

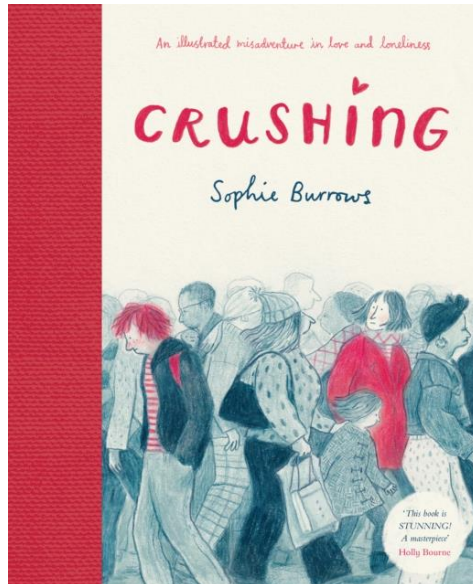


Crushing by Sophie Burrows

[Contemporary Fiction]

Accidents will happen – but only if you're lucky!

Wrapped in richly realised park, city-centre and suburban landscapes enjoying everything that the British weather likes to throw at them, this is a tender, beautiful book for all the gentler souls out there; those who find the hassle and the hustle of crowded streets oppressive, and the pressure to join with everything the modern age throws at us too overwhelming to be attractive.



Especially when looking for love in a world which seems bursting with the trappings of it everywhere.

In alternating threads, we follow the separate paths of two quietly longing but self-contained individuals which converge all too briefly only to be spun out in different directions after their mutual, tentative sideways glances fail to meet by but a split second.

They try to engage others. One telltale blush and flush of attraction on a Tube train is met by its recipient with confusion then embarrassment before the commuter crossly buries his face behind the sanctuary and sanctity of his newspaper. He could have just smiled! And the poor love has already been snubbed up on Hampstead Heath – by a pigeon!

Her glossy magazine proves equally insulting. Not everyone wants to join in the competitively aspirational vain game. Plus her dating app is going to give her far less of what she wants at heart, yet a great deal more than she bargained for.





Our other protagonist, meanwhile, finds himself too anxious for the ubiquitous yet kindly meant small talk, thwarted in the scrum of a supermarket, started on by a stag night then the recipient of a hen party's excess – all over his slippers.

As striking as Sophie Burrows's myriad panoramas are her individual expressions: the smug, the supercilious, the leering and the jeering and one particularly perfect evocation – with extraordinary economy – of cruel satisfaction at someone else's expense. It's captured, of course, in a selfie, taken in order to be shown off to others in triumph. Burrows will quickly become one of your new favourite contemporary cartoonists.

There's a very clever use of colour throughout, right to the end. So many individual panels merit scrutiny to see what they say beyond the immediate and obvious, while moments snatched under sky while he's walking the dog or she's having a jog (then stretched flat on her back) are sublime! While her hot feet, peeled free of socks, soak in the luxury of the cool, soft grass, birds wheel overhead...



Of course it wouldn't be Britain without buses and a blinding downpour. I promise you both of those too.

I've only scratched the surface; underneath you will find wistful, alone-at-home pining, the loyalty of dogs, the impudence of algorithms, the ugly back alleys of immaculately maintained street-cafe fronts and the sort of stoicism which gives us all courage to carry on whatever the weather – meteorological or metaphorical.

Additional Resources: I hadn't even realised that this was a wordless graphic novel, and I've been hand-selling it for a year! Other wordless comics include almost all works by Jim Woodring (mind-altering, yet legal), *THE WANDERER* by Peter Van Den Ende, *THE ARRIVAL* by Shaun Tan, *THE GREAT WAR* by Joe Sacco, *THE PARK BENCH* by Chabouté, *LEAF* by Daishu Ma, *ROBOT DREAMS* by Sara Varon, *GON* by Masashi Tanaka, *MAX* by Giovannetti and *THE RAKE'S PROGRESS* (etc) by William Hogarth.

