



Ollie Always

John Wiltshire

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Named after the main character in his mother's infamous Oliver novels, Ollie's been fighting his fictional namesake his whole life. It's a battle for identity he is slowly and inevitably losing. Ex-army PTI Tom knows all about battles—the real ones that break soldiers. When he volunteers to help with the Oliver situation, Ollie hears more in the offer than Tom apparently intends, for Tom quickly informs Ollie that he's married. Which is absolutely fine, because Ollie isn't gay—that's Oliver. Tom and Ollie discover fairly swiftly that there is often a very fine dividing line between fact and fiction.

Ollie Always Details

Date : Published January 15th 2016 by MLR Press
ISBN : 9781608209996
Author : John Wiltshire
Format : ebook 217 pages
Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Contemporary, Lgbt

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From Reader Review Ollie Always for online ebook

♣ Irish Smurfétté ♣ says

4.5 wonderful beautiful unique stars on Prism Book Alliance®

Ollie. Always. And Tom. With tea and shortbread biscuits. These two, their personalities erected brick by brick, with humor, and pasts and many other things that intrigued me, all made me want to get to know them. Mission accomplished in getting me interested in this story from page one.

Despite both the main characters holding things close to their respective vests, I felt the heart of this story, right there out in the open, ready to be experienced, willing to share itself. The cool thing about this, despite the obvious, is that the depth of characterization was also held at a distance, slowly but surely revealed as the story began to unfurl. There was so much more going on here than initially indicated. It got me energized.

Ollie is living life from a very painful place as this story opens and, based upon what we learn, it's not a surprise and it informs a lot of his decisions, as well as explaining his way of thinking. He's endured, suffered, and survived a lot in his 25 years on this planet, and I understood the coping mechanisms he'd put in place to handle life. (~more on this later) These two lines efficiently describe his state of mind, much better than I just did.

Ollie had been coming here during the long school holidays since he'd started at his prep school, so if he'd wanted to, he could have thought of it as home. Nowhere was home, so he didn't.

The "here" is New Zealand, and prep school was a number of years ago but that experience shaped much of his emotional state of mind from an early age. On the outside Ollie appears to be living life on his own terms. On the inside, that's not the case. Tom might be the first person to be seeing this truth of Ollie's. *This* truth is a constant connection maintained throughout the story, even in the worst moments. And I am fortunate to have gotten the chance to witness this journey of theirs as they try to work through it all

As usual, Wiltshire incorporates a twist or ten in this story like he's done in many other of his books I've read. The first one is rather a doozy, opening many doors, to the past, to the future, and to the possibilities that might exist. The scope of my comprehension of this story expanded and left me pondering many a 'what if?'. These two people were going to make each other work for this potential friendship (and more? I wasn't at all sure) and their truths. It looked like they were going to discover that neither of them had adequate defenses against each one's ability to break through to the other.

I could have highlighted all of chapter nine. Just to give you an idea of how many tendrils are swirling around beneath the surface nearly the entire way through this book. Jussayin'.

~ here's the more: practically unbeknownst to himself, Ollie is wide open for love, for connection, for exploration and emotional bravery, and he's been searching for that unconditional consideration that is for *him*, not a character in a book that is a poor reflection of what others see in Ollie. Further, he and Tom have all of this in common, but originating from a completely different life as lived so far. How do I know this? Because of Wiltshire and his fabulosity with the emotional twisty turns that made my mouth drop open and my heart leap into the stratosphere.

There are some scenes that were muddy in their structure and intention, feeling underdeveloped or uncertain

in their purpose. There were also some instances where it almost felt like I was getting Tom's point of view, his feelings about whatever was going on, which isn't really possible since this story is told as Ollie's experience, alongside his footsteps, his demons and revelations. I think it came down to odd sentence structure, causing a head tilt here and there.

But listen, this story. ~ *takes a deep breath* ~ it got me. It's gutwrenchingly real with passages that felt almost dreamlike, ethereal while delivering undeniably earthbound emotional punches. Ya know, right to that gut. No matter any stumbling blocks along the way, this is unmistakable Wiltshire storytelling with the surprises, the depth of emotion (I know, I keep using this word, but there is a lot of it in this book), the connections that come barreling around their corners and knocked me over, performing literary 360's like a pro thrasher. I love when I have to work for my stories and to understand the characters. I don't like being spoonfed and Wiltshire doesn't engage in such tomfoolery.

He gives us gems like this:

He hadn't had to return, but he'd wanted to. Being brave, he'd discovered, wasn't all about looking forward and facing challenges head on. It was also about checking back and making sure that those behind you fared well too. Never leave stragglers. Never cause collateral damage. He needed to finish with New Zealand properly and bury the ghosts of his abortive attempt to find a world big enough to escape cowardice. No world that big would ever exist.

Letmejusttellyou, not long after this thought process of Ollie's, I experienced one of the swooniest swoony swoon worthy lines of prose I've ever read. Ever. I actually felt a bit lightheaded due to the lack of oxygen from the swoonage. Wiltshire, he's a romantic! My proof is this book. I mean, before I read **the** line, which I know you'll know which one I mean when you read this book, I was going to say this story isn't a romance. But it is. It's just not conventional. What I'm really saying here is this is (unfortunately) unconventional for the literary world but couldn't be more tried and true for the real world: love is messy, the past providing companionship into any new encounter, any new relationship, working hard to try and protect the heart, attempting to deny a starting chance. This is the journey on which Ollie and Tom find themselves.

Ok, I could keep going on and on and on. I need a book club for this one. Book club anyone?

I wana talk about the stuff and the things, all the things, and the title, and the omg and...

ETA: March 2016 Recommended Read on PBA

Bev says

4.5 stars from me, a lovely slow-burn romance between two guys who both deserved more from life.

Ollie, the main character and from whose POV the story was told, suffered from being his mother's muse for her pornographic series of gay books..even though there was a chance he possibly wasn't gay. Oliver Fitzroy, the slutty main character, was always better than Ollie at everything, and needless to say, Ollie had an inferiority complex the size of a house cos everyone thought the books were based on him. When staying at his mother's house on New Zealand's South Island, ostensibly to write a book, Ollie notices a good looking guy running past the house (which is in the middle of nowhere) every day,

decides to ambush him and get to know him better. Little does he realise that he already knows the guy from way back when, and life will start to become far more complicated.

If I have a teeny, tiny criticism of the story, it's that I think Tom could have been 'fleshed out' a little more. I loved Radulf's nemesis, hated the mother although she apparently did everything she did cos she loved her son and Ollie's ideas for his stories were spectacular, and guess what...a John Wiltshire story with hardly *any* sex!! I WILL make it to NZ one of these years...congrats John.

Katie says

I don't have a problem saying I was hesitant about reading this book. John Wiltshire is a new-to-me author, and that's always a tiny bit nerve-wracking. Don't get me wrong. I LOVE finding an author I've never read and enjoying their work. But, it's always a crapshoot. And it makes me nervous.

This? My mind is bent. It has been twisted into new and--what I thought--impossible shapes by this story.

So, Ollie/Oliver/Ollie Always is a thoroughly lost soul with too much privilege to see a clear path (rich, trust-fund kid, over educated, never had to work, etc., etc., and etc.).

His mother reads as a sociopath the likes of Mommy Dearest without the *no more wire hangers* incident.

But she invoked a different concept of the closet for me in this book....

Ready?

Ollie's denial of being gay because it's what his mother wants him to be.

One more time. Lemme rearrange the words and change them up a little. We'll see if that helps.

His mother wants him to be gay; therefore he feels he must rail against it and simmer away in denial and self-loathing.

Well, if that ain't a newfangled twist in Romance Land...

Mommy Dearest shapes Ollie's world by a successful career of writing a series of books based on a fictional character of the same name. Their lives are so parallel the real Ollie has a hard time knowing what's real and admitting/owning who he really is.

Which came first, the chicken or the egg? Real Ollie, or fictional Oliver. Who did what? Which memories are true? Which ones belong to fake Oliver?

What is pure fiction versus engineered reality versus authentic reality?

How does a person figure out who they are in this world with that kind of Truman Show bullshit?

It doesn't help that mother's elitist acolytes are just as indulgent to her whims and so absorbed with keeping their noses firmly planted up her arse they can't be bothered to know the real Ollie.

Kiss, kiss. A treat, as always, to see you darling.

It also doesn't help that mother's books are so popular that nearly everyone Ollie meets seems to know him. Oliver. The fiction one.

And how many times do you have to hear a thing before it becomes your reality?

See?

MIND. BENT.

Tom, the love-interest. I liked him perfectly well and can't think of a better counter-point to the utterly lost Ollie.

But brew another cuppa tea and have another biscuit because Tom's got a past and secrets, too. Oh yeah, he does.

My only slightly mild grumble is that it felt as though these guys fell into their *thing* way too quickly...a matter of days, to be precise. Then there was so much of the back and forth with the denials, supplication, and miscommunication, then a long stretch of time where they were apart.

Things happen and the truth reshapes during their separation. Time marches on, waits for no man, and all that jazz.

But! I can't really complain about that a whole lot. There were twists and turns I didn't see coming that did a fine job of broadening my understanding of how all of these pieces were coming together.

This was not an easy happily ever after for these heroes.

And that's the kind of story that gives me immense satisfaction.

The writing was fluid and sublime with dashes of British humor that crept up with perfect timing, garnering chuckles that felt inappropriate and cleansing at the same time. I've got scads of passages highlighted simply because they were amusing.

Conclusion: I enjoyed this, far more than I thought going in. A definite win.

Also posted on BackPorchReader.com.

Leanne says

I practically inhaled this book.

If it hadn't been for pesky work today I would have read it in one sitting.

Ollie, dear. I loved you to bits you complicated, wounded, funny, beautiful soul. So glad you got your HEA.

I dunno. I'm all out of words.
Wiltshire's words are so so good, though.

Highly recommended.

Ulysses Dietz says

Ollie Always
By John Wiltshire
MLR Press, 2016
Cover by Molly Wright
ISBN: 978-1-60820-999-6
Four stars

Wiltshire writes such interesting, offbeat stories. He pushes the romance genre to its edge, sometimes beyond my own personal comfort zone – he's familiar with the kind of gay men I've spent most of my life avoiding. But he also presents you with challenges in his books: you have to learn to love these folks even though you want to despise them. "Ollie Always" is also filled with a kind of wry, dark humor that gives it a sense of being a stage play, or possibly a television series. There are twists and turns and little, pointed surprises that keep you on edge. Wiltshire writes romance, but it's not easy romance.

Ollie Fitzroy is a victim of his mother's success. Writing as Ronnie Fitzroy, she has made untold millions, pretty much guaranteeing that her son would never want for anything; except, of course, for any sense of self-identity other than through his frankly creepy avatar in her Oliver novels. Tom Collins, on the other hand, has never had anything at all, except for the army, and for that reason his sense of self is as badly stunted as Ollie's. Both men deny that they're gay, each for his own reason. Ollie does so in defiance of his mother, who invented Oliver before Ollie was born; Tom simply has no idea of what love is, and is simply lost.

Set for the most part in New Zealand, Wiltshire's narrative is woven more tightly than it feels. He paints a vivid sense of place, giving the reader cinematic images of New Zealand's beauty, while also making clear its profound physical isolation from the rest of the world. Although the author lives in New Zealand, he is not a native, and he seems to use the locality as a metaphor for both Ollie and Tom's emotional dislocation.

One of the biggest surprises in the book is that the bad guys aren't, in the end, as bad as one thinks. The corollary lesson in Wiltshire's tale is that if you hide from the world you'll never come to understand its complexities. Each of us bears the burden of engaging the world if we hope to survive in it.

Nerea says

Oh my! A total melodrama!
Ollie life going down step by step!

This book is a rollercoaster!!

Fun , angst , romantic , decadent , exiting , sad, then fun again and go on...

I hate Ollie's mother! Seriously she's totally crazy :(and made Ollie's life a nightmare!! And then I need to believe she made all for him? Oh gosh NO!! All the books issues? Sick!

I'm happy at least that we have a HEA for Ollie! Poor boy :”(

Alison says

This is a gorgeous book and I loved it. I've loved everything I've read by John Wiltshire. It's an unconventional love story (in that lovely John Wiltshire way) and an emotional rollercoaster ride. This book runs the gamut, feeling-wise--it's cheerful, funny, horrific, heartwarming, heartbreaking, and filled with both profound joy and the deepest misery. I was looking forward to this one partly because it takes place in New Zealand, which is where both I and John Wiltshire live. I was delighted by the vivid and affectionate portrayal of this country, and I found that even the many little digs were done in a fond and playful way. The physical setting is almost another character in itself and plays a big role. This story is beautifully written and the writing is smart and evocative and packs an emotional punch. The characters are full of depth and are so well-developed and complex and flawed--they're loveable, though maybe not always likeable initially. This is a romantic, wonderfully funny, heartwarming story that's full of real-ness and surprises and is very moving and fairly dark at times. It's maybe more of a bildungsroman-type novel than a romance, though it has a gorgeous love story at its heart. I enjoyed reading this so much. It's a satisfying story and a real treat. Oh, and because it's a John Wiltshire book, there is a very charming dog.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

3.5 stars, rounded up for making me cry in a good way

Ollie Always was my first experience with John Wiltshire but I guarantee you that it won't be my last.

This book really stood out among other books in the M/M genre. First of all, **the writing was beautiful**, just dreamily romantic and very atmospheric. I was right there with these guys in the New Zealand countryside, and I got right into the zone with this story.

My 3.5 stars is pretty deceptive because this book was something special. Though the overall tone was serious and angsty, it had some really funny parts and some great dialogue between the two MCs. It was an **interesting mix of romance and literature, with a plot line that I found to be extremely well conceived.**

The first part of the story, until about 60%, actually, was a solid 3-stars. Though the writing was flowing and lovely, I found the pace to be a bit off and Ollie's whole "I'm attracted to guys but not gay" thing to be confusing. I still adored the concept of the plot-line, but I found that my mind wandering a bit and I wasn't sure where the story would lead.

Now, maybe I'm just not the most perceptive person, but I found this book to be anything but predictable. **From 60% to about 80%, I was riveted and near crying at all times.** I actually read that section while I was at the gym, and I spent that time exercising and wiping tears off my face like a crazy person. That part of the book was 5-stars for me. It was exciting, uplifting, heart-breaking... everything.

After the high of that part of the story, the ending just seemed to peter out a bit. I was happy to see the progress of Ollie and Tom, but it grew a little long-winded, IMO.

I found this book to be such an **interesting character study**. I could spend ages just thinking about the relationship between Ollie and his mother, or Tom and his coping mechanisms. The characters were really well done and very multifaceted.

For those reader who love sex-on-page, don't look to this story. While sex acts are alluded to, they are described more in the style as if this book was a non-romance fiction that just happened to have a short sex scene: the details are glossed over, and what is included is mostly referred to in metaphors.

Also, for those of you afraid from the blurb, this book had **no cheating**, just an FYI.

Ollie Always was a beautiful, complicated story about two men finding themselves and making a lot of mistakes along the way. I think it was a very worthwhile read, and it put John Wiltshire on my to-watch list.

Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

Kaje Harper says

It's hard to come up with a new, never-used backstory that can carry both humor and angst. This one is an imaginative success, as Ollie's problems arise from his mother's writing career. He has spent his life dealing with a mother who has a hard time separating life from fiction, and who loves her fictional creation as much as her flesh-and-blood son. It's not just the fact that she named Ollie after the sexually-precocious boy in her books, but that she keeps pulling his life into that fictional world, combining him and his namesake, while keeping him at emotional arm's length. Her attention is definitely on fictional Oliver. She would say she loves Ollie, but she has very little idea of who he is, separate from the character she has created on the page.

Ollie has run to New Zealand, ostensibly to write his own book, but really to escape the wreck of his young life, and the enormous shadow Oliver casts. Book Oliver is beautiful and experienced, seductive, witty, brilliant, and gay. Ollie would prefer no points of resemblance, but he can't avoid his good looks, and he's having to dive deep into denial to avoid the gay. When he sees a handsome stranger jogging by every day, his interest is intense, but so is his avoidance. As a result, their meeting is the beginning of a messy, frustrating, and fitful friendship full of half-truths. Some of which would make a cat laugh, and others of which could just make a reader cry.

For me, the humor and emotion are uneasy bedfellows in this story. There's great atmosphere and language, and interesting if somewhat polarized characters, but I was tugged in different ways by the moments of real angst, and the bursts of darkish situational comedy. Without settling into either mode, I was left with admiration for the author's imagination, but felt a bit distanced from the story. But then, I'm not a huge fan of

romcom, so I was left wishing that the guys' emotions weren't sidetracked by more slapstick moments. Still, an enjoyable read with skilled storytelling and a vivid sense of the New Zealand location.

A.B. Gayle says

I had heard that a lot of this book drew on the author's own experiences, so at times I was distracted by wondering which bits were autobiographical and which just drew on thoughts and experiences.

In the end, I relaxed and took the story as it came. And there were many things to like about this book. First off, the scene where he manipulated the "meeting" was hilarious as were the books titles that followed.

Then there is Ollie. I felt for him trying to find a place for himself given the overwhelming (even if loving) presence of his mother. It's like I imagine many children of celebrities feel and why so many of them have troubles finding their own paths in life.

I loved how Ollie eventually found a way to come to terms with his Oliver namesake via Freddy.

And of course there is a dog. And a loveable one at that. I loved the way he leaned on people and how Ollie unabashedly used him to further his goals.

Don't expect lots of hot sex scenes, this is more two men finding a way to be together. Tom/Skint is a proud man. I loved the scene in the shearing shed he'd been living in, and the way Ollie reacted.

There were definitely echoes of Nik in Ollie and Ben in Tom, but these were more real and hence, more fragile versions.

This was the narrator discovering that "Once the *me, me, me* of life had ceased, hearing other people's pain became a great deal easier."

There were lovely digs at the reality of living in picture postcard New Zealand's remoteness. The temperature of the water, the cost of living.

I highlighted a couple of sections, but will probably see more when I re-read it as it is definitely worth it.

Tom did release Ollie's hand then, but only apparently to pat the dog. Ollie began to see a pattern here-stressful question...dog. He foresaw Bartleby being very well patted for a few more days and nights yet.

And this: As he says "He hadn't proved himself entirely reliable since he'd met Tom over shit, and parted over vomit."

It's lovely to have another stand alone from John even though I am waiting with bated breath for Book 8 of More Heat than the Sun.

This is not the gut wrenching high octane emotions or dramatic events. This is life. I absolutely loved the way Ollie fantasized about a "rose-cottage, sugar-coated fantasy" where he could "Cook them both breakfast and slip into Tom's room, be welcomed into bed with a grumpy but secretly very-pleased-to-see-him pat of encouragement on the sheets to crawl in alongside Tom and they could sit there eating, perhaps reading the

papers..." OR... and you'll have to read it to discover the alternative.

And if JW is wondering what book to write next, those children's books sounded good. Kids books without the moral message or at least have it very well hidden. We need more books with heroes like Miles/Freddy. Raoul Dahl made a fortune with books bucking the "system" perhaps there is room for more. Or maybe we need a series of adventures with three legged Bartleby and his pedigree-in-disguise mutt partner. Gay dogs. Yep, I'd buy that!

Simon says

Great observational humour, the very best kind of humour IMHO.

The two stand alone novels that J.W. has penned to date are both similar in observational humour and both have an undercurrent of deep sadness, or is that just me and Ollie?

"Ollie had spent his formative years reading a great deal into a single word and a well-placed comma. But perhaps he'd read more into those author's choice of words than they had intended."?

Yes, like everyone else that has expressed their opinions on this novel, I laughed out loud at the lavatorial humour, "Scat for beginners" and "Adventures in Shit" but then the twist-to-the-tale and we learned of the years of adoration Tom had/had been suffering and I wanted to cry. In fact I wanted to cry several times through out this story for both main characters. How pleased was I that they got their HEA even though I was convinced until the very last minute that it was going Tits Up.

This is a "Home-is-where-the-heart-is" novel essentially.

There are some lovely humorous digs at the Gay/m/m genre through out this book; personally I can't wait to read about Frederick Wentworth doing it with James Benwick on the Cobb, and yes.....a lot of literature in this genre is "porn masquerading as art" this is especially true of Ronnie's novels which seem to be verging on paedophilia, and not in the style of "Death in Venice" I might add. (You'll have to read about Ronnie, she's just too bloody "gorgeous" a-multi-layered character, which becomes apparent at the end of the novel - not the shallow lesbian-in-Paris chic in Querrelle-style pants as we initially are led to believe) - Hysterical! (I have a favourite Aunt who styles herself just like this).

Great story, great characters, great writing, I even got to use my on-line Kindle dictionary a couple of times.....always good to learn some new vocabulary).

I am still chuckling at the "he *liked* shortbread" and Ollie's fertile imagination "gagged and tied". Brilliant!

(A quick p.s. JW's novels always have the most tasteful and evocative covers).

Marte - Thunderella says

**** 4,5 stars ****

"What do I need to do to make you stay, Ollie?" (...)

"Tell me that you'll always be here if I do." (...)

"I think I've been telling you that since we met... Ollie-*Always*."

Ah, this was such a great book! Complex characters, slow build, twist and funny moments!

The book starts out one way and you kinda think where the story is going, but then Wiltshire does a number on me and surprises me, typical his Wiltshire Way, and makes the book even better than I imagined myself. I love that about Wiltshire!

Would have loved a more epic sweep you off your feet ending, but the way it ended felt more realistic. Not everything is a quick and easy fix. I'm so happy about how it all turned out.

Loved it!

Recommended!

Elena says

I wouldn't even know how to begin to review this book.

The only words that come to mind are original, unusual, surprising, dysfunctional and beautiful.

I thought I knew where the story was headed and I was right, but then it took me completely in another direction. Even if I didn't always like the MC(s), I kind of loved it and I'm sure I won't forget this book anytime soon.

Tess says

4.5 stars

This is much different from the author's other books, yet with a romance that was just as appealing to me.

This is mostly Ollie's story and he has his flaws. Ollie has struggled his whole life to separate and distance himself from his mother's literary creation, Oliver Fitzroy. He doesn't always know where Oliver ends and Ollie begins and neither does anyone else in his life, which has had a hugely damaging effect on him. This becomes clearer when one understands more about what happens in the Oliver Fitzroy stories. Believe me.

Enter Tom. Tom's a former soldier and personal trainer who grew up poor and in care. He's a flawed man as well, not above doing most anything for the permanence of a home. But yet ...

Both English ex-pats, they meet as neighbours in New Zealand and their relationship evolves as Tom agrees to train Ollie. But there are many twists and turns along the way and things aren't always as they seem. And then there's Ollie's mom. Yikes.

The romance had a very slow burn. Which is always my favourite. There is a lot of personal growth (on both sides) that needs to happen before these boys are ready for each other. Even though Ollie is 25, I feel like this

story is in many ways his coming of age story. He's got to come to terms with his past before moving on.

The setting itself - New Zealand - felt like its own character in this book. In my opinion, the author's love-hate relationship with New Zealand really stood out throughout. In fact, the whole story had a very personal feeling to it being that the author himself is a former soldier like Tom, a writer like Ollie and a English expatriot living in New Zealand. Of course he says that that's where the resemblance stops ...

Overall, a lovely romance with a touching story of personal growth. Although much different than his other books, the writing itself has a very John Wiltshire-feel so likely will still appeal to most of his fans.

Breann says

John Wiltshire continues to charm me with his beautiful writing and heart-stopping suspense.

Ollie was lost and struggling to find his own identity. He was named after the main protagonist in his mother's famous book series. Ollie's life and the life of the fictional Oliver often overlapped and it was messing with Ollie's sanity.

Then Tom came along. Tom who both hurt Ollie and saved him.

This is some sloooowww burn right here. Ollie refuses to admit he's gay, mostly because Oliver (from his mother's book) is gay. They're not the same person and Ollie tries to distance himself from the fictional character as much as possible. But that doesn't stop Ollie from enjoying the view and Tom's company. The first 60% or so is the building of Ollie and Tom's beautiful friendship, and I assumed I knew where things were headed.

But this is John Wiltshire, after all.

This isn't the same type of suspense that his other books have, but there are still twists and turns and new revelations on every page. Just when I thought things were on solid ground, I was hit with something new. Even in a slow-burn, contemporary romance, John Wiltshire knows how to keep his readers on their toes.

The suspense was emotional and left me hurting and raw for Ollie. I cried for him and was proud of him. And Tom. Oh, Tom was sweet. Even after what happened, I dare readers not to love him. His love for Ollie was a tangible thing.

I wish I could give this five stars, but the first half was so slow. It was hard to keep with it, but I'm so glad I did as the payoff was huge.

OLLIE ALWAYS is another winner from John Wiltshire and I have to say, I'm not surprised one bit.
