

## Think Your Life's a Prison? Think Again.

These books are heartbreaking, painful, poignant and purposeful. Read on.

### SHANGHAI TANGO: A MEMOIR

(Atlantic Books) By Jin Xing

Born a boy, Jin Xing's childhood dream was to be a ballerina. And against the odds, that's what he became. After visiting the States, Jin realises that sex-change operations are viable and heads



back to his native China for surgery. But Jin soon finds out the surgery comes with serious risks. Jin talks frankly about the ups and downs – the outs and the ins – of the journey to becoming a woman and, later, a mother.

A simple story of a woman trapped in a man's body.

### THE ALMOST MOON

(Picador) By Alice Sebold

This new novel, by the author of *The Lovely Bones*, examines the fraught and complex relationship between a mother and daughter. Helen kills her mother. Detached, she thinks back to episodes in her life that brought her to this point. In this book, which all women will somehow relate to, Sebold's heroine comes to see the value in people, including her mother, as her late father once described it: "The moon is ever-present, but for most of the time you only see a fraction of its beauty – it is an almost moon."

## The Rest is History

Books about the past, and how it affects the present and defines the future.

### DRESDEN, TENNESSEE

(Faber And Faber) By Carolyn Slaughter

Most acts of extreme destruction in history have signalled the onset of a Diaspora, but how does this affect future generations? Dresden in Germany was bombed flat in 1945. The people who escaped fled to the corners of the earth.

Years later, a similar fate befell the World Trade Center, citadel of trade and commerce. But the loss, then, had a trickle-down effect. Overworked office worker Kurt Altman, a German-American, is struck by amnesia. Convinced New York is about to be terrorised again, he is consumed by the compulsion to travel south. En route he meets Hannah, with whom he has an immediate rapport, but the journey doesn't end until he hits the town of Dresden, in Tennessee, and unwittingly hooks up with Frieda, a friend of his mother's since World War II. As the history of Dresden, Germany feeds into the present, the veil of forgetting is gradually lifted. An interesting look at the impact of historical shifts on those directly involved as well as those that live in their wake.

J.M. COETZEE

Diary of a Bad Year



### DIARY OF A BAD YEAR

(Random House) is not an easy read. But this is J.M. Coetzee we're talking about. A respected 72-year-old writer hires his neighbour's trophy girlfriend to be his typist. He requests her

services because the "tomato-red shift she wore" when they met "was so startling in its brevity." Her boyfriend, irritated by the attentions of the "crumpled old fellow," starts to hatch a plan. The novel is divided into two, sometimes three, narratives – literally lines cutting through the pages – which takes some time to settle into. It's perfect, though, for those looking to gain more insight into Coetzee's evolving work.

## Oprah's Thoughts On Her New Book Club Selection

### LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHOLERA

(Random House) By Gabriel García Márquez

"This is one of the most beautiful and greatest love stories I have ever read. It's a captivating story about a passionate but troubled love affair that takes place over the course of 50 years. It is so beautifully written that it really takes you to another place in time and will make you ask yourself: How long could I, or would I, wait for love?"

—OPRAH

## 3 Great Beach Reads



■ **EX AND THE CITY** (Pan) By Alexandra Heminsley

If you've recently been dumped then this one is definitely for you. It's not a deeply intellectual read but the book is a satisfying page-turner about the pain of love.



■ **THE SCANDAL OF THE SEASON** (Random House) By Sophie Gee

If you enjoyed the 1988 movie *Dangerous Liaisons*, you'll love this story of seduction and conspiracy. It will entice from the very first page.



■ **STRANGE NERVOUS LAUGHTER** (Oshun) By Bridget McNulty

This funny story, set in Durban, deals with the lives of six characters, with healthy doses of sex, love, self-discovery – and an appealing quirkiness.