

## more book reviews

**Crabby Road: More thoughts on life from Maxine****(Shoebox Greetings Book)****Illustrated by John M. Wagner**

This book has no plot and no storyline, but hey, it doesn't need one. It's a comic book-- no, not comic, it's a book full of cartoons about this cranky old woman and her dog. Maxine will make you laugh until you pee your pants. My favourite little example is "I hate it when people slip and fall on the ice. I laugh so hard I nearly freeze my lungs." I have noticed that Maxine has a calendar out, and it's also full of her hilarious sayings. If you like sort-of twisted humor that you have to think about before you get the joke, this book is for you.

-- Jennifer Caseley

**Brother to Shadows**  
**(Avonova)****By Andre Norton**

In this case you can judge a book by its cover, provided you take the summary on the back of the book into account. The book depicts a young, heroic-looking fellow in leather armour with an automatic weapon in one hand and a cute fuzzy creature in the other, against a backdrop of soldiers, mountains and a reptilian alien with a glowing birdcage. The back cover helps inform us that this is Jofre, a young Shadow (a ninja by another name) who's been exiled from his clan. The lizard character, Zurzal, the two get together to try and unlock the mysteries of time, and they get into a lot of trouble along the way.

As trashy fantasy, this is okay stuff. Andre Norton is a prolific writer of dime-store fantasy novels. Among her other works is *Dar*, the Beastmaster, who inspired two of the silliest sword-and-sorcery movies of all time. This latest work doesn't measure up.

The plot is fast-paced, as these tales go. There are lots of interesting aliens (my personal favourites are the insect-like creatures who rent out their hive as locker space), some interstellar pseudo-Comms, and a few fun action sequences. But to get that good clean fun you first have to wade through Norton's quaint, archaic grammar, which is confusing to say the least and drive you crazy, and it barely skirts ruining the whole book.

At \$6.50 Canadian, I can't really recommend *Brother to Shadows*. If you want to read good Andre Norton, track down some of her older books at a second-hand bookstore.

--Trent Drake

## Trashy Novels

**After Innocence****(Avon)****Brenda Joyce**

This trashy novel, on the other hand, was excellent. As a connoisseur of trashy novels (can you tell I have a lot of time on my hands?), I would rate this book as one of the best. The story is very well thought-out and well told. If you read carefully and pay close attention to the plot, you will pick up on the little tidbits the author lays throughout the book (there is one line about halfway through the book that came back to haunt me in the epilogue). Brenda Joyce brings her imagination into this book, which adds a whole new dimension to it. The reader is drawn in and feels pity for poor Sophie the cripple, who is not really a cripple but has lived with her mother calling her a cripple for most of her life. Along with Sophie's story of love and finding herself, we see Sophie's mother's story and how the actions of her past have hurt her daughter's chances for a happy future. This book is very inspiring, and I would recommend you read it as soon as you can. My copy has a list of people wanting to borrow it, (after the rave reviews I've been giving it) so I would recommend buying your own copy. Enjoy.

-- Jennifer Caseley

**Night Fire****(Avon)****By Catherine Coulter**

*Night Fire* is a romance novel set between 1812 and 1814. The main character starts out as a spirited young girl, but becomes a bitter young woman until her true love kidnaps her and turns her into a lean, mean, loving machine. This book starts off slowly but picks up quickly. The writing is good, the plot is great and the characters are wonderful. Definitely a book worthy of the money, especially for romance fans.

-- C.A. Schneider

**Tempt A Lady****(Avon)****Susan Weldon**

Rayne North is a prim and proper lady when she goes to Confederate-era Nevada to meet the father that abandoned her as a child. There, she is met by her father's notorious business partner (and confederate spy) Case O'Malley. The plot is

typical: they hate each other upon first sight, but are attracted. They quarrel, they part. A tragedy reunites them and they live happily ever after. Despite that, this novel really is interesting. The characters are surprisingly believable. You like your stories slightly trashy with intelligence. This book is for you.

-- Aldera Chisholm

**Anything for Love****(Avon)****Connie Brockway**

This novel is mediocre as far as romance novels go-- limited action both in and out of the bedroom. It's typical: girl meets boy, girl falls in love but doesn't think boy loves her, they go their separate ways and then finally meet again and their undying love for one another. There is not much about this novel, 'cause anyone who reads these things knows the general gist of the story.

-- Jennifer Caseley

**Everyone's Guide to Outpatient Surgery****(Andrews and McMeel)****By James R. Macho, M.D., and Greg Cable**

A great guide for all who venture into hospitals or clinics for what is sometimes referred to as "day surgery" (which for some reason sounds better than "outpatient surgery"). It's a very comprehensive look at simple surgical procedures with diagrams included.

As the title implies, this source book is written in simple, everyday language which even my ten-year-old child enjoys reading.

So, if you're apprehensive about an upcoming surgical date or are simply a Curious George, this is a fine text to consult.

-- Kate Lehmann

**The Body: Photographs of the Human Form****(Chronicle Books)****by Willaim A. Ewing**

This book is a compilation of photographs arranged in 12 chapters, some of which are entitled EROS, Estrangement and Mind. The photos found in each section portray these images. The pictures are incredible - some are very old, some are really weird, some are disturbing and some are beautiful. The text describes the photos, how they were made, who made them and how they fit into the section. There is an index in the back, which is wonderful. If you know the name of a particular photographer, you can find his work right away. This book is well worth the \$39.95 price.

-- Kathy Giesbrecht

**Stan Mack's Real Life American Revolution****the sweep of history told in colorful detail****(Avon Books)****By Stan Mack**

This book is factually and chronologically accurate despite what you might think when you read the slightly sarcastic text. The book consists entirely of cartoons. I didn't know anything about the American Revolution until I read this book, but I actually picked up a few things in an entertaining way. There is one "modern" character in the book named Carl and he can be found most often on the corners of the pages. He explains details that can't be added in the cartoon. If nothing else appeals to you, you can entertain yourself by colouring in the cartoons since the book is black & white. This book is really fun.

-- Kathy Giesbrecht

**Grace Notes****(Avon)****By Alexandra Stoddard**

This charming little book is full of daily quotations to help keep your karma cool. Designed to allow for an interesting quote each day, the book gives instructions on how to relax and enjoy life. At the bottom of each page there is also a section to fill in your thoughts and feelings for that day. While it's not for people seeking humour to help them through the day, *Graceful* helps people with tender words and the occasional quote from the Bible. This would make a nice Christmas gift for someone who enjoys doing their own thing, searching, or for someone who should really learn to relax and take things one day at a time.

-- Jennifer Caseley