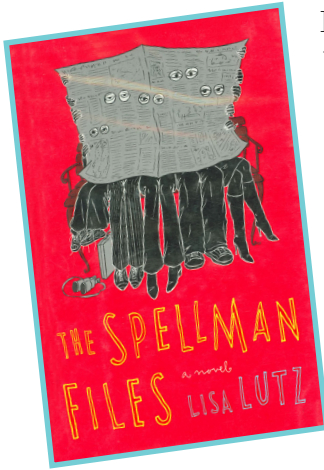


## THE SPELLMAN FILES by LISA LUTZ

SIMON & SCHUSTER, 2007

The Spellmans are private investigators. This first became the family vocation when Albert Spellman, former police inspector, saw his wife Olivia spying on her sister's cheating fiancé. Many years and three children later, Spellman Investigations is a success.



Daughter Isabel Spellman is sick of being tailed and snooped on by her parents and sister. She is tired of having her boyfriends scrutinized. To make matters worse, she has found a normal guy she wants to date. She first spotted Daniel in the midst of an investigation and immediately goes about pretending she is a teacher. Her abrupt wardrobe change and suspicious behavior soon leads to an investigation and to Daniel's eventual enlightenment. Now Isabel wants out. Her parents will let her go on one condition; she must solve one last case.

Andrew Snow disappeared in 1995 and after all leads dried up, the case was dropped after a couple of years. If Isabel can find any new information, she is free. However, the case is much more complicated than she first imagined. When her sister Rae disappears, she begins to believe someone is going to sinister lengths to end her search.

For an enjoyable and humorous read, pick up this fast-paced book.

## THE KNITTING CIRCLE by ANN HOOD

NORTON, 2007

Mary Baxter has just lost her five-year-old daughter to a sudden case of meningitis. Reeling at the loss, she cannot focus on her job as a magazine writer and finds a gulf widening between her and her husband as he struggles with his own overwhelming grief. As Mary faces wrenching emotional paralysis, her estranged mother suggests that she take up knitting as therapy.

Mary joins a knitting circle at a local shop in an effort to fill her empty hours and lonely days, not realizing the impact it will have on her life. As the rhythm and predictability of the knitting begins to soothe Mary's soul she learns that the other members of the circle are all struggling with their own forms of grief. Each has a tragic story to tell and as these stories of loss, hope and survival are shared, Mary begins to find solace for her own life.

The novel is a searing portrait of a mother's loss, one that author Ann Hood knows only too well as she recently lost her own five-year-old daughter. Through this book she eloquently and seamlessly tells her own devastating story in a heartfelt and poignant manner.



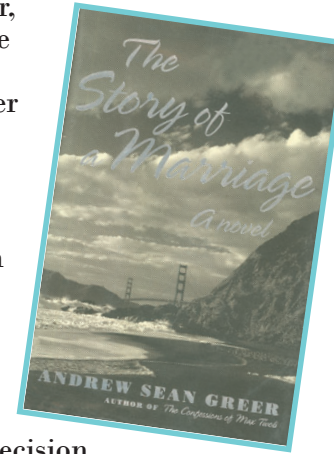
## THE STORY OF A MARRIAGE: A NOVEL

by ANDREW SEAN GREER

FARRAR, STRAUS & GIROUX, 2008

"We think we know the ones we love."

Pearlie Cook comes to the rapid realization that she doesn't know her husband at all. She has done everything that she can throughout the years to shelter him from life's unfortunate events, from clipping out the sad stories in the newspaper to helping hide him from the draft during World War II. But when Buzz Drumer, who claims to have known her husband in the war, comes to her family's front door in 1953, she knows that her husband is a total stranger to her.



Pearlie married her childhood sweetheart, Holland Cook, in small-town Kentucky and, through a series of events, follows him to San Francisco where they marry and have a son who later develops polio. Life is difficult for Pearlie, but it only becomes more confusing and tragic as the past relationships of Holland's life take control of her marriage and Pearlie is forced to make an agonizing decision in an effort to save both herself and her son.

Greer presents a very original and poignant story of the twists and turns of a marriage, where one begins to question the veracity of love and the choices made.

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Shellife Spring 2009

- Book Reviews
- Books & Bites Program
- The 10 Best Books of 2008

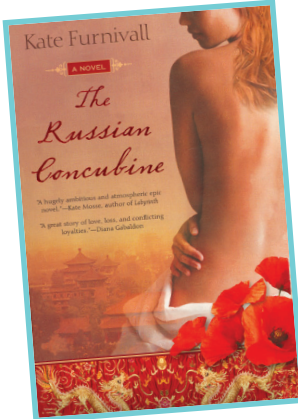


## THE RUSSIAN CONCUBINE by KATE FURNIVALL

Berkley Books, 2007

*"She lifted her gaze to his and in that second when their eyes fixed on each other, he felt something tangible form between them."*

Valentina Ivanova and her 16-year-old daughter Lydia escaped the Bolshevik revolution in Russia to end up impoverished and without passports in the international settlement of Junchow, China. To support themselves, Valentina gives concerts—she is an accomplished pianist—and accepts gifts from her gentlemen friends, and Lydia steals. Set between the wars, in 1928, this is a tumultuous time for China—the nationalists and the communists are battling for power, both helped behind the scenes by various European powers. Lydia becomes embroiled in the struggle when she falls in love with a young Chinese communist—Chang An Lo. Bold and fearless, Lydia protects Chang after he is almost caught by the Chinese officials, putting herself in great danger. It seems that everyone in Lydia's world—her schoolmaster, her mother, her friend—has their own secrets. Valentina keeps her own sorrows to herself even as she tries to find a British husband so that Lydia can become a British citizen.



The book is, at once, a love story set during a time of social upheaval and the story of the sacrifices parents will make for their children and that people will make for their country. Lydia is an irrepressible, if a tiny bit unbelievable, heroine. It is the romantic nature of the book that allows the reader to put aside disbelief and enjoy the adventure.

## A FLAW IN THE BLOOD by STEPHANIE BARRON

BANTAM DELL, 2008

A cold foggy night at Windsor Castle in December 1861 starts off this interesting mystery. Prince Albert is near death and Queen Victoria is frantic with worry. Patrick, a lawyer, has been summoned to a secret meeting with the Queen. He is accompanied by Georgiana, a physician, who had been consulted by Prince Albert over some medical matters. Neither Patrick nor Georgiana can understand why they have been summoned or the murderous attacks that are subsequently directed towards them. But these two strong-willed characters are not about to die quietly and so they decide to fight back and discover the secret that Queen Victoria wishes to hide. Their determination to find answers sets off a chain of events leading to murder and a chase across England and Europe.



This diverting historical mystery is concerned with the genetic trait for the "bleeding disease" hemophilia that Queen Victoria carried. Stephanie Barron's novel tries to answer the question of how Queen Victoria inherited the trait. Victoria's ancestors did not have this trait – so where did it come from? Was this a spontaneous genetic mutation because Queen Victoria's father was old as some scientists believe or could there be another reason? Certainly a more intriguing, plausible theory is presented in this book.

## THE 10 BEST BOOKS of 2008

The editors of the *New York Times Book Review* have selected these titles from the list of *100 Notable Books of 2008*.

### Fiction

*Dangerous Laughter* by Steven Millhauser

*A Mercy* by Toni Morrison

*Netherland* by Joseph O'Neill

*Unaccustomed Earth* by Jhumpa Lahiri

### Nonfiction

*The Dark Side, The Inside Story of How the War on Terror Turned Into a War on American Ideals* by Jane Mayer

*The Forever War* by Dexter Filkins

*Nothing To Be Frightened Of* by Julian Barnes

*This Republic of Suffering, Death and the American Civil War* by Drew Gilpin Faust

*The World Is What It Is, The Authorized Biography of V.S. Naipaul* by Patrick French

## Books & Bites

READ THE BOOK AND COME TO DISCUSS YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT IT.

MARCH 19 AT 7PM, LOUNGE &

MARCH 25 AT 2PM, CONFERENCE ROOM B

*KINDRED* by OCTAVIA E. BUTLER

April 16 AT 7PM, LOUNGE &

April 22 AT 2PM, CONFERENCE ROOM B

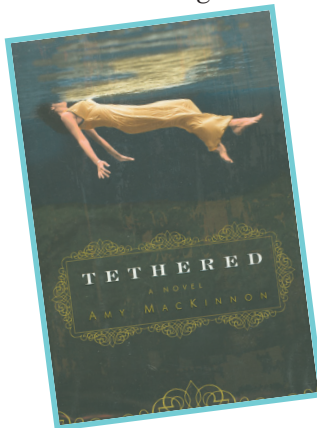
*LINCOLN* by GORE VIDAL



## TETHERED by AMY MACKINNON

SHAYE AREHEART BOOKS, 2008 *"I touch the scars now. So many. They're all there for anyone to see; only I was blind to them until now."*

In ethereal language, MacKinnon gives voice to the troubled Clara Marsh through her internal monologue as she copes with her fears. Troubled and fearful due to childhood trauma, Clara is the undertaker for the Bartholomew Funeral Home in a depressed area of a northeastern city. As such, she prepares the dead for burial—picking up, washing, embalming, dressing, and finally, tucking a meaningful spray of flowers into their casket. She is more comfortable with the dead than with the living.



A few years before, Clara lovingly prepared an unidentified murdered girl known as Precious Doe, whose grave she still visits. Detective Mike Sullivan is still trying to identify her and find her murderer. He visits Clara at the funeral home to question her. One day, a living girl visits Clara at the funeral home. Called Trecie, she reminds Clara so much of Precious Doe that she calls Mike. Then, while doing a body pickup, Clara stumbles across pornographic videotapes that feature both girls. The mystery quickly unravels from there.

With all of the action filtered through Clara's perceptions, it is like reading underwater. Clara doesn't seem to know if she wants to be alive or dead, but in the end, she must choose.

## THE CELLIST OF SARAJEVO by STEVEN GALLOWAY

RIVERHEAD, 2008

*"Is he playing for the people who died? Or is he playing for the people who haven't?"*

Inspired by actual events in war-torn Sarajevo during the mid-1990s, Canadian author Galloway weaves the stories of four people who attempt to maintain their dignity and kindness in the face of unbelievable brutality.

When a mortar tragically kills 22 people standing in line for bread as he watches from an upstairs window, a cellist vows to honor them by playing the mournful *Adagio* by Albinoni in the rubble every afternoon for 22 days, despite the threat of death. Arrow, a young woman who trained as a sharpshooter in college, now finds herself as a sniper, ordered to protect the cellist from those who desire to do him harm. Meanwhile, Dragan, an elderly baker steels himself to make the trek across town for a little bread and Kenan, a young father struggles to make his weekly walk to a distant brewery to get water for his family and a cantankerous neighbor. Both men are paralyzed with fear to make the perilous journey through mortar fire and sniper's bullets as they watch their beautiful city and way of life fall into ruins. As each character attempts to reclaim a bit of themselves in extraordinary circumstances, the reader gains a glimpse of a world under siege, where crossing the street can mean instant death.

With spare prose, the author's heartbreaking story of the high price of war on the lives of common people creates an ominous, haunting performance on a distant stage.

## THE SILK TRAIN MURDER: A MYSTERY OF THE KLONDIKE by SHARON ROWSE

CARROLL & GRAF, 2007

Thievery and general lawlessness were to be expected during the Klondike gold rush, but to discover a murder on your first day on the job wasn't. John Lansdowne Granville, fourth son of an English baron, and his friend and former partner, Sam Scott, sign on as guards for a silk train, a high-speed train that rushes raw silk shipped from the Orient to Vancouver, then on to the East Coast. When a man's body is found near the train, Scott is quickly arrested for the murder. Though Clive Jackson was a low-life with many enemies, Scott's refusing to talk makes him look guilty. Granville is determined to clear Scott's name and to discover who he is protecting. With the help of an eager lad named Trent and a bored, thrill-seeker named Emily, Granville turns detective. As the trial date for his friend Scott looms closer, secrets are revealed as the trio's investigations lead them to smuggling rings, opium dealers, power struggles, houses of ill repute, blackmail and betrayal.

Rowse's debut novel gives a promising start to a new series that will appeal to those who enjoy both historical and mystery stories.

