

Book Chat Notes for February 2020

We met at the Lingonberry Llama at 2:00 on February 11th. Here are the titles we discussed:

In the Time of the Butterflies by Julia Alvarez. "It is November 25, 1960, and three beautiful sisters have been found near their wrecked Jeep at the bottom of a 150-foot cliff on the north coast of the Dominican Republic. The official state newspaper reports their deaths as accidental. It does not mention that a fourth sister lives. Nor does it explain that the sisters were among the leading opponents of Gen. Rafael Leónidas Trujillo's dictatorship. It doesn't have to. Everybody knows of Las Mariposas--the Butterflies."

Love Me to Death by Allison Brennan. (Lucy Kincaid Novels Book 1) "Six years ago, Lucy was attacked and nearly killed by an online predator. She survived. Her attacker did not. Now Lucy's goal is to join the FBI and fight cyber-crime, but in the meantime, she's volunteering with a victim's rights group, surfing the Web undercover to lure sex offenders into the hands of the law. But when the predators she hunts start turning up as murder victims, the FBI takes a whole new interest in Lucy."

Too Far Gone by Allison Brennan. (Lucy Kincaid Novels Book 14) "When a man who appears mentally unstable holds a group of people hostage and dies in a shootout with the FBI, Special Agent Lucy Kincaid is assigned to investigate what happened. Up until two months ago, McMahon was a respected scientist—then his wife left him, he lost his job, and was arrested for assaulting a former colleague. The one person who might have answers — his research assistant — has disappeared."

Other favorite mystery/thriller writers: J.D. Robb, Sandra Brown (early books), and Karen Robards.

City of Light. City of Poison: Murder, Magic and the First Police Chief of Paris by Holly Tucker. La Reynie, a magistrate loyal to King Louis XIV, is assigned to clean up Paris. He does clean up the streets, adds lanterns, and passes harsh judgment on criminals. The book is a fascinating look at late 1600's Paris. Great description of poison makers and poisoners. Too much palace intrigue but good book. Reminds me of **Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic and Madness at the Fair that Changed America** by Erik Larson. "Erik Larson intertwines the true tale of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair and the cunning serial killer who used the fair to lure his victims to their death. Combining meticulous research with nail-biting storytelling, Erik Larson has crafted a narrative with all the wonder of newly discovered history and the thrills of the best fiction." A real page turner.

Also recommended are the Inspector Lynley British mysteries by Elizabeth George.

The Line Between by Tosca Lee. In this frighteningly believable thriller from *New York Times* bestselling author and master storyteller Tosca Lee, an extinct disease re-emerges from the melting Alaskan permafrost and causes madness in its victims. For recent apocalyptic cult escapee Wynter Roth, it's the end she'd always been told was coming. When Wynter Roth finally escapes from New Earth, a self-contained doomsday cult on the American prairie (Ames, Iowa), she emerges into a world poised on the brink of madness as a mysterious outbreak of rapid early onset dementia spreads across the nation and the cult leaders." And the cult leader is planning his own biological terror. There is a sequel **A Single Light: a Thriller**.

World War II novels are all the rage right now. So many are being published about women's roles on the home front and in espionage. A good one is **The Baker's Secret** by Stephen Kiernan. It

takes place in a fishing village in France that has been living under the German occupation for several years. The local baker's niece becomes the village baker. She learns to stretch flour rations by grinding straw to a fine powder and adding it to the flour so she can bake two extra loaves for the starving village. It is a look at how awful the Germans were to the villagers and to the everyday bravery of those citizens.

Where the Crawdads Sing by Delia Owens is a novel about a girl growing up in the marshes of North Carolina and a local murder mystery. The descriptions of nature are beautiful and the characters are very well drawn. A must read.

This Tender Land by William Kent Krueger. “For fans of *Where the Crawdads Sing*, “a gripping, poignant tale swathed in both mythical and mystical overtones” (Bob Drury, *New York Times* bestselling author) that follows four orphans on a life-changing odyssey during the Great Depression. 1932, Minnesota—the Lincoln School is a pitiless place where hundreds of Native American children, forcibly separated from their parents, are sent to be educated. It is also home to an orphan named Odie O’Banion, a lively boy whose exploits earn him the superintendent’s wrath. Forced to flee, he and his brother Albert, their best friend Mose, and a brokenhearted little girl named Emmy steal away in a canoe, heading for the mighty Mississippi and a place to call their own.” This is Krueger’s latest novel.

Plainsong by Kenneth Haruf. “In the small town of Holt, Colorado, a high school teacher is confronted with raising his two boys alone after their mother retreats first to the bedroom, then altogether. A teenage girl—her father long since disappeared, her mother unwilling to have her in the house—is pregnant, alone herself, with nowhere to go. And out in the country, two brothers, elderly bachelors, work the family homestead, the only world they’ve ever known. From these unsettled lives emerges a vision of life, and of the town and landscape that bind them together—their fates somehow overcoming the powerful circumstances of place and station, their confusion, curiosity, dignity and humor intact and resonant. As the milieu widens to embrace fully four generations, Kent Haruf displays an emotional and aesthetic authority to rival the past masters of a classic American tradition.”

If you like **Plainsong**, try **Virgil Wander** by Leif Enger. **Virgil Wander** is a sweeping story of new beginnings against all odds that follows the inhabitants of a hard luck town in their quest to revive its flagging heart. Virgil is the owner of the town’s struggling movie theater. Full of quirky characters, the novel soars above the commonplace goings on of a town in the upper Midwest. The novel is a joy to read and soothes the troubled heart.

Dawn Hayslett