

HARDBACKS FICTION



Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding

Picador £12.99

★★

Bridget Jones is a spinster of 30-plus and her diary recounts a year of lightweight torment. Day after day, she battles with feelings of inadequacy, drink, cigarettes, fat and men. And it is the men problem that seems to cause all the others. She should be able to see the dud fellows coming, there are clues ('a white sock... a grey slip-on shoe, a swastika') but she doesn't. I was deeply moved by her battle with the video, but the word '****wit' pops up with depressing frequency, and Bridget, despite her supportive feminist chum, is at heart a committed fluffly waiting for Prince Charming. Michele Hanson



Automated Alice by Jeff Noon

Doubleday £14.99

★★★

JEFF NOON



The Innocence of Roast Chicken by Jo-Anne Richards

Headline Review £16.99

★★★

Kate is a white South African with attitude. While her human rights lawyer husband Joe is starry-eyed about the unfolding of the new South Africa, she relentlessly mocks it. In uncovering the mystery of why Kate is as she is, the story shifts between two worlds: the rural idyll of her grandparents' chicken farm in 1966, and Johannesburg in 1989. Despite characters who theorise about emotions rather than experience them, this book has pace and tension — shot through with the terrible beauty of the South African landscape and the efforts of a child to stave off a gathering evil. Gillian Slovo



Zoe Trope by Amanda Prantera

Bloomsbury £14.99

★★