



#### **-News-**

What a busy month! Sharleen, Sylvia and I went to an evening at St Cuthbert's listening to author Patrick Ness speaking about his teen books – *The Knife Of Never Letting Go*, and *The Ask And The Answer*. It was fascinating to hear about how and why he writes. Both of these teen books have been incredibly successful and we can't wait for the final book in the trilogy. *Monsters Of Men* will be out in May. We then had Andrea Levy come to Matakana to promote her new book, *The Long Song*. She had already had a busy day, with an interview with Katherine Ryan on Radio New Zealand, followed by a luncheon with some independent booksellers (of which I was one), an interview at the luncheon, then up to Matakana to speak at our event! Andrea was fascinating to listen to, and her reading from the book was brilliant. She was incredibly generous and honest in her answers to our questions and we have had so much positive feedback from everyone who came.

#### **-Book Reviews-**

***After You'd Gone* by Maggie O'Farrell** – Maggie O'Farrell has a new book coming soon, but I found this on the bookshelf and thought I'd try it before the new one arrives. For those of you who have read "*The Vanishing Act of Esme Lennox*", also by O'Farrell, you will understand how beautifully she writes. In this novel we learn about the life of Alice Raikes, a Scottish woman living in London. She has just had an accident and is in a coma. As Alice slides between different levels of consciousness, she relives moments from her life, both recent and long past. I could not put this book down and hid in the bathroom so I could finish it in peace! Absolutely beautiful book – highly recommended.

***A Gate At The Stairs* by Lorrie Moore** – This book has been long-listed for the Orange Prize. Twenty-year-old Tassie, a farmer's daughter from the Midwest, has escaped small-town to experience university life. Tassie is lacking self-confidence and is not sure where she fits in. She gets a part-time job as a nanny to an unusual couple who are adopting a mixed race child. All is not as it first seems with this new family and Tassie is increasingly drawn to their dramas. Meanwhile, she is also feeling alienated from friends and family at home. A very powerful look at modern America.

***Rupture* by Simon Lelic** – There have been books about high-school shootings, where a student loses the plot, or exacts some sort of revenge against fellow-students. This one is about a teacher who shoots three pupils and a colleague before turning the gun on himself. Lucia, the young policewoman who is expected to wrap up the investigation quickly, realizes things are not as clear-cut as everyone would like to believe. What drove a mild-mannered, diffident teacher to commit such a despicable crime? Is Lucia discovering some parallels between her life and that of the teacher? Fascinating reading.

***Blood Men* by Paul Cleave** – "Edward Hunter is a family man with a beautiful wife and daughter, a great job, a bright future and a very dark past." Things start to go very badly for Edward after his wife is taken in a bank robbery, and the more his life unravels, the more you find out about his past – particularly his father who is in jail for life. If you have enjoyed some of the fantastic thrillers that have been released lately, you will enjoy this book. Paul Cleave is a New Zealander who lives in Christchurch, and has set this new book in the city he obviously knows so well. His books are very popular in Europe and I suspect it won't be long before he breaks into the American market. He also very cleverly slips characters in from his previous novels. High body count, but clever and engrossing – you won't be able to put this down!

**Containment by Vanda Symon** – Wow! I have finally discovered why thrillers are so popular. Customers have introduced me to the author William Boyd, and since then I have found another couple of authors who are both from New Zealand. One is Paul Cleave, who is very popular in Europe. Tracey has reviewed this. The other is New Zealand author Vanda Symon, whom I accidentally discovered while reading the back of the book. This new story is set in Aramoana, my hometown, so of course, I was immediately interested. A container ship has run aground and shipping containers are washed up on the beach. Word gets out and the looting begins. The story takes a turn when a skull and then a dead body are found among a pile of garments. Sam Shepherd is the detective in this and the previous two novels. She must find out who the body is, and if it was murder. The investigation leads to quirky antique shops around Port Chalmers and Dunedin, and grotty university student flats. It is a great mystery that keeps you on edge and guessing right to the end. This is a perfect curl-up on the sofa read which will be hard to put down. (Sharleen)

**Lunch In Paris by Elizabeth Bard** – As the book says, this is a delicious love story, with recipes woven through the pages at the end of each chapter. For those of you who enjoyed Eat, Pray, Love, you will enjoy this read. It is part love story and part cook book, where Elizabeth finds that learning to cook and building a new life as a stranger in a foreign country – in fact, the world's most romantic city – certainly has its highs and lows. An easy read which leaves you warm and fuzzy. For me, now that I've done the Italian trip, a French trip could be next on the agenda! (Sharleen)

**Buen Camino – Beyond The Journey by Thea Hughes** – For anyone who has ever wanted to walk the Camino de Santiago – this is the novel for you! This is the story of Ana, who at the age of thirty decides to walk across Spain on the 764 kilometre medieval pilgrimage trail. She is hoping it will be a life-changing quest to end her traumatic childhood pain. She bravely starts out on her own but is befriended by an older man in the early stages of Alzheimers. Richard and Ana form an unlikely friendship. It seems every person they meet on the walk has not only a physical journey but also an emotional one where some healing occurs. It may be as simple as learning to put one foot in front of the other, or like Ana, the healing can be more profound. I really enjoyed reading about how this pilgrimage affects people, as well as learning about Spain's colourful history, myths, legends and stunning countryside. I am wondering now how I could extend my next OE to include *both* France and Spain. (Sharleen)

**The Unnamed by Joshua Ferris** – This book totally took me by surprise. The main character, Tim Farnsworth, is happily married, loves his position as a partner in a successful law firm, and all seems great until we learn that Tim has a compulsion to walk ... think along the lines of Forrest Gump. He has had this compulsion before and has unsuccessfully tried to find the cause. In this touching novel, we realise Tim's compulsion has consequences for his wife and daughter as well. This is a beautifully written novel about one man's struggle with himself.

**Guardian Of The Dead by Karen Healey** – Wow! This teen fantasy novel is a stunning take on Maori legends. It tells the story of a teenage girl Ellie who has never considered herself worth noticing. Her parents are away overseas and she has been sent to a boarding school in Christchurch. Ellie doesn't have many friends, but then something happens which drastically changes her perception of herself and the way she sees the world she lives in. Set in both Christchurch and Napier, this is a great way to introduce teens to Maori legends. Loved it!

**March has been another busy month. Some great new books have come in and we can't wait to read them. We have also been offered the chance to do another movie preview – the second in the Millenium Trilogy. The Girl Who Played With Fire is due out in early August, and we will be doing a preview in late July. Watch this space! Hope you all have a fun Easter weekend and for those of you with children or grandchildren, I hope you survive the holidays with sanity intact!**

**Tracey, Sharleen and Sylvia**

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