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REVIEW: Garden Spells

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Buster, a practicing attorney by day, is actually a philandering horticulturalist who has discovered that the way to gain a lady's favors is through selected verses from Millay. Neither male nor female considers him the least bit threatening as they confide in him, telling all their secrets. We enter the backrooms where the powerful Cofield clan plots business deals. We witness marriages, the births and the deaths of friends and foes alike. We also hear of the political shenanigans of buying and selling votes for "white liquor" or permanent waves and the "religious" philosophizing from the town's sage, Oscar Hosey. The Cofields have a lock on the county and much of the state until life events pull their attentions away. Suddenly, they wake up to a whole new world and things really get interesting. This novel is a delightful journey into the lives of some real characters. You'll walk in their shoes, laugh out loud, shed a few tears and learn a little about yourself along the way. ►►

— Reviewed by **Patrice Prevost**
Gwinnett Public Library System

Garden Spells by Sarah Addison Allen (Bantam Dell, 2007; ISBN 978-0-5538-0548-2, \$20.00).

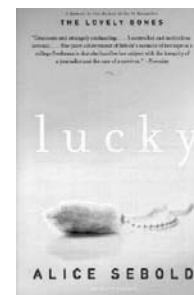


Claire Waverley enjoys her life as a caterer of unique dishes in the town of Bascom, N.C., content with the reliability of her routine. Two events occur that rattle Claire's complacency: the arrival of her new neighbor, Tyler, and the unexpected return of her sister, Sydney, after 10 years. From the moment they meet, Tyler begins to pursue Claire, with both comical and touching results. Sydney and her daughter, Bay, seek refuge in Bascom from the abuse of David, Bay's father. Colorful and quirky characters play their part in the story, yet none of them are caricatures. The mother of one of Sydney's high school friends is described as "so Southern that she cried tears that came straight from the Mississippi." Preparing lunch for Tyler and his friend Rachel, Claire admits to herself that she is doing so "under the guise of good manners – because it was a Southern tradition to do all sorts of things under the guise of good manners." The most intriguing aspect of the book is the underlying element of magical realism, which Allen artfully blends into the story. Rather than just hinting that there may be things going on outside the realm of probability, the reader is treated to many instances of unusual phenomena, such as the big apple tree that purposefully drops apples at people's feet, and occasionally throws them. Claire's cooking is sought after because of her way

with edible flowers, bringing out feelings and emotions that people wish to experience and stifling those they wish to forget. Recommended for public libraries and academic libraries with a popular/contemporary fiction section. High school teachers or college professors may wish to consider this book as part of a curriculum introducing magical realism as a concept. ►►

— Reviewed by **Carol Malcolm**
Riverside Military Academy

Lucky by Alice Sebold (Little, Brown and Company, 1999; ISBN 0-316-09619-9, \$12.99).



As a new semester begins at Georgia's colleges and universities, now is a good time to be reminded that college-age women are the highest-risk age group for sexual assault.

Lucky is Alice (*The Lovely Bones*)

Sebold's memoir of her 1981 rape and its physical, emotional and legal consequences. Sebold jumps right in with a detailed, almost clinical recounting of her attack. This seemingly cold retelling of a highly traumatic event has the effect of revealing the absolute horror of the rape, almost as if she were showing crime-scene photos to a jury. Only after the rape is over, the reporting and forensic exam are done, and Sebold is released back to her life as a freshman at Syracuse University, does she have a chance to reflect on the emotional consequences. She must deal with the reactions of friends and family while helping the police and prosecutors prepare her case for trial. When her trial is over and she thinks that part of her life may be behind her, her best friend's rape brings the emotions back in unexpected ways. Although the rape depicted in *Lucky* happened more than 25 years ago, Sebold's memoir is an accurate depiction of the experiences of rape victims today. Some things have changed (for instance, rape crisis centers now do a better job of helping victims through the emotional impact), but Sebold's experiences with a "system" unprepared to respond to victim needs, confused friends and family, social stigma, and a legal process seemingly designed to protect rapists instead of victims are common in the 21st century. Although the title comes from a police officer's assertion that Sebold is lucky she wasn't murdered, she is indeed lucky in one important way: Her rapist was caught and convicted. Unfortunately, very few rape victims can say that. *Lucky* is a compelling read, recommended for adults. ►►

— Reviewed by **Wendy S. Wilmoth**
Griffin Sexual Assault Center