



-News-

Some days it feels like summer might be coming, and then other days I'm not so sure. Christmas cards have arrived in, and as many of you know, I do have a major weakness for beautiful cards! Lots of cookbooks, interior design, architecture and gardening books are coming in as well as some very quirky titles such as "The Grumpy Old Git's Guide To Life", "Hipster Puppies", "The Gloomster", and "Putting A Ring On It"! I have taken down the All Black flags (it's a bit like Christmas decorations – how long should one leave them up?) but I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed the RWC and can only apologise to all the South African and Australian customers if I was overly zealous! Six weeks to go until Christmas and the shop is really starting to look full. Hope you enjoy these latest reviews.

-Book Reviews-

***In The Sea There Are Crocodiles* by Fabio Geda** – Italian novelist Fabio Geda tells the true story of Enaiatollah's five-year journey from Afghanistan to Italy. What makes this tale extraordinary is that Enaiatollah was ten when his mother abandoned him on the border of Pakistan, in the hope that he would be able to make a better life for himself. During his five-year ordeal he will travel through Iran, Turkey and Greece, hide from the police, work illegally, sleep in parks, and generally have to keep his wits about him and pray for good luck. There are times when strangers will offer help, but generally Enaiatollah was on his own with very little idea of where he was going, but knowing that life had to be better elsewhere. This book is both heartbreaking and heart-warming, and doubly so because it is true. (Tracey)

***Hotel On The Corner Of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford** – This is a bitter-sweet story about age old conflicts between father and son, conflicting loyalties and timeless devotion. It gives us a glimpse of the cruel damage done to individuals and families during a war. Henry, a 12 year old Chinese American school boy, forges a bond of friendship and innocent love with Keiko, a Japanese American girl, during the second world war. Their secret friendship transcended the prejudices of their Old World ancestors. After Keiko and her family were evacuated to the internment camps she and Henry could only hope and promise that they would one day reunite. Forty years later Henry goes on a search that will take him on a journey to revisit the sacrifices he made for family, love and his country. I loved this moving story of love lost and perhaps once again found. Debbie

***The Language Of Flowers* by Vanessa Diffenbaugh** – In a by-gone era, the Victorian language of flowers was used by people to convey what words could not. From declarations of love, confessions of betrayal, to guilt, grief, rejection and reconciliation, these are some of the feelings flowers expressed. For Victoria Jones, alone after a dysfunctional childhood in foster care, it is her only way of expressing a legacy of grief, rejection and guilt. Believing she is damaged beyond hope and redemption, unable to trust anybody, she retreats into a world of flowers, connecting only with the world through message-laden bouquets. But when a stranger in the flower markets responds in kind to her, Victoria must decide if she can accept the possibility of friendship and love. This is a heartbreaking novel, full of opportunities and betrayal and the hope that love will prevail. Life does give second chances, but can Victoria grab hers? I enjoyed learning about the secret language of flowers and my heart was with Victoria every step along her journey, urging her to reach out and embrace life. I really enjoyed this book. Debbie

***The Story Of Beautiful Girl* by Rachel Simon** – 1950's America and we have three main characters. Linnie – a young white woman with a developmental disability. Homan – an African American deaf

man who can only communicate using homemade sign language. Martha – a widowed retired schoolteacher who relies on her ex-pupils for companionship. The novel starts with Lynnie and Homan escaping the institute where they are housed, and arriving at Martha's house during a bad storm. They are wet and desperate for help, as Lynnie has just had a baby. The authorities catch up with them very quickly, but Homan manages to escape and before Lynnie is taken back to the Institute for the Feeble-minded (!) she manages to ask Martha to hide her baby. This beautiful story weaves together the three separate lives of Lynnie, Homan and Martha – three lives needing to reconnect against all the odds. Highly recommended. (Tracey)

***Obedience* by Jacqueline Yallop** – A convent in rural France is closing and there remain only three elderly nuns. When Sister Bernard joined seventy years earlier, the convent was a lively cloister but now the three nuns are having to pack away their meagre possessions and prepare to move in to a nursing home. However, the convent has been more than a spiritual home for Sister Bernard. It has also sheltered her from the locals after she was involved with a young Nazi soldier. *Obedience* is a story of betrayal and divided loyalties. How can a woman choose between two equally strong passions – her love for Christ and her physical desire for a young German far from home. (Tracey)

***Love At The End Of The Road* by Rae Roadley** – This is the candid and charming story of the meeting of two people and the gradual intertwining of their lives. As well, it is a very valuable social history of the district around Batley, where the Roadley family lives and has farmed for the best part of a century. Rae Newman, back from overseas and tired of big city life, takes a job as a journalist in her hometown of Whangarei. In order to build a social life for herself, she joins a dating service, and meets Rex Roadley, a farmer from the Kaipara. They 'click', and a friendship begins. But while Rae and Rex are the main characters in this drama, there are many others, not least the imposing historic homestead of Batley itself. I wholeheartedly recommend this book, such an interesting account in so many ways. The publishers, Penguin Books, obviously feel the same, and have made a superb job of the production and presentation, and have included a lavish number of photos that add to the value as a lively and amusing social history. (Sylvia)

***The Monsoon Bride* by Michelle Aung Thin** - This is the story about Winsome, a mixed race girl brought up in a convent. An arranged marriage to a stranger called Desmond takes her to live in Rangoon, which she regards as the Great Metropolis. She sees possibility in her uncertain destiny as she is on the brink of her adult life. Rangoon, a city cradled in the arms of rivers, about to be torn apart in the struggle between its ancient owners and the new masters. It will seduce her, possess her senses and change utterly her notion of what love is. When she meets Jonathon, when the monsoon season arrives, she begins to find out what kind of woman she is. This story evokes a viscerally sensual world and a passionate journey into the consequences of love. I enjoyed this novel. (Debbie)

***The Sweet Second Life of Darrell Kincaid* by Catherine Robertson** - For twenty-one months and three days Darrell Kincaid has been struggling to come to terms with the death of her beloved husband Tom. Then she has a revelation – it's not the ending that really matters but what comes next? When Tom died she realised she lost more than the man she loved, she lost her own 'happy ever after'. The life she expected to live has gone, vanished in a puff of fickle, unfair smoke! Darrell knows she has a choice, to stay in New Zealand and live half a life, or she can leave in search of something, perhaps someone else. So she decides to move to London and sets out to live the second sweet life she deserves. This is a light hearted and funny story with a motley group of characters, gypsies and hunky men. Loved this quick light read, great for a holiday read. (Debbie)

Tracey, Debbie, Sharleen, Sylvia, and Gillian

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