

# *Read All About It*

My year of falling in love with literature again

PAUL CUDDIHY

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# *Contents*

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Introduction  | 1   |
| 1. You Say You Want A Resolution                          | 7   |
| 2. From Starks Park To Seventh Avenue                     | 18  |
| 3. Seeing Is Believing                                    | 31  |
| 4. A Kick Up The Eighties                                 | 41  |
| 5. Three Is A Magic Number                                | 55  |
| 6. Do Do Do Do DoDo, Do Do Do Do DoDo                     | 66  |
| 7. Lazing On A Sunny Afternoon                            | 77  |
| 8. #Curmudgeon  | 88  |
| 9. Don't Judge A Booker By Its Cover                      | 99  |
| 10. There's More To Life Than Books,<br>But Not Much More | 110 |
| 11. Based On A True Story                                 | 118 |
| 12. It's The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year              | 128 |
| Conclusion  | 139 |
| Appendix I  | 142 |
| Appendix II   | 146 |
| Appendix III  | 151 |

*No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading, or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance.'*

Confucius

*Every night I have to read a book so that my mind will stop thinking about things that I stress about.'*

Britney Spears

It hasn't undermined my core belief in God, but who couldn't find their faith in the Catholic Church tottering, if not completely collapsing? It is against this backdrop that I read *The Bishop's Man*, a powerful and moving story that gives an 'insider's view' of how the Church deals with its errant priests. I would recommend the book which, though only a work of fiction, contains enough truth within it to ensure I remain unsettled, uncomfortable and angry with my Church.

There is a strange dichotomy with social media. On the one hand, as David Nicholls points out, '*... no-one reaches the end of their life and wishes they'd spent more time on Twitter.*' Indeed, an hour on Twitter can pass by in the blink of an eye, where you have literally done nothing, and literally nothing in the world has happened, except that someone has cooked something tasty on *Masterchef* or there's been a goal in the Barnet versus Plymouth Argyle game. On the other hand, it's an important platform for any writer and provides a gateway to a wider audience. Indeed, you may even be reading these words through a link I've posted on Twitter or Facebook. And I do have Twitter to thank for my next book.

A friend of mine tweets randomly about the comedic genius of P.G. Wodehouse and his *Jeeves & Wooster* series of books. I confess that I've never read P.G. Wodehouse. Not that I'm alone in this, and I hadn't really envisaged myself ever doing so. I don't think my life would be any better or worse either way, but the Wodehouse fan is someone whose taste and judgement I respect, and so I ask for a recommendation. I duly purchase *The Code of the Woosters*, and I couldn't have picked a book with a greater contrast to *The Bishop's Man*.

It is entertaining, in a farcical, upper-class twit sort of way, that veers between being funny and infuriating. The biggest drama of the book is about a cow creamer which every character covets. I don't even know what a cow creamer is. *The Code of the Woosters* doesn't convert me to being a Wodehouse fanatic, although I may read more in the future, old chap.

While not necessarily a P.G. Wodehouse fan, I am most definitely a Molly Ringwald devotee. I was a teenager in the 1980s, for goodness sake, so how can I not be? *Pretty in Pink*. *The Breakfast Club*. Need I say more? I discover she's written a novel and so, intrigued at the thought of a celebrity actually writing something rather than taking a suitcase of cash to put their name to something trite – and that can be Cockney rhyming slang if you want – I buy the book.

*When It Happens To You* is a series of inter-connected stories set in California, and it's deceptively captivating. Molly Ringwald can write. Should I be surprised? I don't know her so I have no idea as to her literary talents, or any other talents beyond an ability to put make-up on with the lipstick wedged in her cleavage, or to dance quite badly to *We Are Not Alone* by Karla DeVito. So I might have watched *The Breakfast Club* more than once. Having finished reading *When It Happens To You*, the book does leave me wanting to know more about the characters and what happens to them, which is a great skill in itself, just giving the reader a glimpse of a life at some random point and then leaving with a lot of loose ends behind. Frustratingly satisfying, I look forward to reading more of her novels in the future. I'm tempted, for about five minutes, to 'tweet' Molly Ringwald and let her know I like the book. I 'follow' her on Twitter. Sad but true. However, I decide against it. There is a fine line between admiration and adulation, and at my age, it's best I don't risk crossing from one to the other. I opt to watch *Pretty in Pink* instead.

I've almost reached the end of January and I'm about to start my ninth book since Boxing Day. That, in itself, is an invigorating thought, and for my next book I decide to tackle my first Sherlock Holmes novel. I have a box-set of all Arthur Conan Doyle's Holmes books, and they have remained in pristine condition on my shelves since I bought them several years ago. The obvious choice is the first book in the series, *A Study In Scarlet*, which sees Holmes and Doctor Watson united for the first time. It's interesting, and easy to read, and clever enough. I believe there are better

## READ ALL ABOUT IT

Sherlock Holmes books and I may investigate further, but for now it feels like I've ticked another 'should read' novelist off my list. I finish the Conan Doyle book on February 1, and allow myself a moment of self-congratulation. I've read nine books. That is a remarkable total, even if I say so myself, and so I begin February imbued with a new-found literary enthusiasm.

## *From Starks Park To Seventh Avenue*

*'I love the solitude of being on a plane and finally getting to read an entire book and being left alone.'*

*Christina Ricci*

It might be worth explaining at this point that I work as a journalist in the multi-media department of Celtic Football Club, writing about the team that I support. It's why, on the second day of February, I find myself in Kirkcaldy, at Starks Park, home of Raith Rovers. It's a cold and chilly Saturday afternoon, and the thought of a fish supper for dinner when I get home later is the only thing enabling me to maintain a cheery disposition in the face of a biting Fife wind.

Our pre-match routine follows a similar pattern – searching out a suitable venue for a fried breakfast and then arrival at the ground two hours before kick-off. While this makes for a long day, the additional time has come in handy on occasion if there are any technical difficulties. I hasten to add that I never have any technical difficulties since I have no idea how anything works, but my colleagues do sometimes encounter a few problems, and the two-hour cushion can be invaluable. As for fried breakfasts, I now like to think of myself as something of a connoisseur. Black pudding is always the key. If it has been freshly cooked, is nice and soft when you cut into it and just about crumbles in your mouth, then you know you're on to a winner. For future reference, in my experience the best eateries are Renfrew Golf Club and Oz's Café in Edinburgh. The fact that the food in both establishments is served on a giant plate may have slightly influenced my decision.

Unfortunately, the early 12.45pm kick-off in Kirkcaldy, and our need to be at the ground two hours beforehand, has a knock-on effect on our routine. So, instead of searching out