



PHOTO BY: PAUL LINDEN

LOL TOOK A SIESTA BUT SEE WHAT SHANNON READ THIS SUMMER

BY: SHANNON LINDEN

The LOL book club takes July and August off, opting to read whatever strikes our fancy at the beach, on vacation, or just on our back decks. Here are a couple of books I read this season; both a little heavy for the sunshiny months, I must admit, but well worth your time. Stay tuned for our fall reviews, coming at you as the weather cools.

Q103.1

KELOWNA'S HOTTEST HITS!

THE BIG BREAKFAST

with Susan Knight & John Stone

Weekday Mornings 5:30AM-9AM



THE FAULT IN OUR STARS

BY JOHN GREEN

It's true; I'm a hopeless romantic. I'm also a big fan of young adult (YA) literature. Both those passions came together in one delicious summer read: *The Fault in our Stars* by John Green.

Probably the biggest name in YA lit right now (and no, he doesn't write about vampires, magic potions or post apocalyptic survival) Green is at his best in this book.

Hazel Grace Lancaster is a typical sixteen-year old girl; hiding out in her bedroom most of the time, begrudgingly admitting her parents might be right that she should get out more. Except Hazel has even more reason to wax reflective in the confines of her room, balking at the usual teen talk about boys and clothes with her best friend. Hazel has evaded death several times. In remission from the cancer that is creeping throughout her body, collapsing her lungs, she doesn't go to school but finally agrees to attend a support group.

It is a fateful decision for there she meets Augustus Waters, an irresistibly charming, handsome 18-year old boy, also in remission.

Augustus is every teenage girl's poetic dream as he philosophizes about life, adores Hazel, and even relinquishes his "wish" yet to be fulfilled by the charity that grants dying children a dream come true. Together he and Hazel (chaperoned by her mother) travel to Amsterdam to meet Peter Van Houten, author of Hazel's favourite book, "An Imperial Affliction."

Sadly, while the book guides Hazel's life, she is sorely disappointed in its author, who turns out to be a crotchety drunk, bitter about something that was stolen from him (it is later revealed he lost his own young daughter to cancer).

Disillusioned, Hazel finds comfort in—and truly falls in love with—the wonderful Augustus. The two share some very tender scenes that are tastefully written.

Their joy is short-lived, however, when Augustus' cancer comes back. Hazel is forced to come to some of her own conclusions about life and death and to work through the grief her parents will inevitably endure.

The strength of this book is in the story—well constructed, compellingly told, comical and bittersweet in the way that life and love are—but also in its insistence

that there is beauty in the world, even in the face of loss. It is utterly romantic but not overly syrupy. It is realistic but poignantly hopeful. Most of all it is a testament to the power of great love; even if is short-lived.

While I haven't seen the movie adaption yet (starring acting sensation, Shailene Woodley), it too gets high praise from reviewers.

4.5 / 5 *cheers!*

KICKING THE SKY

BY ANTHONY DE SA

At the other end of adolescence, we have twelve-year old Antonio Rebelo, a typical pre-teen who relishes his freedom, riding his bike with his buddies through the labyrinth of laneways that connect his Portuguese neighborhood to Toronto.

Kicking the Sky is Canadian author, Anthony De Sa's, first novel (although he introduced the main character in his previously acclaimed book of short stories, Barnacle Love).

Life is relatively carefree for Antonio until a Shoeshine Boy from the neighborhood disappears, his brutalized body later discovered. The premise is based in truth: the story of Emanuel Jaques, who was raped and murdered in 1977, exposed Toronto's seedier side and cloaked the Portuguese community in fear. De Sa was eleven at the time and his vivid recollection of the event inspired him to tell the story in a fictional setting.

Many of the families were recent immigrants. In fact Jaques and his family had been in Canada for only three years when he was killed and De Sa says the incident rocked adults to the core. Doors were newly locked at night while a sense of betrayal blanketed the Portuguese community as it struggled to reconcile coming to Canada for a better life with the horrific crime that stole one of their children.

Likewise, in the novel, Antonio suffers the effects of the unspeakable crime. With his parents each working two jobs, he is accustomed to less supervision, but fear breeds paranoia in the Portuguese community, and suddenly Antonio's summer fun is threatened when he finds himself more tightly leashed.

At the same time, Antonio is wrestling with his emerging sexuality, attracted to Agnes, the older, hotter teen across the street, yet conflicted by his obsession with James, the handsome newcomer who

lives in a neighboring garage. James lets the boys hang out at his place, regaling them with stories, all the while exuding sexual innuendo, and ultimately using the boys to get what he wants—everything from information, to food, to work, and even dirty money, as he prostitutes one of the boys out to a lecherous neighbor.

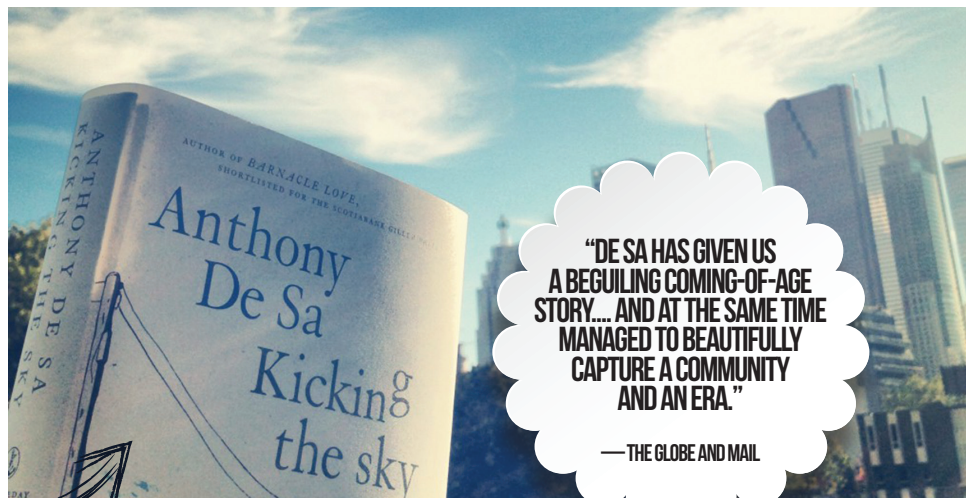
Abuse, violence, teen pregnancy, emerging sexuality, religion, immigrant issues, grief over lost children, biracial marriage—a great many complex issues come to bare and De Sa does an exceptional job of relaying them all through the eyes of a child coming of age.

The writing is wonderful and the story entirely compelling, but it's not an easy read. Dark and difficult—maybe even depressing—the novel will stay with you long after the last line.

4/5 *Cheers!* 

"DE SA HAS GIVEN US A BEGUILING COMING-OF-AGE STORY.... AND AT THE SAME TIME MANAGED TO BEAUTIFULLY CAPTURE A COMMUNITY AND AN ERA."

—THE GLOBE AND MAIL



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