One Better

By Rosalyn McMillan

(Warner, \$22, 360 pp.)

Middle-aged

widow Spice

Witherspoon

owns

go ur me t's

delight called

Southern Spice.

It's a glorious,

four-star restaurant town Rochester,

DIAZ

Mich., a five
story, reconvert
cellite meet to eat "country cure

ham from Virginia, (and) bacro

with the rind on," not to mention

Seruga caviar or "ogg-white

shrimp omelets with a tropical

citrus butter sauce."

Spice lives above the store in a

sumptuous, two-story duplex

affair, appointed with Ming

vases, ivory linen and Faberge

salver to-die-for. Through hard

work, sho's not only made herself

rich but highly respected in her

community. To say that this is

simportant to her is putting it

mildly.

She's about as beautiful as her-

Cardboard characters

make novel long, tedious

and love, her characters never take on much more dimension than paper dolls. Consequently, many readors may find that this book loses its punch early in the rame.

than paper dolls. Consequently, many readers may find that this book loses its punch early in the game.

Essentially, Spico's problems center around on a dark past and her two adult daughters.

Sterling is a 28-year-old, heroin-addicted me'er-do-well. Always obsessed with her personal appearance and supported by her indulgent mother, she's also obsessed with fellow ne'er-do-well and drug dealer Bennie.

Older sister Mink, on the other hand, is an over-achiever. Not only one of the first black fomales to pilot a commercial airliner, she's recently been promoted to captain. With loving husband Dwight and cute daughter Azure, she resides in one of the splendid old mansions of the Boston-Edison District. She also drives a sparkling mey man of the Boston-Edison District. She also drives a sparkling new-engine Cesana, made possible by her \$270,000 annual patent, (Hard-working husband landscaping.) Still, Mink needs more. As districted to see what with a handsome-but shellow con let have only just begun. In the meantime, Olis Witherspoon, brother of Spice's deceased husband, and Golden Westbrook, beloved pastor at Detroit's Divinity Baptist Church, vie for the lovely, but highly independent Spice's attention. I enjoy my freedom.

I don't need a husband anymore." she declares at some point – and somehow a reader

## GUIDE TO THE MOVIES

General Chemas Bargain matines daily plus \$1.25 (finl-lite) show daily

Canton 6 ford Ed., 1 M west of 1-2750 734-981-1900 Advanced same-day tickets available "Devokes VP restrictions

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\*SPICE WORLD (PC) 2:00, (4:45 @ \$3.50) 7:45, 10:00

Keego Terin Goessa Orchard Lake Rd Orchard Lake Rd. at Cast Lake Rd. 682-1900 Sat. & Sun. only All Seats \$1.50 before 6 pro; \$2.53 after

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SUMPAY - THURSDAY

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DECONSTRUCTING HARRY (E)
200, 430, 730, 930
THE SYMET HIBELATER (E)
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WELCOME TO SULFLY (F)
THE WINGS OF THE DOVE (E)
1:45, 7:15

important to her is putting it midly.

She's about as beautiful as her two beautiful daughters, Mink and Sterling, Granddaughter Azure is as cute as a button Business is booming. Though there's no real romance in her life, that seems to be fine for the moment, as far as Spice is concerned.

So what's her problem? It'a a long story, Maybe it's too long. Though Detroit author McMillan would seem to have a real flair for stirring up readers' tastobuds, and though she appears to want to any something important here about truth

nary Day By Pearl Cleage Avon Books, 1997, \$20

Tor Horin

1.7.14

What does a woman do when she discovers he's HIV positive? Declare he's HIV positive? Declare he's move with a woman do when she discovers he's HIV positive? Declare he's move with a work of the rinnocence on the TV talk. Write a book about her undescence of the triangular on the TW talk. Write a book about her undescence of the work of the

For every action there's a reaction, and in this town it goes by the name of Joyce. When Ava arrives, she finds her widowed sister raising consciousness and compassion with survival lessons for the unwed "Sewing Greus." Teaching birth control, nutrition, and self-defense, her utilimate goal is to help mend the torn fabric of black society. Ava, meanwhile, is occupied elsewhere helping Joyce raise Iman; on abandoned crack baby and service of lands and the society and the service of lands and lands

Author takes a hard look at life

Victoria Diaz is a Livonia free tance writer who specializes in book and theater reviews. You can reach her by voice mail at 953-2045, then press 1854.

gets the feeling this should be filed under Famous Last Words. Also, in the meantime, Spice's talented chef and longtime friend, Carmen, has developed some life-threatening drinking problems, due to her own discounting the second with Spice's.

In addition to its cardboard characters, Medillan's novel is hampered by a an omniacient, flowery "voice' that interjects a kind of ill-fitting, intrusive commentary from time to time. ("Death is the foreshadwing of life; we die that we may die no more." or "Memories are like books that remain a long time shut and need to be opened from time to time to exhume the dust shut's collected." Also, a conclusion that's very hard to swallow - especially in its melodramatic timing — does little to enhance this book.

McMillan's imagination seems liveliest when it comes to painting word-pictures of things instead of people. Living spaces, restaurants, clothing, food, the background tapestry of Detroit in general — all of these add more spark and sparkle here than do leading players. The author paints a surprisingly engaging (though not always flattering) portrait of the thirving metropolis of Novi, by the way, with its linen shops and bookstores side by side with truck stops, automate laundries and the ubiquitous Red Roof Inn

to the cadence and diction of inner-city lingo, violent youths consumed by solf-hatred and women abandoned or dependent on abusive men.

"I thought there was a limit we would reach," writes Cleage in the persons of her protagonist. "A cutoff. A damn bottom line. We used to brag about it. There were certain crimes we commentiting. When we read in magnet that someone had stabbed their mather to death or apped a 2-year-old, we would a take our heads and clued and clean of a such a su

## **BOOK HAPPENINGS**

Book Happenings features vari-ous happenings at suburban bookstores. Send news leads to Hugh Gallagher, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers Inc., 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonie, MI 48150, or fax them to (313)591-7279.

BARNES & NOBLE (NORTHVILLE)
Mystery book club discusses Juli
Kaewert's "Unbound," 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 27 at the book
store, Six Mile and Haggerty
Road, Northville.

BARNES & NOBLE (BLOOMFIELD

HILLS)
Mystery book lovers, 7:30 p.m. Mydery doon tools, 1.35 Fiction Book Wednesday, Jan. 28; Fiction Book Club discusses "Smilla's Sense of Snow," 7:30 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 30; Linda Cos discusses "A New Year, A New Beginning," 4 p.m. Saturday Jan. 31 at the store 6575 Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills.

6575 Telegraph, Bloomfield Hills)
Super bowl Span 1-4 p.m.,
Sunday, Jan, 25, David Kraus
gives travet tips, 7:30 p.m.
Tuesday, Jan. 27; singer/song-writer Dan Haziett 8 p.m. Friday,
Jan. 30; Leader Dog presents pro-gram on how they train dogs, 11
a.m. Saturday, Jan. 31 at the
store 1122 Rochester Road,
Rochester Hills (248)652-0558.

BORDERS (FARMINGTON HILLS) Nancy O'Hara signs her book "Just Listen: A Guide to Finding Your True Voice," 7 p.m. at the store 30995 Orchard Lake Road, (248)737-0110.

BORDERS (BIRMINGHAM)

ONDERS (BIRMINGHAM)
Robert Burns Birthday celebration
1 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 25; Mask
Puppet Theater, 3 p.m. Sunday,
Jan. 25; Jamie Harrison eigns her

book "An Unfortunate Prairie Occurence," 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 27; Emmy Winning documen-tery maker Gary Glazer discusses tary maker Gary Glater discusses downtown's resurgence 7:30 p.m. Wednesdry, Jan. 28; Jeffrey Caponigro discusses "The Crisis Counselor," 7 p.m. Thursdry, Jan. 29; Dennis Cyporan Trio, 7:30 p.m. Friday, Han. 30; mean 22 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 31 at the store 34300 Woodward, Birmigham, MI 48009, (248) 203-0005.

## TRUTH BOOKSTORE

Dr. Jawanza Kunjufu wili discuss his book "Black College Student Survival Guide," a book on how black students can succeed in attaining a college degree, 4 p.m Saturday, Jan. 31, at the book-store, Northland Mall, Southfield (248)557-4824