

First Reviews of 2007 Notable Books

Not Afraid of Dogs

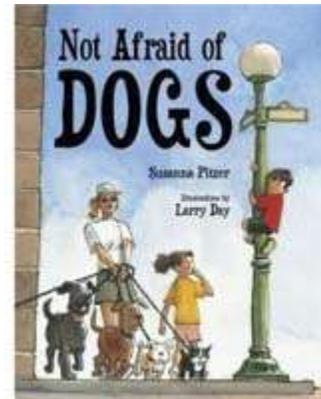
By Susanna Pitzer

Illustrations by Larry Day

Reviewed by Eunice Boeve, KCFB Notable Books Committee

Daniel is afraid of dogs. He does not admit to being afraid of dogs, not even to himself. He says he just doesn't like them. He does everything he can to avoid dogs, but one day his mother brings one home. Poor Daniel. The only safe room in the house is his bedroom. He can't even make himself come out of his room to eat dinner.

Finally, Mother Nature steps in and Daniel comes face-to-face with the dog. That night, during a thunderstorm, Daniel sneaks to the bathroom and there crouched behind the toilet is the dog. Daniel is not afraid of thunderstorms, but the dog is terrified of them. The story winds down to a logical and satisfying conclusion when Daniel, seeing the dog's fear, tries to comfort him.



This is a charming story with charming illustrations that support the story very well. *Not Afraid of Dogs* captures a truth so common to humankind. We dislike (fear) what we do not know or understand.

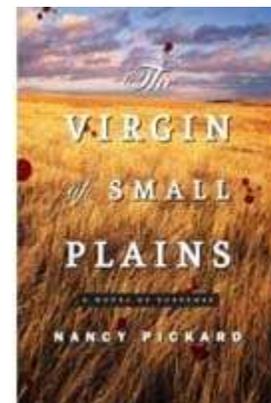
The Virgin of Small Plains

By Nancy Pickard

Reviewed by Eunice Boeve

This well-constructed novel delves into the lives of the residents of the fictional town of Small Plains, Kansas, who live under the shadow of the tragic and mysterious death of a young woman twenty years ago. She was found one winter night, her nude body drifted over with snow, her face beaten beyond recognition. Her death altered the lives of many forever.

For Amy and Mitch, sweethearts since childhood, her death shattered their hopes and dreams when, without explanation, the young man is sent away. Others harbor secrets concerning the death and others fear they know the answer to who among them is capable of this



awful deed. She was laid to rest in the local cemetery, a donated stone marking the grave, and, as the years go by, rumors surface of pilgrimages to her grave that have brought about miraculous healings.

Although there are some mystical aspects attributed to the Virgin, as the anonymous young woman comes to be known, there is nothing mystical about the age-old human frailties of lust, deception, and fear that hide the guilty and bring suffering to the innocent. The story illustrates how the past influences the present in the lives of individuals who live in silence with what they know or suspect, and how those responsible for their evil acts perpetuate more evil in their efforts to hide their guilt.

This is an engaging tale of secrets and silences. The reader is drawn in and held captive to the very end.

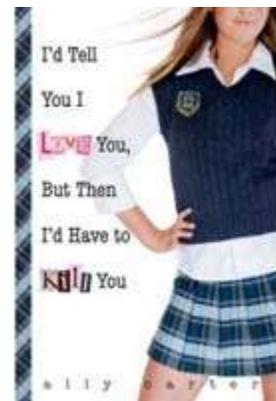
I'd Tell You I Love You, but then I'd Have to Kill You

By Ally Carter

Hyperion Press (ISBN: 978-1-4231-0003-4). 2006. \$15.95.

Reviewed by Julie Tomlianovich, Youth Services Consultant, South Central Kansas Library System

Secrets. What teenage girl does not have them? They are usually the run-of-the-mill kind--make-up, boys and homework. But Cameron (Cammie) Morgan has secrets beyond the normal high school sophomore, especially since her school is the Gallagher Academy, a private girls school for geniuses. This exclusive school is actually a training ground for future spies and espionage experts. Cammie's mother, a super agent herself, is also the headmistress of the school.



The story is told in the first person. Cammie set out on her first Covert Operations field trip and met Josh, a boy from town. It is hard enough to meet cute boys and date, but when you are a spy in training, it is even more daunting. Josh cannot find out who Cammie really is and what the school is for, so Cammie makes up fact after fact, which Josh actually remembers and acts upon--such as buying her a birthday present and giving it to her on the day she said was her birthday. While Cammie may know fourteen languages, she is out of her element when meeting Josh's parents or going to a dance. The Academy dance training entails infiltrating an Embassy party, not a local town dance.

Teenage spy stories are not new but Carter gives voice to a girl who has honest emotions in an exceptional environment. The relationship between mother and daughter, as well as among the classmates, gives this work added dimension. The differences between the town teens and the Gallagher girls works its way into the story, with results that are often amusing, but which also show intolerance and meanness. Cammie is an everyday girl with the exception of some pretty extraordinary skills. This story puts both the spy game and teen spies in a whole new light.

Visit Carter's website: <http://www.allycarter.com/blog.html>.