

Emily Usher

Writer - fiction

Emily Usher is an author and award-winning short story writer, originally from West Yorkshire. She gained a 1st Class BA Honours Degree in Media and Performing Arts at the University of Salford and went on to live in Sheffield and London before relocating to Australia. Emily also works as a freelance writer specialising in the not-for-profit sector, and teaches creative writing in prisons and secure centres. Her debut novel, *WILD GROUND*, will be published by Serpent's Tail (UK) and Penguin Random House (USA) in May 2024.



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Publications

Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
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WILD GROUND

2024

Serpent's Tail,
Profile (UK) and
Random House,
PRH (US)

There were parts that were bliss, there were parts that were full and faultless and laden with joy. The way everything Danny and I did, everything we felt, we did, we felt together. The way we loved and loved and loved each other. From the beginning, it has always been Neef and her mother, Chrissy—troubled, beautiful, at the mercy of addiction and a revolving door of bad relationships. When Neef turns twelve, they move from inner-city Leeds to a small Yorkshire town to follow Chrissy's much-older boyfriend, who runs the local pub. But for Neef, perhaps it's also a chance to start over. On her first day in her new home, it becomes Neef and Danny, the boy who captures her attention planting flowers in the pub garden—and then, it is somehow always Danny. Danny is seen as an outsider by those around him; half Jamaican, he and his father are the only people of color in their community. Immediately drawn to each other, Neef and Danny form a friendship that gives way to the slow burn of romance as they grow up. Desperate to escape the confines of their world, Neef and Danny cling to each other throughout their adolescence, even as their relationship strains against the same forces that hold their families hostage: substance abuse, poverty, racism. For a while, though, it seems like it could be Neef and Danny forever.

But then, finally, it is just Neef: sober, living in London, trying to tell herself she never knew a boy called Danny, never loved him, never had him wrenched away. That is, until someone from those days comes seeking redemption, and she cannot pretend any longer.

Braiding together past and present, Wild Ground introduces us to a young woman both coming of age and coming to terms with herself. This tender and moving debut, at once heartbreaking and hopeful, is an aching love story that you will find impossible to forget.
