

We've recently expanded our Preloved collection to include Ex-Display items – pieces used for photoshoots, discontinued lines or products with slightly damaged packaging. They're "almost as good as new," offering great value for money while helping us reduce waste even further. You'll now find them all together in the Hippychick Outlet.

Every item in our Preloved range is carefully quality checked to ensure it's ready to be loved again. And we don't try to pull the wool over our customers' eyes – our preloved toys aren't reboxed or disguised as new. They're sold as seen, giving families complete transparency and confidence in what they're buying.



Buying preloved isn't just about saving money (though that's certainly a welcome bonus!). It's also a more sustainable way to shop. Instead of toys and nursery essentials ending up in landfill, they're given a new lease of life and another family the chance to make happy memories. It's a small but powerful way to reduce waste and champion circular living.

We're so proud to see parents embracing this shift towards mindful giving. It shows that "new" doesn't always mean "better." A preloved toy can bring just as much joy on Christmas morning – with the added bonus of a story, a sense of continuity, and a positive impact on the planet.

This Christmas, why not join the rise of preloved? It's a simple way to give gifts that are sustainable, affordable, and full of history – proof that the best presents aren't always the newest, but the ones ready to be loved again.

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HEARTS ALIGNED, POWERS COMBINED:
IT'S TIME FOR THE CARE BEAR STARE!

Watch now!

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Tuscia tales: My summer escape to the magical Lake Bolsena

By Monica Costa

Every summer, without fail, I pack my sunhat, notebook, and boundless curiosity and head straight for Tuscia – one of Italy's best-kept secrets. My destination? Bolsena, a postcard-perfect village perched on the shores of the mesmerising Lake Bolsena, the largest volcanic lake in Europe.

It's my happy place, my creative recharge station, and quite literally, my writing sanctuary. I always stay at the delightful B&B **Bolsena Cento20**, where I've claimed "my" room – the one with the breath-taking lake view that has inspired more words than I can count. There's something utterly magical about waking up to the glimmer of sunlight dancing on the water, hearing the bells of the medieval borgo chime in the distance, and knowing that the day ahead will be filled with dolce vita moments.

Full of dolce
vita moments...





A creative
recharge

A hidden gem in the heart of Lazio

For those scratching their heads, Tuscany isn't a theme park (though it sounds like one). It's a historical region that once belonged to the Etruscans, Italy's mysterious ancient civilisation, before the Romans took over and renamed it. Today it lies in northern Lazio, about 90 minutes north of Rome - lush, green, dotted with hilltop villages, olive groves, and a sense of calm that's increasingly rare in modern Italy.

My childhood friend Donatella has lived here for two decades. Thanks to her, I've been introduced to corners of Tuscany that no guidebook could ever capture.





Lake life, Italian style

Don't be fooled by the word "lake" - Bolsena feels like the seaside. The water is crystal clear, warm in summer, and framed by little beaches and wooden piers perfect for a dip or a lazy afternoon reading under a parasol.

When the sun goes down, the town comes alive. Imagine: open-air disco nights by the lake, live bands playing under the stars, everyone dancing barefoot on the sand while heart-shaped fireworks make the dark skies super romantic. It's summer at its finest - joyous, spontaneous, and a little bit wild.



And if you have a sweet tooth like me and my son, you'll want to join my gelato tour of Bolsena! The town boasts at least three artisanal gelaterie - all heavenly. My personal favourite? The pistachio and ricotta from Gelateria Santa Cristina, named after the town's patron saint.

♥ Heavenly gelato!



A celebration
of faith art and
community in
Santa Cristina

Saints, celebrations, and a touch of the miraculous

Speaking of Santa Cristina, the town's devotion to her is the heart of local life. Each July, Bolsena transforms for her feast - a week of processions, medieval pageantry, music, and fireworks that blend the sacred and the celebratory in perfect Italian fashion. The famous Corpus Domini "Infiolata", when streets are carpeted with intricate flower mosaics, is pure magic - a kaleidoscope of colours and petals underfoot. It's a celebration of faith, art, and community that leaves visitors wide-eyed and moved.

Fairy tales and dying cities

A few kilometres from Bolsena lie some of Italy's most enchanting sights. There's Civita di Bagnoregio, known as "the dying city" - a tiny medieval village balanced precariously on a cliff of crumbling volcanic rock. Only reachable via a footbridge (and a small toll that magically disappears at night), it looks like something out of a fantasy film. In fact, it's so cinematic that stars like Jude Law and Harry Styles have dined there - at Osteria al Forno di Agnese,

where the owner Raffaele still serves Nonna Agnese's recipes with pride.

And then, for something straight out of a fairy tale, there's Capodimonte - where, legend has it, the real-life **Beauty and the Beast** once lived! Yes, really. The tale of the noble Gonzales family, who inspired the famous story, unfolded right here on the shores of Lake Bolsena.



* magical *





straight out of a fairy tale ♡

Books We Love: Kids & Family Reads

ELLA THE SUPERSTAR: (7 RULES FOR A HAPPY LIFE)

If your child has ever doubted how special they truly are, *Ella the Superstar* will remind them that the brightest magic lies within. This heart-warming tale by Goose in Gold, beautifully illustrated by Kris Lillyman, captures that universal childhood worry - "*Am I good enough?*" - and turns it into a joyful journey of discovery, courage and kindness.



When Ella is given an "impossible" weekend challenge by her teacher, she soon learns that real superpowers don't come from flying, turning invisible or wearing a cape - they come from gratitude, friendship, and self-belief. With the help of her ever-cheerful friend Giggly Furbottom, Ella uncovers the seven golden rules for a happy life - lessons that sparkle with wisdom and laughter, and will stay with little readers long after story-time ends.

This enchanting book is the latest chapter in the magical Giggly Furbottom Adventures, a growing series that's fast becoming a family favourite. Each story combines giggles and goodness, inspiring children to dream big, stay curious, and believe that kindness is the greatest power of all.

The Adventures So Far

- **Book 1: *Bedtime for Ella*** - A rhyming bedtime story about friendship and conquering fears.
- **Book 2: *Ella's Forest of Letters*** - Turn the alphabet into a thrilling treasure hunt.
- **Book 3: *Ella and the Magic of Seven!*** - Celebrate nature's wonders and play in the great outdoors.
- **Book 4: *Ella and The Undersea World*** - Dive beneath the waves with dolphins, seahorses and a dancing shark!
- **Book 5: *Ella the Superstar*** - Learn ten joyful rules for a happy life filled with laughter and friendship.
- **Coming soon:**
Book 6: *Giggly Furbottom's Dino School* (Another fun-filled adventure and this time it's with dinosaurs!)
- **Book 7: *Giggle Meadow*** (Kindness, laughter and friendship bring joy to the grumpiest of hearts)

Each page bursts with vibrant, enchanting illustrations, making these books perfect for ages 4-8 - whether you're reading together at bedtime or letting confident readers enjoy the adventure solo.

Behind the name *Goose in Gold* is Ella's beloved grandad - a storyteller who lives among the golden fields and sparkling lakes of Storyland, where every honk of laughter sparks a new adventure. Together with the endlessly lovable Giggly Furbottom, he creates magical worlds where children can explore, giggle, and believe in their own extraordinary sparkle.

So, whether you're snuggled up under the duvet or reading aloud to a classroom full of dreamers, *Ella the Superstar* is more than just a bedtime story - it's a reminder that every child is already a superstar, just waiting to shine.

Order now and watch your little one discover their superpowers within!





SKY TRAILS BY PLAYMOBIL: NONSTOP ACTION. BUILT BY YOU.

Playmobil's Sky Trails is rewriting the rules of playtime. With its bold new play pattern, this innovative system blends construction, motion, and storytelling into a thrilling experience that's as smart as it is fun. It's not just a toy it's a launchpad for creativity.

At the heart of Sky Trails is a fresh approach to building. Children are no longer confined to flat surfaces. Instead, they're encouraged to construct vertically and horizontally, transforming everyday spaces like tables, windowsills, shelves into part of the adventure. This multi-dimensional play fosters engineering thinking and problem-solving, as kids learn to balance structure, momentum, and gravity in real time.

The system's modular design means the possibilities are endless. Every component is plug-in and reconfigurable, allowing young creators to redesign their tracks again and again. It's a playground for experimentation, where loops, jumps, and stunts evolve with every build. But the real magic begins after the construction is complete. Sky Trails is built for movement. Sky Rider figures zip through helix curves, flip rails, and confetti funnels, bringing high-energy action to every play session. It's a dynamic blend of storytelling and physical play that keeps kids engaged long after the last piece is snapped into place.

What makes Sky Trails truly unique is its integration with the real world. Using clever clamps and connectors, the system attaches to furniture and surfaces, turning bedrooms into custom-built adventure zones. This interaction with the environment helps develop fine motor skills and spatial awareness, while giving kids the freedom to shape their surroundings.

Beyond the fun, Sky Trails offers a subtle but powerful introduction to STEM learning. Concepts like gravity, momentum, and structural stability are woven into the experience, giving children a hands-on understanding of physics and engineering without ever feeling like a lesson.

Designed for ages seven and up, Sky Trails is inclusive and collaborative. It's perfect for siblings, friends, and even parents to join in, encouraging teamwork, communication, and shared creativity. It's a toy that brings people together, one track at a time.

Already a standout in the toy world, Sky Trails has earned the prestigious German Toy Award 2025, a testament to its innovation and appeal. With its blend of imagination, movement, and learning, Sky Trails isn't just a new way to play, it's a new way to think, build, and explore.

Available at Hamleys for more information visit
<https://skytrails.playmobil.com/>

Books We Love: Kids & Family Reads

A IS FOR AMAZING: A CHILDREN'S BOOK BRINGING MINDFULNESS TO THE ALPHABET

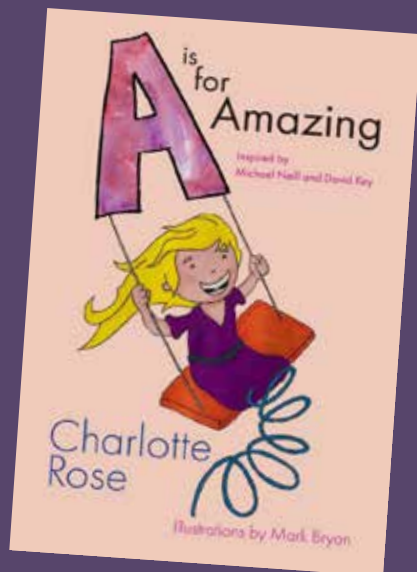
How do you introduce big ideas like mindfulness and emotional awareness to young children in a way they can understand? Author **Charlotte Rose** has taken on this challenge with *A is for Amazing*, a new picture book that combines the alphabet with concepts designed to help children recognise their feelings and develop tools for inner calm.

The book is inspired by *The Three Principles* created by Scottish philosopher **Sydney Banks** – universal mind, universal consciousness and universal thought. These ideas are simplified and woven into the story so that children can begin exploring how thoughts and feelings work, without the need for heavy explanations.

Each letter of the alphabet is linked to a new word, a mindfulness idea, and a short rhyming reflection from *Jacqueline* – a character presented as a “female Jack-in-the-Box”. The format is consistent throughout, which makes it easy for young readers to follow along. The pages are illustrated by **Mark Bryan**, with line drawings that children are encouraged to colour in themselves, making the book interactive as well as educational.

Learning Through Play

For parents and teachers, *A is for Amazing* provides a way to start conversations about feelings and wellbeing. The structure means it can be read cover to cover or dipped into



at random, allowing families to return to particular words and ideas as they come up in daily life. Some educators have also suggested that it could be used in classrooms or mindfulness sessions as an accessible introduction to self-awareness.

Reader Feedback

The book has already received thoughtful reviews from parents and teachers. One primary school teacher described it as “a lovely book that supports mindfulness in young children... when read with the support of an adult, there are lots of words and concepts that can be discussed to help support emotional development.” Another reader appreciated the flexibility, noting that “you can open at any page and be taken on a mindfulness journey.”

Where to Find It

A is for Amazing is available in paperback (£7.99) and Kindle format (£4.99). Copies can be purchased through Amazon.

Festive Books

WE'RE GOING ON A CHRISTMAS HUNT IT'S A MAGICAL NIGHT! WE'RE NOT SCARED

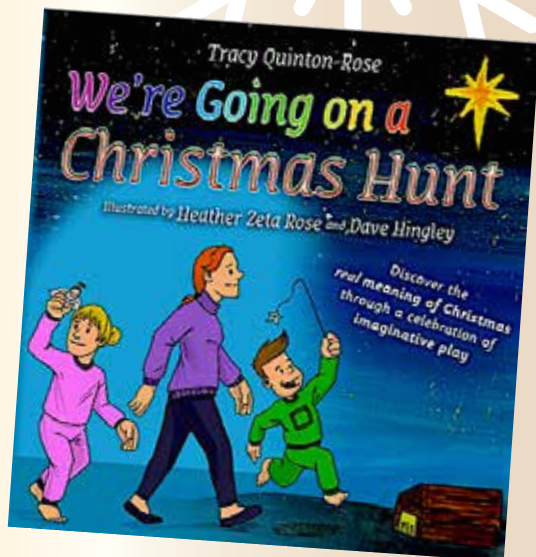
A mum of six from Canterbury is finally seeing a twenty-year publishing dream come true thanks to her eldest son and youngest daughter. Tracy Quinton-Rose, who's 62, wrote *We're Going on a Christmas Hunt* when she was working as an early years' practitioner at a local nursery.

Now, thanks to the publishing prowess of her son, Chip Colquhoun and the illustrating skills of her daughter Heather Zeta Rose alongside Dave Hingley (*Disneyland*, *Jurassic World* video games), Tracy's book has come to life in time for this year's festive season.

Telling the true story behind Christmas, the book takes two children on a journey through time where they see the nativity brought to life through a collection of traditional and modern-day illustrations.

Based on a much-loved traditional folk song, lovingly mixed with Christmas spirit and featuring wondrous pictures, ***We're Going on a Christmas Hunt*** is sure to become a festive favourite picture book.

Author Tracy Quinton Rose says, "I had the idea for ***We're Going on a Christmas Hunt*** whilst working at The Firs Nursery in Chartham in 2005 and we were looking to stage a nativity. I adapted one of the children's favourite nursery rhymes and this book is the result. I'm so excited that I get to celebrate its publication alongside my son Chip and daughter Heather in this way."



The book is even more special as Tracy's love for Christmas is woven into details on each page. From images of stockings made from pillowcases – a festive tradition started for her family by Tracy – to encouraging a love of reading and books, the story is filled with love and hope.

Beginning with the night before Christmas, the children ask, "Why do we celebrate Christmas Mummy? When was the first Christmas?" The story ends with the arrival of a very special festive visitor, every child would like to meet.

Available from Amazon.

TOMMY AND THE MAGICAL DANCE

A 'STRICTLY'-INSPIRED ADVENTURE OF FRIENDSHIP, FUN AND FANCY FOOTWORK

There's a touch of glitter, a sprinkle of laughter, and a whole lot of heart in *Tommy and the Magical Dance*, the delightful children's story by **Paul Dann** that's captivating families across the UK. With its charming mix of talking animals, dance-floor dazzle and life lessons, it's a read that brings the joy of *Strictly Come Dancing* straight into storytime.

The story follows **Tommy**, a curious young boy who stumbles upon a secret treehouse being built by an unlikely team of talking animals and birds at the bottom of his garden. Each creature has its own quirks and skills, from the chatterbox squirrel foreman to the owl architect, all working together to finish their magnificent woodland hideaway. When Tommy asks if he can join them inside, he's told he'll be welcome – but only if he can master *The Magical Dance*.

That's where the real adventure begins. Determined to earn his place in the treehouse, Tommy embarks on a hilarious and heart-warming journey full of rhythm, mishaps, and discovery. There's a *Strictly*-style sparkle woven through every page, with the animals acting as his unlikely dance coaches – cheering him on, tripping over their own tails, and teaching him the value of teamwork, patience and perseverance.

Far more than just a whimsical fantasy, *Tommy and the Magical Dance* celebrates imagination, curiosity and community. Told through the eyes of a young boy, the story reminds readers that magic can be found in the most unexpected places – even in



your own back garden. The blend of humour and education makes it perfect for shared reading, encouraging children to laugh, learn and move along with Tommy as he masters his steps.

Parents have praised the book for its clever mix of fun and gentle life lessons, with themes of friendship, determination and self-belief shining through every chapter. Young readers love the witty animal characters and, of course, *The Magical Dance* itself – a sequence so infectiously described that many families have tried performing it together at home!

Here's what some delighted readers are saying on Amazon:

"A great read for 6–10 year olds. Both educational and very funny." – Dann

"This is a truly excellent book. The family loved the story." – SW

"Great book, funny and both children and adults will laugh along." – Stace

Published by **Nightingale Books**, *Tommy and the Magical Dance* is available in paperback (£8.99) and Kindle (£3.99) from Amazon, Waterstones, WH Smith and directly from the publisher.

Books We Love

GOOD BITS BY KES GRAY, ILLUSTRATED BY RUBY WRIGHT

Bestselling and award-winning author Kes Gray is back with a brand-new book that's bound to get kids reading, laughing and letting their imaginations run wild. *Good Bits* is a collection of story-bites that will captivate readers and encourage them to delve into the endless possibilities of imaginative storytelling.



In a world of increasingly decreasing attention spans, Kes Gray is on a mission to instantly engage. With an immersive writing style that includes a multitude of genres from fantasy to science fiction, *Good Bits* will propel children of all reading abilities from page to page. From a spaceship flight into a Black Hole, to a town plagued by zombie beavers, and a magical pen that knows all the answers to a test, *Good Bits* point themselves in every imaginable direction which children not just read but read on and explore.

Kes' accessible style is combined with multi-award nominee Ruby Wright's vibrant and warm illustrations that make all 14 story-bites deeply engaging. Readers will be captivated by every *Good Bit*, whether they are compelled to devour them all at once, or savour them one at a time, they will love it and read it to bits!



Author Kes Gray exploded onto bookshelves with his debut, the award-winning *Eat Your Peas*, and has since become one of the UK's most popular children's authors. Known for his sharp wit and big heart, Kes has a remarkable gift for writing stories that make children laugh, think and feel - and for inspiring even the most reluctant readers to fall in love with books.

Illustrator Ruby Wright brings a rich artistic background to her work, having studied sculpture and worked at the BBC before turning to printmaking and children's illustration. Her debut book *Animal Crackers* (Rocket Bird Books, 2023) was nominated for the prestigious Klaus Flugge Prize. She draws every day from life, creating playful, heartfelt art that perfectly complements Kes's storytelling magic.

Good Bits: Bits of Stories. Endless Fun.
Written by Kes Gray, Illustrated by Ruby Wright. DK flip, £8.99. Out Now.



Books We Love

TREE SPIRITS AROUND THE WORLD BY LOUISE WANNIER

Louise Wannier follows her award-winning debut *Tree Spirits* with a beautifully realised sequel that once again combines nature, imagination, and play in an enchanting way. *Tree Spirits Around the World* takes readers on a journey across six continents and ten countries with Tilly the mouse, a gentle guide who helps children uncover the hidden magic of trees.

Aimed at children aged four to nine, the book is an invitation to pause, look more closely, and rediscover a sense of wonder in the everyday. At a time when screens dominate family life, Wannier's work stands out as a tactile, screen-free alternative. Many teachers praised her first book as "an antidote to screen time," and the new volume carries that same spirit of calm and curiosity.

What makes this book especially fascinating is its interactive design. Each spread pairs vibrant photography with illustrated acetate overlays. Children lift the layers to reveal hidden shapes and spirits within the trees, turning the reading experience into an act of discovery. These small surprises echo the excitement of spotting patterns in nature and encourage imaginative thinking as much as careful observation.

The journey is both geographical and emotional. As Tilly explores different landscapes, she encounters tree spirits that reflect the culture and character of each place. The framework is simple but powerful: no matter where in the world you are, trees embody resilience, connection, and beauty. Through this lens, young readers begin to understand that while our surroundings may differ, there are universal threads that bind us all.

Wannier writes in a lyrical style that lends itself to being read aloud, with prompts



that encourage children to respond and share their own ideas. Story time becomes collaborative, less about reading to a child than reading *with* them. Rather than a single storyline, the book offers a series of small imaginative encounters, allowing families to dip in and out, return to favourite pages, and build conversations around the details.



Visually, the book is striking. The layered acetate pages, sturdy paperback format, and rich photographic palette make it as much a keepsake as a children's book. It's the sort of gift parents and grandparents will value not just for its beauty, but for the way it invites meaningful moments of connection.

Wannier herself has a varied background as a creative entrepreneur and artist, and her passion for encouraging imagination and emotional awareness comes through clearly in her work.

More than just a picture book, ***Tree Spirits Around the World*** is a journey into wonder. It reminds us that trees are not simply part of the scenery but living symbols of history, culture, and shared humanity. Families looking for enriching, screen-free activities will find it a truly inspiring companion.

**Available from Amazon on Paperback
(ISBN No: 978-0990997672) priced £17.99
and Kindle format (£7.99).**

Books We Love

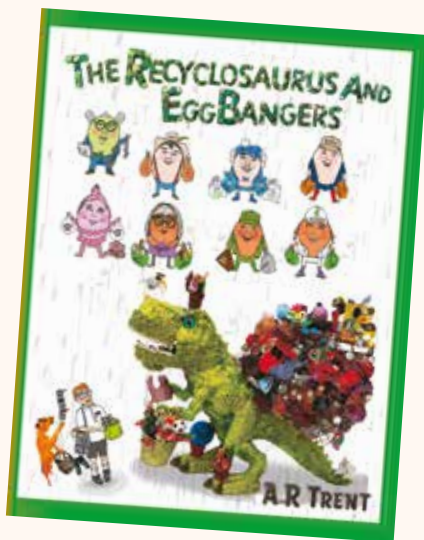
THE RECYCLOSAURUS AND EGGBANGERS: A FABLE FOR A NEW GENERATION

NEW CHILDREN'S BOOK TACKLES CLIMATE CHANGE WITH HEART AND HUMOUR

A R Trent's *The Recyclosaurus and EggBangers* invites young readers to step into LA-LA Forest Park for an unforgettable eco-adventure. When young Ed Williams gets lost, he discovers a secret world of homeless wild animals, a runaway stray dog, and a wise old crow – all debating who's to blame for the planet's climate crisis. Along the way, Ed befriends *EggBanger*, *Little Bro*, and learns that sometimes the smallest voices ask the biggest questions: *Who is responsible for our planet's future?*

Published by **Maple Publishing Company**, this debut children's book blends humour, imagination, and environmental awareness into a story that entertains as much as it inspires. The story opens as Ed's school closes due to an unusually hot spell – 'Well, isn't it winter?' he wonders. Lost in the forest, Ed soon learns from the local wildlife that they hold humans accountable for starvation, habitat loss and even the melting of the Antarctic.

Trent, who describes herself as a concerned great-great-great-great grandmother, weaves her grandchildren's insights into the story, creating an authentic and heartfelt narrative. *The Recyclosaurus and EggBangers* transforms complex environmental themes into a child-friendly fable, set in a world where "super polluters" are called out and animals fight for survival through dialogue, empathy, and imagination.



Engaging readers aged **7-11**, the book uses vibrant storytelling and beautiful illustrations to spark curiosity and compassion. While it's packed with playful moments, the underlying message is profound: protecting the planet begins with awareness, responsibility, and small acts of change. Beneath the humour lies a gentle wake-up call – urging children to think about the kind of world they want to inherit.

Synopsis:

Eons ago, humanity was gifted the "Seed of Planet Earth" and turned it into a force of mass evolution – but with dire consequences. Our ancestors' choices created a global climate crisis, leaving once-safe air, land and seas in peril. Now, creatures of all kinds ask: *'Our inheritance is this?'*

The author says:

"While *The Recyclosaurus and EggBangers* is aimed at children aged 7-11, I don't believe age should be a barrier. I still remember watering tulips at school in Nottingham in 1963 for a newspaper photo titled '*Well, isn't it spring?*' – it was cold and grey, much like today's uncertain seasons.

"In my book, the air has become so polluted that future generations live in dome cities, and all living things – people, animals, and birds – share one goal: survival. I hope this story sparks conversations about our planet while remaining a fun and imaginative read."

The Recyclosaurus and EggBangers is available in paperback (£11.00) on Amazon

Books We Love

SUBURBAN SECRETS AND SURPRISING TRANSFORMATIONS: VICTORIA WEBSTER'S TWO-PART SERIES

Behind the neat hedges and freshly painted doors of suburbia, life isn't always as polished as it seems. That's the world Victoria Webster opens up in her compelling two-part series, *The Con Artist* and *Abigail's World* - two novels that blend humour, drama, and suspense in equal measure.

Webster, who writes under a pen name, didn't set out to become a novelist early in life. But after years of rich experiences - marriage, divorce, and even dipping a toe into the unpredictable world of online dating - she found herself with stories too good not to tell. Rather than penning a straightforward memoir, she chose to weave fact and fiction into page-turning narratives that shine a sharp light on modern relationships and the secrets we all keep.

The first instalment, *The Con Artist* (2022), introduces us to Mitch, a man who is as charming as he is deceitful. With his wife Marnie quietly enabling his schemes, Mitch moves from town to town spinning webs of lies, conning unsuspecting women and later entire neighbourhoods. At times darkly funny, at others jaw-dropping in its audacity, the novel paints a picture of how charisma can so easily disarm us. For many readers, Mitch will feel uncomfortably familiar: the smooth talker who seems too good to be true - because he is.

But it's in the second book, *Abigail's World* (publishing September 2025), that Webster's storytelling takes on a new, more intimate dimension. Abigail, a seemingly ordinary woman who appears in the first book, steps



into the spotlight. Moving to a new house in the countryside with her husband, she's thrust into a world of competitive neighbours, school-gate politics, and a marriage that suddenly feels less secure. When the infamous con artist resurfaces to wreak havoc, Abigail's carefully balanced life is tipped upside down. Yet rather than crumbling, she begins to discover her own strength, her voice, and a new sense of identity.

What makes this series so engaging is Webster's ability to mix biting social commentary with real warmth. The characters feel authentic because, in part, they are drawn from the author's own lived experiences. Many readers - particularly women juggling families, friendships, and the expectations of society - will recognise themselves in Abigail's journey from passive participant to resilient protagonist.

Both novels work beautifully on their own, but together they offer a layered exploration of deception, resilience, and reinvention. With sharp dialogue, moments of laugh-out-loud humour, and enough suspense to keep you hooked until the final page, Webster delivers domestic drama with a delicious twist.

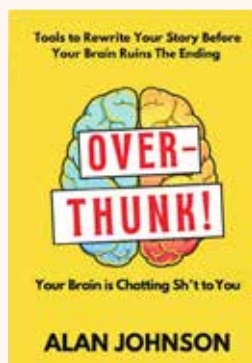
For anyone who has ever wondered what really goes on behind the twitching curtains of suburbia, *The Con Artist* and *Abigail's World* are irresistible reads.

Find Victoria Webster's books now on [Apple Books](#), [Kindle](#), and in paperback from [Amazon](#).

Books That Matter

OVERTHUNK! YOUR BRAIN IS CHATTING SH*T TO YOU

TRANSFORMATIVE NEW BOOK HELPS YOU STOP THINKING AND START LIVING



If you've ever caught yourself lying awake at 3 a.m., replaying awkward conversations, catastrophising the week ahead, and wondering why you still feel anxious even though you understand your mental health, Alan Johnson's new book

*Overthunk! Your Brain is Chatting Sh*t to You** might just be the tough love you need.

Published on 1st August 2025, *Overthunk!* cuts through the noise of modern self-help with humour, compassion and sharp practicality. Johnson – a former mental health nurse and award-winning corporate trainer – speaks directly to the people who've done the therapy, read the self-help books, and know their triggers inside out, yet still find themselves mentally exhausted.

“People today are more psychologically literate than ever,” says Johnson. “They can explain their childhood trauma in three different ways – but they're not necessarily happier or sleeping any better.”

Overthunk! offers an antidote to that paradox. Drawing on 20 years of clinical and corporate experience, Johnson delivers straightforward tools for escaping the spiral of overthinking and emotional overwhelm. His approach blends elements of **Neuro-**

Linguistic Programming (NLP), counselling, and real-world insight – all explained with wit and simplicity.

At its core, the book explores why our ancient, threat-wired brains struggle in modern life and how understanding ourselves isn't enough unless we also learn to manage what we feel. Each chapter offers clear, actionable exercises to help readers calm racing thoughts, challenge unhelpful patterns, and regain emotional balance.

Unlike traditional self-help titles that drown readers in jargon or platitudes, *Overthunk!* takes a refreshingly direct route. With irreverent humour and conversational storytelling, Johnson invites readers to see their brain for what it really is: a chatty companion that sometimes talks absolute nonsense.

“This isn't another mindfulness manual or gentle guide to self-care,” he explains. “It's for people who know what's wrong but still can't stop their brain from making everything worse. Once you understand that your mind's chatter isn't truth – just noise – you can finally start turning the volume down.”

Released in paperback (£19.99), Kindle (£6.99), and audiobook (£6.99), *Overthunk!* is already attracting attention for its no-nonsense voice and practical impact. It's the kind of book readers will keep on their bedside table, dog-eared and underlined – a companion for the moments when awareness alone isn't enough.

Johnson's expertise has been featured in the cinema-released documentary *Love & Trouble*, where his coaching played a pivotal role in the recovery of a young couple living with post-traumatic stress. Based in North Yorkshire but working globally, his approach to change is grounded, human, and always solution-focused.

“I don't just teach tools,” he says. “I show you how to use them when it matters.”

For anyone who's ever been *too* self-aware for their own good, *Overthunk!* is a witty, wise, and empowering reminder that understanding your brain is one thing – but learning to shut it up is where the real freedom begins.

***Overthunk! Your Brain is Chatting Sh*t to You** is available from Amazon and alanjohnsonchange.com / www.books.by/alan-johnson**



A night of Italian grace: Teresa Scognamiglio honoured at the Campidoglio

By Monica Costa



There are moments in life when beauty, friendship, and emotion blend so perfectly that they leave a lasting glow in your memory. One of those moments for me was the evening of 25 July 2025, when I had the privilege of attending my dear friend Teresa Scognamiglio's award ceremony at the Campidoglio in Rome.

It was a hot summer night, the kind that only Rome can gift - when the air feels like silk, the city lights shimmer on the ancient stones, and the Fori Imperiali and Colosseum below seem to whisper centuries of history. From the Sala della Protomoteca, where the ceremony took place, the view alone was enough to make one's heart swell. Yet what truly filled the room was the sense of pride and elegance that defines *Made in Italy*.

Teresa, founder and creative soul behind Teresa Si Couture, was honoured at the Fairness Magazine Excellence - Values and Talents of Made in Italy Awards, celebrating those who embody the essence of Italian creativity - beauty, ethics, craftsmanship, and heart.

Over the years, I've had the pleasure of covering many of Teresa's breath-taking haute couture shows, dressing Hollywood stars and Italian icons alike. But beyond the glamour, what has always stood out to me is her kindness and humility. Her talent is extraordinary, yet she remains warm, gracious, and genuinely passionate about making women feel beautiful.

I was lucky enough to model one of her evening gowns - a flowing, luminous creation that made me feel, quite literally, like a princess. It wasn't just about wearing a beautiful dress; it was about stepping into the world Teresa creates - one where elegance meets emotion, and where every woman can feel radiant, confident, and special. For that, I am deeply grateful.

In her speech, Teresa captured the spirit of the evening perfectly:

"The award aims to go beyond simply celebrating success: it seeks to recognise an attitude, a set of values deeply rooted in the Italian identity - beauty, competence, ethics, a connection to the local area, but also international openness... It is an award I want to share with all those who believe in the value of roots, beauty, and innovation made with the heart."

As the applause echoed through the hall and the Roman skyline glowed in the distance, I couldn't help but feel moved by how beautifully Teresa represents everything that is timeless about Italian creativity - authenticity, generosity, and the power of dreams stitched with care.

That night at the Campidoglio wasn't just about awards or recognition; it was a celebration of friendship, artistry, and the enduring magic of Italy - a country where beauty is not only seen but deeply felt.

www.teresasi.com



London Mums Christmas Gift Guide

Santa's lost his list again
(he's useless, bless his beard!),
So London mums stepped in
- our guide's what he revered!
From gadgets to giggles,
we've wrapped it with flair,
Because mums know best
what's worth the share!

A - Merci Maman Personalised Heart Signet Ring

A heartfelt, custom keepsake engraved with your loved one's initial.
RRP £59 | Available from www.mercimamanboutique.com

B - The Studio Creator Hollywood Mirror

Perfect lighting, hands-free filming, and glam design for beauty content creators.
RRP £24.99 | Available at Smyths Toys

C - Moover Flat Packed Pram

A beautifully Danish-designed wooden pram, ready to delight on Christmas morning.
Available from www.hippychick.com

D - P.O.P by Liberty Fabrics Short-sleeved pyjamas

Timeless Liberty prints meet cosy Scandinavian sleepwear style.
RRP £60.00 | Available from www.polarncpyret.com

E - Warmies® Peter Rabbit™

Heat this soft Peter Rabbit for warm, soothing cuddles.
RRP £29.99
[http s://warmies.co.uk/](http://s://warmies.co.uk/)

F - Greek Myths, Folktales and Legends

A new book in the Scholastic Classics series from award-winning author Vicki Psarias-Broadbent.
RRP £7.35 | Available from Amazon

G - Mood Bears

Hug your feelings - Mood Bears make emotions cuddly, visible, and understood.
RRP £10.99-£19.99 | Available from <https://moodbears.com/>

H - Monopoly Pokémon Edition Board Game

Catch, trade, and conquer - the ultimate Pokémon adventure meets Monopoly fun!
RRP £17.99
Available from www.smythstoys.com

I - Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles Mini Cable Guys

Heroes on your desk - TMNT Cable Guys power, hold, and protect!
RRP £17.99 - £19.99
Available from EXG Pro

J - Tim Bulmer - Natural History Museum 1000 Piece Jigsaw

Piece together nature's wonders - explore, learn, and connect with wildlife!
RRP £24.99 | Available from www.alljigsawpuzzles.co.uk



B



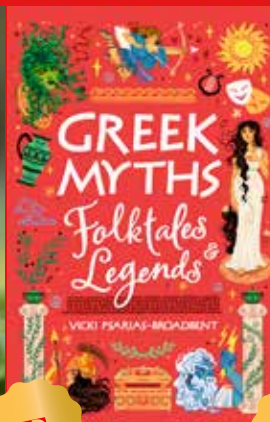
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Christmas sorted!

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