

Book Chat Notes

January 14th, 2020

6:30 p.m.

Here are the titles we discussed:

The Baker's Secret by Stephen Kiernan takes place in a small, French coastal village during the German occupation of World War II. The story is focused on the village baker, Emmanuelle. She learns how to make flour rations go further and discovers other ways to help villagers survive. This book is the January selection for the Library's Book Discussion group on January 23rd.

The Nothing Within by Andy Giesler (Madison author) is about a future biological disaster that reverberates in Ohio Amish country long after the near extinction of humankind. A young woman must try to save what remains of humanity. This is a debut with a strong, well-drawn character.

Reminds me of another dystopic novel, *When the English Fall* by David Williams. Williams is a Presbyterian minister. In the novel, a solar flare wipes out all technology; and society begins to crumble, even the Amish community nearby.

After the Flood by Kassandra Montague is about another possible disaster, climate change. Myra's lived in Nebraska until the flood that covered the Earth with water except for high mountain areas. Survivors live in struggling trading posts or like Myra, on a boat with her seven-year-old daughter. Bronna and I both read this book. It wasn't what I expected. It is a swashbuckling adventure tale with characters I wasn't able to like. Bronna was more generous about the trauma these people experienced and their ability to survive.

Butterfly Farm by Diane Nobel. Taking on a travel writing assignment to rate a Caribbean adventure cruise, Harriet MacIver is pulled into a mystery after a passenger dies following an encounter with a poisonous butterfly, and two college students go missing. Karen said this was a good mystery and a quick read.

Where the Fire Falls by Karen Barnett is the first in a series of three vintage National Park novels. This one takes place in Yosemite National Park in 1929. The main characters are a minister turned park ranger and a struggling artist. Amazon says, "stunning Yosemite National Park sets the stage for this late 1920s historical romance with mystery, adventure, heart, and a sense of the place John Muir described as 'pervaded with divine light.'"

Long Road to Mercy by David Baldacci introduces a remarkable new character: Atlee Pine, an FBI agent with special skills assigned to the remote wilds of the southwestern United States who must risk her career to confront a new threat and an old nightmare. This is the beginning of a new series.

The President is Missing by James Patterson and Bill Clinton is a good thriller and Karen said she could hear the influence of Clinton in the descriptions of what its like to be a president.

Educated: A Memoir by Tara Westover. “Born to survivalists in the mountains of Idaho, Tara Westover was seventeen the first time she set foot in a classroom. Her family was so isolated from mainstream society that there was no one to ensure the children received an education, and no one to intervene when one of Tara’s older brothers became violent. When another brother got himself into college, Tara decided to try a new kind of life. Her quest for knowledge transformed her . . .” Karen said this is a very powerful story. Bronna said she thought this would be a good selection for our book discussion group.

City of Windows by Robert Pobi is about the hunt for a sniper. The FBI brings in former agent, Lucas Page. “Page, a university professor and bestselling author, left the FBI years ago after a tragic event robbed him of a leg, an arm, an eye, and the willingness to continue. But he has an amazing ability to read a crime scene, figure out angles and trajectories in his head, and he might be the only one to be able to find the sniper’s nest. With a new wife and family, Lucas Page has no interest in helping the FBI—except for the fact that the victim was his former partner.” Lee Child said, “it’s a great plot, a great setting, and even better characters — I loved this.”

Good Girl, Bad Girl by Michael Robotham. “A girl is discovered hiding in a secret room in the aftermath of a terrible crime. Half-starved and filthy, she won’t tell anyone her name, or her age, or where she came from. Maybe she is twelve, maybe fifteen. She doesn’t appear in any missing persons file, and her DNA can’t be matched to an identity. Six years later, still unidentified, she is living in a secure children’s home with a new name, Evie Cormac. When she initiates a court case demanding the right to be released as an adult, forensic psychologist Cyrus Haven must determine if Evie is ready to go free.” And then the murder . . . The novel is a clever thriller with a swift pace.

What a great list of books to consider for your winter reading. Book Chat will meet again on April 15th. I hope more of you will join us. Stay warm!

Dawn Hayslett