



# BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

## June 2009

Publishers have inundated us with terrific new books we are happy to recommend. So hop into the hammock with one of the following selections and we guarantee a diverting break.

'The Beach Street Knitting Society and Yarn Club' by Gil McNeil is an Anglophile's dream. The recently widowed heroine relocates to coastal England from London with her two young sons in order to run her grandmother's knitting shop. Naturally such a major move precipitates all manner of confusion, with many opportunities for humorous interactions with old and new friends. The story line will appeal to romantics, knitters, mothers of young children and anyone who enjoys a good giggle. Jo Mackenzie's observations of her contemporaries are razor sharp and the touches of slapstick are perfect. Her two sons are a stitch.

'The Last Child' by John Hart is a gripping thriller. It takes place in North Carolina and follows the search of thirteen year old Johnny Emmeron for his twin sister Alyssa, who disappeared a year ago. Wise beyond his years, and deeply troubled by his broken family, Johnny enlists his best friend Jack in his quest. There are plenty of plot twists and ancillary characters who provide ample suspense and surprising kindnesses. There is an undercurrent of hope that is the parallel thread through a book which has violent and bleak elements. Hart deserves his growing reputation as a writer who knows how to develop characters and realistic dialogue.

'Starvation Lake' by Brian Gruley is a first novel rich in local color. The protagonist, Gus Carpenter, is the editor of a very small Michigan paper, and has reluctantly returned to the town where he grew up. He used to work in Detroit but is now resigned to reporting on town zoning board meetings and Little League tournaments. His youth hockey past is the basis for the unsolved mysteries that are resurrected, starting with the reappearance of the snowmobile that was involved in his coach's disappearance ten years ago. Packed with funny observations about the newspaper business, adult hockey and small town politics, it's a diverting read full of well realized characters harboring plenty of dark secrets.

'Little Bee' by Chris Cleave is my nominee for totally enthralling "Book of the Month". It is the beautifully written, heart wrenching tale of Little Bee, a Nigerian refugee in the UK whose life in Nigeria crossed paths with Sarah and Andrew O'Rourke in a horrific way that haunts all of them for the rest of their lives. The novel is narrated in alternate chapters by Little Bee and Sarah O'Rourke. The slow unraveling of the truth about their lives and what happened on that fateful day is both suspenseful and deeply moving. Cleave nails the details of trying to get through grief and horror and come out on the other side. His characters stay with you long after you have finished the book. Little Bee is especially memorable.

'The German Woman' by Paul Griner begins in the aftermath of WWI as the doctor and nurse team of Kate Zweig and her husband Horst struggle to survive in a series of military field hospitals during the precarious early days of the armistice. Eventually they are chased from the Eastern Front by Russian soldiers. The second part of the book takes place in London during the waning days of WWII. Here she meets Claus, a disillusioned spy who makes propaganda films by day. The descriptions of an exhausted London under V-1



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buzz bomb attacks are the realistic backdrop for the relationship that develops between these two veterans of the enormous conflict.

'Falling Cloudberry: A World of Family Recipes' by Tessa Kiros is a truly beautiful and charming cookbook with gorgeous photography. The author accesses her extended family's multi cultural backgrounds to produce recipes that have backgrounds in diverse cuisines such as Finland, Greece, Cyprus, South Africa and Italy. This is a very accessible cookbook but also perfect for those who love to "read" cookbooks, as it is also a culinary memoir. The champagne risotto is superb, and the Finnish meatballs are yummy. Have fun with this intriguing addition to the cookbook shelf.

Sheila Lukins of Silver Palate fame wrote a new cookbook called 'Ten' organized around ten recipes for each of her 32 favorite ingredients. It's a charming conceit that works really well because the recipes are great. The directions are clear and you won't need a specialty food mail order catalogue to get the ingredients. Take a fresh look at everything from chicken to Sunday suppers to mixed vegetable salads to fruit desserts and get inspired!

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