



# The Ballroom: A Novel

*Anna Hope*

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**The Ballroom: A Novel** Anna Hope

**A searing novel of forbidden love on the Yorkshire moors—“a British version of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*” (*The Times* U.K.)—from the author of the critically acclaimed debut *Wake***

England, 1911. At Sharston Asylum, men and women are separated by thick walls and barred windows. But on Friday nights, they are allowed to mingle in the asylum’s magnificent ballroom. From its balconies and high ceilings to its stained glass and gilded dome, the ballroom is a sanctuary. Onstage, the orchestra plays Strauss and Debussy while the patients twirl across the gleaming dance floor.

Amid this heady ambience, John Mulligan and Ella Fay first meet. John is a sure-footed dancer with a clouded, secretive face; Ella is as skittish as a colt, with her knobby knees and flushed cheeks. Despite their grim circumstances, the unlikely pair strikes up a tenuous courtship. During the week, he writes letters smuggled to her in secret, unaware that Ella cannot read. She enlists a friend to read them aloud and gains resolve from the force of John’s words, each sentence a stirring incantation. And, of course, there’s always the promise of the ballroom.

Then one of them receives an unexpected opportunity to leave Sharston for good. As Anna Hope’s powerful, bittersweet novel unfolds, John and Ella face an agonizing dilemma: whether to cling to familiar comforts or to confront a new world—living apart, yet forever changed.

## **Praise from the U.K. for *The Ballroom***

“A beautifully wrought novel, a tender, heartbreaking and insightful exploration of the longings that survive in the most inhospitable environments.”—*Sunday Express*

“*The Ballroom* has all the intensity and lyricism of [Anna] Hope’s debut, *Wake*. At its heart is a tender and absorbing love story.”—*Daily Mail*

“Compelling and masterful . . . Anna Hope has proven once again that she is a luminary in historical fiction. . . She delivers profound, poignant narratives that stir the emotions.”—*The Yorkshire Post*

“As with Hope’s highly acclaimed debut novel, *Wake*, the writing is elegant and insightful; she writes beautifully about human emotion, landscape and weather.”—*The Observer*

“A brilliantly moving mediation on what it means to be ‘insane’ in a cruel world . . . All the characters are vividly and sensitively drawn. . . Deeply moving.”—*The Irish Times*

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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#### **Larry Devries:**

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