

Finding the Missing Peace



By Stephen G Baker

We all like to be fit and healthy but don't want the hassle that we have to go through to get there.

Health – no one wants to be ill, and we do not really want to die prematurely if we can help it! However, no one likes the check-ups and the 'don't eat this and don't eat that' regime that seems to go with good health.

Fitness – fat and flabby. Don't call me that I hear you say! No one wants to be unfit, but the discipline of doing exercise seems to be more than most people can manage. Going to the gym once is ok but going regularly seems to beat most of us.

Did you know that Brits waste a staggering £558m a year on unused gym memberships? More than one in 10 people say that they have not stepped foot inside their gym for a whole year.

A poll of 1,000 gym members found that 11% said that despite paying an average of £47 a month - that is £564 a year - on a gym membership they had not gone throughout a whole year.

A total of 21% said they visited their gym just three times a year – meaning each visit cost them £188.

Asked why they did not visit their gym - despite paying through the nose for the facilities – 25% said that when they had gone in the past it was 'too busy' and they could not get on the machines they wanted to use and had to queue up.

Spiritual health – Maybe you do not really think it is that important just now! Wait until you are dying, you will then! What if your life is cut short? Will you wish that you had paid more attention? I hear lots of people regret not trying harder at school, not giving more attention to their first marriage, but it is too late now. These issues are important, but not as important as your eternal destiny.

The Bible advises in the book of Amos that people should prepare to meet God, Amos 4.12 (the Bible). Focus and preparation are essential if any of us are going to achieve anything. This one area of life that we cannot afford to ignore.

The truth is – if you seek the Lord, He will be found, if you call upon Him, He will hear. The Bible says – 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord will be saved,' Romans 10.13 (the Bible).

Get fit, seek life and pursue it.

Listen, watch or read more on my webpage,
www.findingthemissingpeace.co.uk



Award-winning Wirral novelist, **Margaret Murphy**, who pens thrillers as **A.D. Garrett** and **Ashley Dyer**, recommends two books per month, across a range of styles and a mixture of new and old.

LA BELLE SAUVAGE: The Book Of Dust Volume I
by Phillip Pullman

Penguin RH & David Fickling Books ISBN-13: 978-0385604413



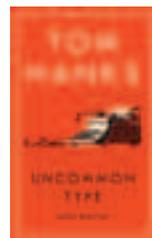
There's a delightful trend, just now, for beautiful books. Bound between linen-covered boards, some engraved, some gilt-edged, many with silk place-markers, they recall a time when print books were given as precious gifts, and treasured by their owners. *The Book of Dust* is one such treat, gorgeous in dark blue with sprinkles of gold: a reference to the cosmic 'Dust' of the title, which is such an important element of Pullman's original trilogy.

La Belle Sauvage opens a new trilogy, with Lyra Belacqua, although an infant, still at the centre of the story. As a flood of apocalyptic proportions threatens the country, ten-year-old hero Malcolm and fifteen-year-old Alice set out on a quest to place Lyra under her father's protection. More earth-bound than its predecessors this prequel to *Northern Lights* chronicles the awakening – or more accurately – the reestablishment of magic in the Oxford/not Oxford parallel universe Pullman created for *His Dark Materials*. *Dæmons* – the spiritual-animal alter egos of humans – feature, and as before, they are not explained. As a natural part of the world they inhabit, they are literally un-remarkable, so when Malcolm comments on the hyena *dæmon* of Bonneville, a stranger in town, he is remarking upon the man's dangerous nature. *La Belle Sauvage* is richly populated by multifaceted characters of depth and humanity, many of whom are not what they seem, and this makes for a thrilling adventure for Malcolm and Alice, fighting to keep the infant Lyra safe as the waters rise and they are pursued by their terrifying adversary.

UNCOMMON TYPE

by Tom Hanks

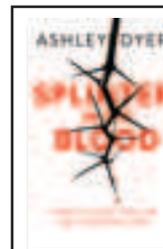
William Heinemann ISBN-13: 978-1785151514



This is Tom Hanks's first collection of short stories. Yes, Tom Hanks the actor. He writes, too – and rather well.

Uncommon Type's eclectic mix of stories have one common theme: a typewriter features in each. We're not talking about electric or word processors; these honest-to-goodness machines date back to the earliest models – and some have magical abilities, bringing people together, getting them talking, helping them to pause and reflect, to appreciate what is important – and ultimately find a joy in life which is there for the taking if they only connect.

A wry humour perfuses the stories in this anthology – Hanks is clearly a Hollywood megastar who doesn't take himself too seriously – so in *A Junket in the City of Light*, we're given a rueful glimpse of what it's *really* like for actors promoting a new film on the circuit. And it's the ingenue, 'Dumb as a box of hair', who proves wisest among the wise-assed cynics who surround him. On a more (literally) sober note, *A Month on Greene Street* rejoices in the possibility of redemption and happiness. Some stories are more successful than others, but most readers will find something to admire among the light and dark, humour and pathos, pragmatism and weirdness, nostalgia, and yes – sentimentality of this collection. Recommended to readers' groups and anyone who remembers the clack of an old Imperial typewriter with nostalgic affection.



Splinter in the Blood, written as Ashley Dyer, was a great hit with international publishers at last year's London Book Fair, and will be published across Europe and in the USA in 2018, beginning in the UK on 1st March. Margaret/Ashley would love to see readers of this column at the launch party at **Waterstones Liverpool One, 2nd March**.

Book tickets at www.waterstones.com/events