



Happy New Year to you all, and we wish you a happy and prosperous 2010.

-News-

Andrea Levy, who wrote *Small Island*, has a new book due out in February called *The Long Song*. The publisher Hachette Livre have asked if I would host an event for her in Matakana, and of course I said YES. I have hired the Paradiso theatre upstairs at Matakana Cinemas as I don't think I will have enough room in the shop and this way everyone will be more comfortable. Andrea will be with us on Tuesday 23rd March at 7pm. Tickets will be \$10 and we will take bookings. You can go online and check out Andrea's website. I'm very excited about this event and I know it will be a fascinating evening.

-Dates for your diary-

As above – Andrea Levy: Tuesday 23rd March 2010. Bookings necessary!

-Book Reviews-

***Dog On It* by Spencer Quinn** – A detective novel with a difference – the story is told from the perspective of Chet, a dog. His owner is a down-at-heel detective with a big heart. Chet knows some vital information about a missing girl, but keeps getting side-tracked by the smell of fast food, his doggy neighbour, and a new female dog in town. This is a fun but good read and anyone who has a dog will relate to Chet and his lovable antics. The first in a series, with the second due out in February.

***Burnt Shadows* by Kamila Shamsie** – This fabulous novel starts in 1945 Nagasaki when a young Japanese woman is witness to the horrors of the bomb. She travels to Delhi to find the family of her dead love, and finds a new life there. This story has plenty of history and politics, but focuses on the human stories that happen on this broad stage. This has been listed as one of The Listeners picks for best fiction for 2009. The author was on National Radio with Kim Hill in late 2009 and it was a fascinating interview.

***Dead Until Dark* by Charlaine Harris** – For those of you who have been watching *True Blood* on the telly, this is the first in the original series of Sookie Stackhouse novels. Whilst *Twilight* was the intro for teens to get hooked on vampire love and lust, this is the adult version. Sookie is a cocktail waitress in a small town in Louisiana. She plays "dumb" because she has a disability – which is to read minds and all is well until Bill moves to town. Bill is tall, dark and handsome, and a vampire. Young women start getting killed, and guess who's the main suspect? Sexy and fun read.

***The Left Hand Of God* by Paul Hoffman** – Young boys are being sold to The Sanctuary of the Redeemers where they are maltreated and trained for battle against the non-believers. Cale, one of the boys, is especially of interest to the Master of Battle. Cale and some friends manage to achieve the impossible, escape. But to where? And what is Cale's destiny? This is the first in a series, and it was a fabulous read that kept me hooked right to the end – can't wait for number two!

***Summertime* by J M Coetzee** – *Summertime* was shortlisted for the 2009 Man Booker and it is certainly a fantastic read. This is a novel about a young author called John Coetzee and it is told through a series of interviews and memories of a handful of people who knew him before he became famous. Very clever and the writing is of course beautiful.

***Consolation* by Anna Gavalda** – By the author of *Hunting and Gathering*, this is a dark and complex novel about Charles Balanda, who is forty-seven and a successful architect. He may seem to have it

all, but the reality is he has never gotten over his first love, Anouk, who was his best-friend's mother. When he hears about her death, his life starts to unravel. The back of the book says it best – "There is a man named Charles at the heart of Anna Gavalda's fourth book, but it is the luminous and wounded women who shape the story." Loved it.

***Notwithstanding* by Louis de Bernieres** – From the author of Captain Corelli's Mandolin, and Birds Without Wings comes a light-hearted and quirky novel about a small English village called Notwithstanding. This is a village of very unusual characters who all celebrate life, and this is a celebration of a time when people were allowed to be themselves, and when community counted for something. Fun and touching.

***The Children's Book* by A S Byatt** – Short-listed for the Booker last year – this book took me a little while to wrap my head around all the characters, but once I had that, I could not put it down! Set pre WWI this book revolves around one family and their friends and acquaintances. The family members became very familiar and when I finished it, I felt quite bereft.

***Cirque Du Freak: The Vampire's Assistant* by Darren Shan** – This is the first three adventures in The Saga Of Darren Shan and is coming soon to cinemas. Great teen boy read (having said that my eleven year old daughter just read it and loved it). Darren is an ordinary young boy who gets caught up in the bizarre after he and his best friend go to the Cirque Du Freak, which has all manner of bizarre circus performers from a woman who grows a beard, to a giant black spider called Madam Octa. When things go horribly wrong, Darren has to save his best friend's life. Great adventure stories.

***Ruined* by Paula Morris** – This teen novel is set in New Orleans where the NZ author lives. The lead character Rebecca has been sent to live there while her father is away on business. She is staying with her aunt who reads tarot cards, has to go to a posh school where she doesn't fit in, and ends up getting lost one night in Lafayette Cemetery. The young girl who helps her find her way becomes her only friend – but who is she and how come Rebecca is the only person who can see her? Excellent read – could not put it down!

***The Bride's Farewell* by Meg Rosoff** – Pell, daughter of a drunken preacher in rural England, flees by horseback on the morning of her wedding, accompanied by her mute younger brother. She is heading for Salisbury Fair, hoping to get a job – of course things don't run to plan and the story of what happens to her is beautifully written and a great read for teenage girls.

The holiday period has been another busy one for us. The weather has been superb and Matakana was the place to be again at New Years Eve as dance parties and concerts drew the crowds north. Sharleen spent some time up north camping with her family, and then spent ten days in Melbourne and was lucky enough to get to see some live tennis at the Australian Open. Sylvia has been working at the bookshop and Piece Gallery, and enjoying walking her dog in the mornings. I've been able to spend a week down at the bach, south of Raglan, with my family and our new puppy Jack. It was a week of lots of sleeping, reading, swimming and eating! Now, back to reality ...

Until next time

Tracey, Sharleen and Sylvia

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