



THE BOUNTEOUS BOOKS OF SUMMER

GO ON, TAKE WHAT YOU NEED. A PERFECT MYSTERY, A MOUTHFUL OF POETRY, STORIES OF GLAMOUR-PUSSES AND GHOULS, SOUL-SEARCHERS, SCOUNDRELS, TRAILBLAZERS, SASSY GRANDMOTHERS, AND BABES IN THE WOOD. CATHLEEN MEDWICK SERVES UP A SMORGASBORD OF THE SEASON'S BEST.

THE IRRESISTIBLES

It's 1974, and a man is dancing on a tightrope between the towers of the World Trade Center—risky business, but as Colum McCann reveals in **Let the Great World Spin** (Random House), so is simply living day to day. This novel, with its web of disparate but connected characters—including a God-battered Irish monk, a swashbuckling prostitute, an artist with a guilty secret, a mother grieving her war dead—is an act of pure bravado, dizzying proof that to keep your balance you need to know how to fall.

After a lifetime together, 70-something Alex and his wife, Ruth, are still smitten—with each other (“He has loved her for so long that he can no longer distinguish between passion and familiarity”) and with their elderly dachshund, Dorothy. About to sell their Manhattan walk-up, the couple is caught up in crisis: Their dog is suddenly paralyzed, a truck jackknives in a tunnel, news channels click into terrorist-hype overdrive. Read Jill Ciment's **Heroic Measures** (Pantheon) for its painterly depictions of a rattled city, its deliciously biting satire of media and real estate madness, its tender knowledge of the creaturely ties that bind.

Margaret Leroy's eerily lovely novel **Yes, My Darling Daughter** (Sarah Crichton/Farrar, Straus and Giroux) is one of those rare books you'll sit with till you

bones ache. The mystery of why 4-year-old Sylvie longs to return to a house she has never seen, a family she cannot have known, takes this peculiar child, her anxious single mother, and a romantically scruffy psychologist onto the windswept beaches of a tiny coastal Irish village—a setting as enchantingly perilous as childhood itself.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

In a lionhearted attempt to shed her past—years of numbing jobs at glossy magazines and two life-threatening bouts with cancer—Katherine Russell Rich voyaged to India to learn Hindi, a language with one word, *kal*, for “yesterday” and “tomorrow.” Fortified with neuroscience and laced with humor (“A lover who speaks the language is a faster route to fluency than any tapes or courses, but perhaps more expensive”), **Dreaming in Hindi** (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt) is a crash course in emotional agility, in an understanding too deep for words.

Solo theater artist Alice Eve Cohen knew that childbearing was simply impossible—her own mother had taken DES, and Alice had a deformed uterus, among other disqualifiers. So when what doctors misdiagnosed as a tumor turned out to be a 6-month fetus, the 44-year-old Cohen had to wrestle with clueless specialists, cavalier insurance companies, and her own no-see-um maternal instincts. Her darkly hilarious

memoir, **What I Thought I Knew** (Viking), is an unexpected bundle of joy.

Maybe it was the snacks: Who wouldn't row alone across an ocean for the chance to eat like a teenager? Whatever it was that propelled Tori Murden McClure to the far side of the Atlantic in her homemade barge, the *American Pearl*, she muscled through 12-hour days of rowing, capsizing (she rescued the M&M's), being eyeballed by a hammerhead shark and clobbered by a hurricane. In **A Pearl in the Storm** (Collins), McClure tells how, on land and sea, she exuberantly bucked the tide.

UNHOLY TERRORS

You may want to leave the horror behind you—that may be why you haven't yet picked up **Columbine** (Twelve), journalist Dave Cullen's spectacularly gripping account of the Colorado school shooting that shocked America a decade ago. But Cullen's chilling narrative is too vital to miss, as are his myth-busting revelations: No, the killers were not social outcasts; there was no broader conspiracy; and, yes, the authorities should have known. Read this book for its unflinching honesty, and for the satisfaction, however grim, of setting the record straight.

A chemically poisoned town, young boys who vanish one by one into the sinister woods, a deadly sin of omission. “Mistakes don't happen in a single ▶