

BLIND NIGHT

Dear Editor/Producer:

February 2004

Critically acclaimed novelist **Cordelia Strube**, Canada's preeminent writer of new urban fiction, is back with her most engaging novel yet: **BLIND NIGHT** (Thomas Allen Publishers, \$32.95 HC, March 20, 2004).

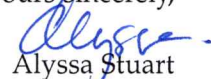
Her sixth novel in nine years, **BLIND NIGHT** is a haunting, hopeful novel about the brutal nature of modern life and the unbreakable bond between mother and daughter despite crisis, chaos and adversity. It is an affecting novel that tackles some of today's most disturbing social and environmental issues—environmental destruction, endangered species, pedophilia—with edgy, brash writing tempered with clever wit.

BLIND NIGHT is classic Strube: a stark and poignant exploration of the depths of human darkness. Strube is a social documentarian of sorts; she asks difficult questions about human nature and the nefarious realities of this world and she writes these truths with forceful, spare prose and unapologetic candour. Renowned for her acerbic wit and dark, comic insight—so much so that one critic suggested “Strubian” should describe a literary style—she has been likened to a modern day Dostoevsky, Tolstoy or Dickens. With powerful, spare prose she writes about ordinary people trying to get by despite ill fortune in a difficult, often brutal world. Strube's novels are reflections of the times and through them she forces the reader to think about why things are the way they are, who holds the power, and why. Says Publisher Patrick Crean, “Cordelia Strube writes in the tradition of fiction as social reform. In these times of social discontent and oppression, this powerful novel is more timely than ever.”

Never one to mince words, her new novel opens explosively: within minutes a mother and daughter's world collapses when a truck slams into their home and it burns to the ground. Left with nothing, McKenna and her daughter Logan are forced to move into a seedy motel. McKenna, who suffered a concussion in the accident, is left colour blind—an unfortunate predicament for a hair stylist. Then her narcissistic, womanizing ex-husband reappears on the scene, on the lam from loan sharks. For Logan, a highly intelligent eight-year-old, this new world is a lot to deal with. As McKenna's colour blindness gets worse, she is forced to rely on Logan and becomes increasingly haunted by flashbacks of the abuse she encountered at the hand of her father. This psychological damage takes McKenna to her breaking point when she is forced to care for him after he suffers a stroke. Logan, meanwhile, is also contending with her own adversities, including the elementary school bully and a creepy daycare worker. Amid all of this, she is consumed with worry about the devastation of the rainforests and saving the whales. Destruction consumes the life of this little girl, yet in this dark tale she refuses to give up hope. Throughout, both Logan and McKenna demonstrate their fighting spirit as they struggle against all odds and prove that the strength of a mother's love can overcome almost anything.

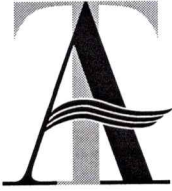
BLIND NIGHT is sure to be one of this season's strongest novels. For tour information or to interview Cordelia Strube, please contact me at 416-361-0233 x 1 or alyssa.stuart@t-allen.com.

Yours sincerely,



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THOMAS ALLEN PUBLISHERS

Books of Merit

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BLIND NIGHT

A Novel

By Cordelia Strube

"Strube's rueful insistence on contemplating human darkness is tempered by a certain wistfulness, a yearning for something finer, a flicker of hope that is never quite extinguished..."

—*Edmonton Journal*

From critically acclaimed writer Cordelia Strube comes **BLIND NIGHT** (Thomas Allen Publishers, March 20, 2004, \$32.95 HC), a new novel full of the dry humour, quirky characters, and sharp dialogue we expect from one of Canada's best writers of smart, urban fiction.

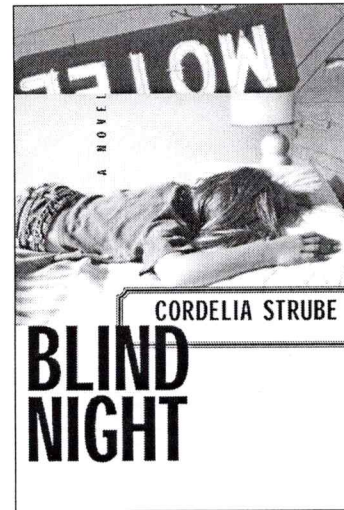
In her new novel, eight year old Logan and her mother McKenna watch horrified from the backyard as a truck veers off the road and slams into their house, causing it to burst into flame. Left homeless and with no possessions apart from the clothes on their backs, McKenna and Logan are forced to move into a seedy motel with their narcoleptic dog, Stanley.

While trying to put on a brave face for her daughter, McKenna must deal with her diminishing eyesight caused by the impact of the accident, and as a hair stylist, this is a particularly acute dilemma. In addition to this problem, she must suddenly deal with the reappearance of her womanizing ex-husband, who is on the run from loan sharks and decides to hide with them at the motel. Increasingly haunted by memories of abuse she suffered at the hand of her father, McKenna is suddenly forced to care for him when he is felled by a stroke.

Logan, too, cannot sleep with worry. How can she stop the rainforests from being bulldozed and the whales from being killed? How can she get her parents back together? How can she tell her mother about the shameful secret she has been carrying around? When Logan is finally forced to reveal this secret, all hope appears lost and the strength of McKenna and her daughter is vehemently put to the test.

BLIND NIGHT is classic Strube. With keen observation, pitch perfect dialogue and ferocious humour, she folds the reader seamlessly into the minds of her characters. Both Logan and McKenna demonstrate their fighting spirit as they struggle against all odds and prove that the strength of a mother/daughter bond can overcome anything.

This mordantly funny, hopeful novel could have come only from Canada's pre-eminent writer of contemporary urban fiction.



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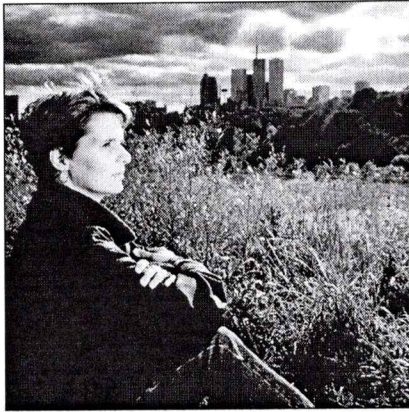


Photo by John Scully

CORDELIA STRUBE, an accomplished playwright and author of five previous critically acclaimed novels, was born and raised in Montreal. Trained as an actress, she moved to Toronto in 1980. In the mid '80s, frustrated with the lack of good roles for women, she turned to writing plays for radio and in 1987 won the CBC Literary Competition for her play *Mortal*. For the next four years she turned out ten radio plays before beginning work on her debut novel, *Alex & Zee* (1994), which was shortlisted for the W.H. Smith/*Books in Canada* First Novel Award. Her third novel, *Teaching Pigs to Sing* (1996), was nominated for the 1996 Governor General's Award for fiction. Strube lives in Toronto with her husband and daughter.

Blind Night (Thomas Allen Publishers, 2004)

The Barking Dog (Thomas Allen Publishers, 2000)

Dr. Kalbfleisch & the Chicken Restaurant (HarperCollins Canada Ltd., 1997)

Teaching Pigs to Sing (HarperCollins Canada Ltd., 1996)

Milton's Elements (Coach House Press, 1995. Republished by HarperCollins Canada Ltd., 1997)

Alex & Zee (Coach House Press, 1994. HarperCollins Canada Ltd., 1997)



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Blind Night

By Cordelia Strube

0-88762-141-4 / \$32.95 HC

A brief Q&A with ...

CORDELIA STRUBE

Q – Who are your favourite authors and books?

Dostoyevsky, Chekhov, Orwell, Dickens, Charles Baxter, Waugh, Flaubert... *Measure of Our Days* (Jerome Groopman) and *Bad Blood* (Lorna Sage) are on my bedside table.

Q – How would you describe your writing style?

I think the *Georgia Straight* review describes my style succinctly: "Unflinching. Chock-full of the flinch inducing. And funny."

Q – If you could meet any writer, alive or dead, who would it be? What question(s) would you ask?

Chekhov—"What kept you going?"

Q – What do you see for the future of the book in this country?

Television—the mind destroyer (dream-stealer) is stunting the imaginations of our children. Reading is no longer a part of daily life. I fear for the future of reading.

Q – How do you feel about the state of book reviewing in Canada?

The profession of full-time book reviewing is disappearing rapidly, mostly due to the cutting of editorial departments through "streamlining" by the newspaper chains. We no longer have the variety, or number, of reviews that we had 10 years ago (i.e. a single review is carried by seven different papers). The less that novels are written and talked about, the less space they occupy in the conscious mind.

Praise for Cordelia Strube

"... [Strube] did not however, start out as a writer but as an actress. And those roots are evident in the writers she cites as influences on her own work, such as Edward Albee, David Mamet and Harold Pinter. They are writers who, like her, use a spare, pared-down style of writing, or as Strube puts it, "They are big in using not many words, but the words are key." They are also famous for the sinuous strength of their dialogue, a feature of Strube's own work that is often regarded as her most powerful element. The conversations in her books crackle with biting insight as her characters struggle to survive in the world she creates for them. Despite the somewhat Dostoyevskian darkness of Strube's brilliant writing, there remains a powerful undercurrent of hope—a hope rooted in people's fundamental goodness and lit with shards of humour."

— Patrick Rengger, *FFWD*

"Smart, eccentric prose." — *New York Times Book Review*

"A master of articulating for the inarticulate." — *Quill & Quire*

"Strube has a rare talent for painting beautiful losers and making you love characters who in real life would be unbearable." — *Montreal Mirror*

"Marvelous dialogue and biting insights that stay with you for a long time." — *Ottawa Citizen*

"Often witty and pointedly observant in the face of pain and adversity." — *Newsday*

"One of the best novelists around...a writer to rejoice in and embrace." — *Ottawa Xpress*

"There are not many writers around who can write as precisely or vividly about modern urban life as Cordelia Strube." — *eye weekly*

Praise for The Barking Dog

"A new word is cropping up on the literary landscape. *Strubian* has been the word of choice in at least three recent articles describing the world of Toronto writer Cordelia Strube's four novels. So what does it mean? Unflinching. Chock-full of the flinch-inducing. And funny." — *Georgia Straight*

"Strube has a powerful way of dragging the reader right into her characters' heads. What is particularly impressive about this skill in *The Barking Dog* is that we desperately do not want to experience what Greer experiences, yet the story is told with such humour and suspense that it is hard to put down... Urgent rather than erudite, hyper-realist rather than lyrical, *The Barking Dog* is a plea for awareness... a rare achievement, an unstintingly honest, hilarious and dreadful delight."

— *Globe & Mail*

"As usual in Strube's work, the characterization is lively and the snappy writing is full of caustic zingers on contemporary urban life and the absurdities of pop culture...*The Barking Dog* confronts and affronts...but it's not easy to forget." — *Toronto Star*

"Strube's writing has verve. It crackles with corrosive wit." — *Georgia Straight*

"A novel is more than an argument, if it's a good one, and this one is. It's an engaging and genuinely affecting narrative." — *Vancouver Sun*

"Strube peels back the fast-food, tabloid cynicism that shrink-wraps urban life and shows us the dark matter beneath...a compelling ride...the novel acquires a depth of horror reminiscent of Greek tragedy." — *National Post*

Praise for *Alex & Zee* (shortlisted for The Smithbooks First Novel Award)

"... one of the most compelling novels I've read in recent years... It's a funny, poignant, realistic tale with many shocks of recognition, told with such professional skill that it's hard to believe this is a first novel... The pacing of this book reminds me of Stanislavsky's 'units' or the modern theatrical 'beat.' Strube builds dramatic tension through scenes of dialogue and narrative till we yearn for the relief of a denouement." —*Event*

"... Bitterly funny... flawless structure, perfectly tuned dialogue and dozens of brilliant cameo appearances..." —*Montreal Mirror*

"Its edgy narrative voice and quick, stylized episodes give the novel a breezy quality, all the while traversing a landscape of angst and disharmony... Often witty and pointedly observant in the face of pain and absurdity..." —*Newsday*

"Strube's sure way with words, her mordant punchiness and equally sharp assessments of urban life on the edge of normal make this familiar story a compulsive read." —*Globe and Mail*

Praise for *Milton's Elements*

"... a momentous journey." —*Halifax Daily News*

"... [Strube] describes Milton's absurd predicament in smart, eccentric prose... while we wince at Milton's blunders, we applaud his limping progress toward a true connection with others and a hard-won faith in his own capabilities." —*New York Times*

"... dark, brilliant comedy... Milton and his dire relations are delicious creatures."
—*London Free Press*

"Strube's ironic portrayal of a tragic family is one of the best and certainly the funniest novel I've read this year." —*Ottawa Citizen*

Praise for *Teaching Pigs to Sing* (shortlisted for the Governor General's Award)

"At its heart, this is a beautiful and subtle love story, about the love between a mother and son. Strube captures the complex emotional relationship ... with a rare combination of grace and passion." —*Edmonton Journal*