



Dear Mrs Bird

A.J. Pearce

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London, 1941. Emmeline Lake and her best friend Bunty are trying to stay cheerful despite the Luftwaffe making life thoroughly annoying for everyone. Emmy dreams of becoming a Lady War Correspondent and when she spots a job advertisement in the newspaper she seizes her chance – but after a rather unfortunate misunderstanding, she finds herself typing letters for the formidable Henrietta Bird, the renowned agony aunt of *Woman's Friend* magazine.

Mrs Bird is very clear: letters containing any form of Unpleasantness must go straight into the bin. But as Emmy reads the desperate pleas from women who may have Gone Too Far with the wrong man, or can't bear to let their children be evacuated, she decides the only thing for it is to secretly write back . . .

Irresistibly funny and enormously moving, *Dear Mrs Bird* by AJ Pearce is a love letter to the enduring power of friendship, the kindness of strangers and the courage of ordinary people in extraordinary times.

Dear Mrs Bird Details

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From Reader Review Dear Mrs Bird for online ebook

Lucy Langford says

3***

This book is heartwarming and mostly uplifting, set in the grim times of the blitz. It pays homage to the women who volunteered and try to go about their daily lives in London during WWII.

Emmeline Lake is an ambitious young woman with her own desire to be a war correspondent, especially when a junior secretarial job opens up at The Evening Chronicle, she believes she is on her way to achieving her dreams. However, what she has actually applied for is Woman's Friend, a different magazine, and is to be working on the problem page under Henrietta Bird. Mrs Bird is hard-laced and won't respond to any letters containing 'UNPLEASANTNESS'; Marital relations, Premarital relations, Extramarital relations, Sexual relations in general, Illegal activities, Political activities and opinions, The War. Emmy feels sorry for these women whose letters are often thrown away, so she takes it upon herself to help them and responds.

This book does a brilliant job at honoring those who decided to stay in London during war time. This is not only shown through Emmy (who is a volunteer and answers calls for the Fire Brigade should bombs be dropped), but also through the men who stayed behind in the fire service to help, other women volunteers, those who experience loss and fear from experiencing the blitz, and the women who write in to Mrs Bird who are dealing with every day problems. A.J. Pearce does a fantastic job at including how there were still real life problems (affairs, love interests) suffered by women throughout the war, and this is often overlooked. I can't even imagine the struggle of trying to go about your daily duties and experience love and family etc., in the back drop of trying to find shelter from bombing, losing friends, witnessing horrific events and rationing. This book also shows what a true friendship is like through the best friends of Bunty and Emmy as they try to navigate their lives through the war.

This was wonderfully warm and uplifting, with bravery and friendship at its forefront, giving a voice to a woman's story during WWII.

Bianca says

I really expected and wanted to love this novel, as its main character is a young woman doing her bit for the war effort, during the WWII.

Unfortunately, I found it predictable, overwritten, over-explained, and, generally speaking, I found our heroine, Emmeline Lake, overbearing and too earnest.

Dear Mrs Bird should have been right up my alley and I was disappointed it wasn't the good lighter novel I was so desperate to find. I got bored and skimmed a lot.

I will say this, *Dear Mrs Bird* could easily be made into a BBC series, although come to think of it, there are plenty of similar stories that made it to the screen.

Annet says

An utterly charming book, with a tear and a smile, and a fun story too! 'I say old chap', Emmeline Lake is one feisty and courageous young woman indeed! Entertaining and fun, while also heartbreakng, this quick read and therefore four shining stars! More to follow as usual, recommended.

Susan says

Emmeline Lake and her friend, Bunty, live in London. It is 1940 and the Germans are making rather a nuisance of themselves, but neither are downhearted. In fact, Emmy has big dreams of being a Lady War Correspondent and, when she sees an advert for part-time work at the London Evening Chronicle, she writes off with high hopes. However, before long, she realises that her Enthusiasm (there are a lot of Capital Letters in this book) has meant that she has rushed in without thinking. Rather than finding herself on the first rung of the ladder towards journalism, she is stuck typing up letters for agony aunt, Mrs Bird – who runs the 'Henrietta Helps,' column for "Woman's Friend," a magazine, which shares nothing with the London Evening Chronicle, other than offices in the same building.

To be honest, when the first question at her interview was, "are you easily scared?" Emmy should have been fore-warned about her new employer. Apart from shouting a lot, Mrs Bird does very little. She does, however, insist that letters which refer to any kind of Unpleasantness, are thrown in the bin. Such unacceptable topics include marital relations, pre-marital relations, extra-marital relations, physical relations, politics or illegal activities. Before long, Emmy, bemoaning the fact that the agony column is not really helping anyone, begins to answer the letters herself...

This debut novel is funny, moving, charming and paints a wonderfully evocative portrait of wartime London. As well as telling a story with great humour, the author also shows how the war caused all kinds of social, and personal, upheaval. Although Mrs Bird's advice was that everyone should Buck Up and Get On With Things, these unprecedented events did mean that life was, largely, thrown into disarray for most of the inhabitants of the country. She also shows the bravery of those on the Home Front, who faced the bombings, upheaval and shortages with fortitude and a complete inability to accept that things would not work out in the end. I adored this novel and received a review copy from the publisher, via NetGalley, for which many thanks are due.

Zoe says

Spirited, poignant, and moving!

Dear Mrs. Bird is an intriguing tale that takes you back to the streets of London during WWII and into the life of Emmeline Lake a cheery, optimistic, young woman who after finding herself inadvertently working on the advice column for Woman's Friend magazine takes it upon herself to begin secretly doling out guidance to those on the home front seeking advice for "inappropriate topics".

The prose is comical and light. The characters are plucky, sympathetic, and real. And the plot is an engaging, perfectly paced tale about life, loss, self-discovery, friendship, tragedy, heartbreak, uncertainty, hilarious

misunderstandings, good intentions, meddling, and the realities of war.

Overall, Dear Mrs. Bird is a delightfully heartwarming, wonderful debut for Pearce that does an exceptional job of highlighting the incredible impact war had on the personal lives of those it touched both at home and away and the significant roles and contribution of women during those dark times.

Thank you to Simon & Schuster Canada for providing me with a copy in exchange for an honest review.

All my reviews can be found on my blog at <https://whatsbetterthanbooks.com>

Angela M says

With a blend of lightheartedness and a dose of the heartbreak reality of wartime, A.J. Pierce gives recognition to the women at home during WWII in this story taking place during the London blitz. Emmeline Lake's lofty ambition to be a war correspondent isn't meant to be when she finds out the job she applied for as a junior secretary for The Evening Chronicle was actually for a weekly magazine called Woman's Friend, working for Henrietta Bird. She's a straight laced advice columnist who will not respond to any letter that mentions: "Marital relations, Premarital relations, Extramarital relations, Physical relations, Sexual relations in general (all issues, mentions, suggestions, or results of), Illegal activities, Political activities and opinions (excl. queries regarding church groups and services), The war (excl. queries, regarding rationing, voluntary services, clubs, and practicalities)." That is until Emmy decides to take things upon herself because she genuinely feels sorry for and wants to help these women who write in asking for advice that Mrs. Bird won't think about giving.

This tribute to the the women remaining at home during wartime is not just reflected with Emmy who is also a volunteer with the Fire Brigade, answering calls each night as the bombings occur, but with those who lose loved ones, and those who write letters to Henrietta Bird seeking advice as they try to deal with their real problems. It also depicts what true friendship is about with Emmy and Bunty. It's a quick read, funny and light at times, but sad and horrifying as we see the destruction and losses. A satisfying story I recommend.

I received an advanced copy of this book from Scribner through NetGalley and Edelweiss.

Louise Wilson says

It's 1940's London. Emmeline Lake is doing her bit for the war office, volunteering as a telephone operator with the Auxiliary Fire Services.

When Emmy (Emmeline), saw an advertisement for a job at the London Evening Chronicle, her dream of becoming a Lady War Correspondent suddenly becomes achievable. But the job is for a typist for the fierce advice columnist, Henrietta Bird. Mrs Birds rules are very clear: letters containing any unpleasantness must go straight in the bin.

Not the job she was hoping for in the Evening Chronicle, but typing up replies to Mrs Birds "Hendrietta Helps" column in the "Woman's Friend" magazine. Mrs Bird does is a hard taskmaster. She does not like

talking when she should be working and she barks out her orders. It's not long before Emmy starts replying to the letters that are meant for the bin.

This is a beautifully written debut novel that has a bit of humour added but is also quite sad at times as well. Not a book I would normally pick up, but when I seen so many good reviews about it. I'm glad I did. It's funny, moving and charming. It shows the bravery of the people on the Home Front. I will definitely be looking out for more from this author in the future.

Holly B says

A charming story about Emmeline Lake who accidentally takes the wrong job.

I think Emmy's enthusiasm for becoming a reputable World War II correspondent clouded her understanding of the job description at the *London Evening Chronicle*. I loved her optimism and how upbeat she felt even after realizing she was only hired as a typist for a woman's advice column.

Her uptight boss, Mrs. Bird was anything but an endearing lady. She was overbearing and wanted Emmy to trash all letters containing what she perceived as "unpleasant" which turned out to be just the kind of problems that many were writing to her about.

Emmy starts "secretly" corresponding to some of the letters flagged unpleasant by her boss and may have put herself in a bit of a pickle. So many laugh out loud moments in this book, even with the back drop of bombed out buildings and German raids. Emmy's contagious optimism and good heart had me cheering for her to the end.

You will enjoy this one, if you love heart warming stories full of humor and friendship. I absolutely fell in love with Emmy.

Thanks to NG for my ARC.

Fran says

Emmeline Lake takes the bus home from work carrying her handbag, gas mask, and an onion (for stew). She dreams of becoming a war correspondent or a journalist covering political intrigue. Discovering a newspaper ad for part-time work at The London Evening Chronicle, she believes the world is her oyster. Wrong! Part-time work will fit in with Emmy's job three nights a week as a volunteer telephone operator for the Auxiliary Fire Service. It is 1940. London is being blitzed regularly by the Luftwaffe. Emmy is dumbfounded when she finds out the job of her dreams is nothing more than a junior typist job. She has been hired to type responses written in a column of Woman's Friend Magazine. Cantankerous Mrs. Bird picks and chooses which letters are worthy of a written response in her column "Henrietta Helps".

Emmy has been hired to say nothing at all. Mrs. Bird maintains a list of "unacceptable" topics. Letters mentioning divorce, unhappiness and intimacy are among the unmentionables to be cut up and sent to the bin. But, war is hell on the home front, too! Emmy secretly decides to send kindly responses to women desperate enough to write in.

The gallantry of the Fire Brigade cannot go unnoticed. One evening, a fire blazes out of control in a building now teetering on collapse. Members of the Fire Brigade enter the rubble, pulling out a frightened little girl and her brother. Just seconds before total collapse of the structure, a fireman is pulled out with something shielded in a blanket. The little girl's doll.

"Dear Mrs. Bird" is a novel that runs the gamut of feelings and emotions experienced by our narrator, Emmy, in this work of historical fiction. Make no mistake, author A.J. Pearce, in her debut novel, possesses the gift of transporting us to wartime London. We are concerned for the well being and safety of its residents. "Dear Mrs. Bird" by A.J. Pearce is a lovely, heartfelt read that I highly recommend.

Thank you Scribner Publishing and Net Galley for the opportunity to read and review "Dear Mrs. Bird".

Melisa says

When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, "Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping." - Fred Rogers

All in all, this is a story about the helpers of World War 2 - amongst all the atrocities, there was a bit of light in those who came to the rescue of others.

The author drew inspiration for the book after finding an advice column in a women's magazine from 1939 (love this so much!). AJ Pearce has done some beautiful justice to the people who had to experience the atrocities of the terrible bombings in London and the emotions they must have faced and the questions they must have had.

This is as delightful a book you will find that has a setting of a war. The characters are absolutely charming, you'll be rooting for them all. And the language is brilliant - I absolutely loved the dialogue between the characters.

Definitely recommend!

A huge thank you to Picador Books for an advance copy. This book is currently available!

Cheri says

4.5 Stars

*"We'll meet again
Don't know where
Don't know when
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day
Keep smiling through
Just like you always do
'Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away*

*"So will you please say hello
To the folks that I know
Tell them I won't be long
They'll be happy to know
That as you saw me go
I was singing this song"*

-- "We'll Meet Again," Vera Lynn, Songwriters: Hughie Charles / Ross Parker

Overflowing with charm and humour, *Dear Mrs. Bird* is a treat as sweet as that favourite one your mother made specially for you, just the memory of it makes you smile. I laughed out loud, I cried, I fell in love with Emmeline Lake and her best friend, Bunty, and all of the people inside these pages.

Still, it's not at all light and fluffy, as this begins in London in December of 1940, and there are bombings. People's nerves are frayed more than a bit, but it seems Emmeline really wants to set the tone for all about her. Air raids abound, and buildings about are crumbling, but she keeps her focus on the positive.

Emmeline, Emmy is so determined to *keep calm and carry on* despite the war that's going on, and so when she sees the newspaper advertisement on a day that she considers a cheerful day, despite the Luftwaffe's bothersome presence creating delays for everyone and making people late for work, she just about bursts from the excitement she feels. She wants nothing more than to become a journalist, a Lady War Correspondent, she's been dreaming of this for the last ten years of her life – which is almost half her life at her wizened age of twenty-two.

Emmy is offered the job she applied for, but it isn't quite what she thought it would be. Instead of leading to a job as a Lady War Correspondent, she will be screening letters from readers of *Woman's Friend* magazine, weeding out anything ... unacceptable. Included in "unacceptable" topics - anything hinting at s-e-x, or socially inappropriate behavior, premarital, extramarital, marital "relations," divorce or other unpleasant topics. She is to destroy any containing any "unpleasantness," per Mrs. Bird's rather firm directions. But she's also been told to do what she can, as well as she can, and she can't bear to let all of these letters go unanswered. It's only one to start with, and she feels better knowing that the writer will feel heard.

I loved the colloquial expressions from another era, I loved the off-hand manner in which Emmy approaches things such as having to carry a gas mask along with her handbag, I loved her heartfelt desire to reach out to these women so they would know that someone out there cared. I loved Emmy for having the best intentions. I loved that there was a deeper, darker story underneath the light and sweeter exterior. I loved reading about the changing issues of the day through these letters, seeing women reaching beyond the lives they thought they were destined to live.

Most of all, I loved the perfectly imperfect Emmy.

The idea, inspiration, for this novel came from a 1939 women's magazine that the author, A.J. Pearce, came across. Inside was a peek into women's lives in another era, another way of life. Reading the letters on the "Problem Page" which ranged from what to do if you have freckles to how to deal with rude people in public. An idea was born, and a very entertaining debut novel is the result.

Many thanks for the ARC provided by Scribner

abby says

"I had taken entirely the wrong job."

Emmy Lake *thinks* she's interviewing for a war correspondent job. Finally, she will become the hard hitting journalist of her dreams. But as she daydreams through her job interview, she misses that she's really taking a typist position at a stodgy women's magazine. Far from being on the front lines, she'll be producing copy of Henrietta Helps, an advice column that does not offer much in the way of advice at all. Henrietta refuses to deal with any reader problems she classes as "unpleasantness," which is just about anything apart from table settings and nylons. Feeling boxed in by restriction in a job she didn't mean to take and wanting to help the women who write in desperate for advice, Emmy starts impersonating Henrietta and responding to letters. It's a victim-less crime. Right?

This book is charming a lot of fun. It's chick-lit meets the London Blitz. The only real detraction is the Strange Random Capitalization of words and phrases. Readers who enjoy fluffy books now and again will find a lot to love about *Dear Mrs. Bird*.

Thank you to the publisher and NetGalley for providing me with an advanced copy of this book.

Jennifer ~ TarHeelReader says

4 utterly charming stars to Dear Mrs. Bird! ?? ?? ?? ??

I never tire of World War II fiction. I say it in many of my reviews, but for posterity, my late grandparents were young people in the 1940s. Both grandfathers fought in WWII, and I feel like I can visit this time with them through books.

So how does Dear Mrs. Bird eke out a name for herself in a sea of WWII reads? The answer: with humor and finding joy even amid the most turbulent times.

It is 1940 in London, and adorable and lovable character Emmy Lake is seeking the job of her dreams, war correspondent. She has her hands full as a volunteer telephone operator with the Auxiliary Fire Services and her unfulfilling current job. She finds an advertisement in a magazine that may be the ticket to her next career.

Emmy takes the job knowing little about it and finds herself a typist to an advice columnist, Mrs. Bird. Emmy needs the job, so she perseveres. Mrs. Bird is a strict enforcer of her rules, and the primary one is that no unpleasant letters will be addressed in the column; however, Emma finds this impossible to follow. Her heart opens up when she reads the words of these women, and she feels their loneliness, longing, and pain.

With nightly bombings and a war happening all around her, Emmy writes these women back on her own.

As if you could not tell already, Emmy is a character to adore, as is her endearing best friend, Bunty. Dear

Mrs. Bird is about true friendship, warmth, and generosity, in the most frightful and horrendous of times. It is a charming and uplifting read.

Thank you to Scribner for the ARC. Dear Mrs. Bird is now available!

My reviews can also be found on my blog: www.jennifertarheelreader.com

Karen says

This story shows us the rolls of women in wartime Britain during the early 1940's. A young Emmeline, who works a couple part time jobs, one at the fire station to answer calls after bombs from Hitler go off on the city. She gets a third job at a newspaper in hopes of it being as a wartime journalist, but she is disappointed when it is to help out a Mrs Bird who writes an advice column to people who send in letters.

This is also a story of friendship, and you get a good feel for what everyday life was like for the Brits in the city during WWII.

This was just an ok read for me, I found myself starting to skim through several areas of the book.

Thank you to Netgalley and Simon and Schuster for the eGalley!

Tammy says

A fizzy, frothy little novel that takes place in London during WWII. That is, it's frivolous until it isn't. With bombings occurring nightly there is bound to be sadness and tears. The main character, Emmeline, is a shoe-in for Honeysuckle Weeks as Samantha Stewart in Foyle's War. She has spunk to spare. Emmy lands a job and behaves in ways that are less than ethical despite her intention to be helpful. Filled with Britishisms of the 1940's, I could have Done Without the capitalizations which I found patronizing and rather annoying. Otherwise this is humorous and enjoyable summer reading
