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CONTEMPORARY
SARA LAWRENCE

WIVES LIKE US
by Plum Sykes
(Bloomsbury £18.99, 368pp)

I RACED through this pleasingly Jilly Cooper-esque rural romp, gripped to the end. Set in The Bottoms, a glorious slice of Cotswold countryside comprising a cluster of small villages, the plot revolves around the lives and loves of the mega-rich, uber-stylish people who live there, complete with devoted staff.

After a row with her billionaire husband, Bryan, socialite Tata Hawkins moves out of their grand mansion and into a coach house on their vast estate.

This was a bad move, because it doesn't take him long to install a gorgeous young bikini designer. Tata's butler, Ian, comes up with a cunning plan to get Bryan back.

Meanwhile, two mean sisters are conspiring against her, and next door lives Selby Fairfax, a stunning American divorcee who inherited the biggest pile and who everyone is consequently desperate to get to know. It's stuffed with fascinating characters wearing fabulous clothes. I loved it.

I HOPE THIS FINDS YOU WELL
by Natalie Sue
(Borough £16.99, 352pp)

JOLENE has worked in the same office for eight years and doesn't like any of her colleagues. In fact, she finds them mostly stupid and annoying and does everything she can to minimise interactions and remain invisible. That is until she forgets to hide one of the rude footnotes she often adds to emails which detail the many ways in which the attitude, appearance and behaviour of her colleagues offends her.

Her IT access is supposed to be monitored after this slip-up, but instead Jolene suddenly starts receiving every email sent by anyone at the company.

Needless to say, she reads a lot of unsavoury, often cruel stuff about herself — and however much she says she hates her co-workers, it's pretty hurtful. Jolene also begins to find out private things about these people, and the more she discovers about their various personal difficulties, the more she thaws. Great fun.

THE SECOND CHANCE
by Charlotte Butterfield
(Avon £9.99, 384pp)

WE MEET protagonist Nell when she is getting rid of all her possessions. She is selling everything because, 20 years ago, a clairvoyant told her the date of her death. Nell wouldn't have believed it were it not for the fact that a friend who went with her died on the exact date the psychic gave. Ever since, Nell has been wedded to her own expiry date, which is now in six days.

Nell writes a lot of brutally honest letters to loved ones and exes, believing she won't be around to deal with the fallout. She spends all her money and checks into an expensive hotel, waiting for the inevitable. Nell wakes up the next day, of course, very much alive and now in a huge mess.

It's brilliant on facing problems head on and embracing everything life has to offer, including the scary parts.

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