

BOOK BREAK

Northwoods adventure holds reader's attention



VICTORIA DIAZ

"Black Water," by Doug Allyn (St. Martin's Press, \$21.95, 217 pages).

Readers (like me) who enjoyed Doug Allyn's previous novel, "Icewater Mansions," will probably find "Black Water" to their liking also.

The mystery continues the adventures of Mitch Mitchell, owner of the Crow's Nest bar and restaurant in fictional Huron Harbor, Mich.

You remember Mitch. She once worked as a diver on offshore oil rigs in the Texas Gulf. She's a single mom. Has an adolescent son who attends a private boarding school.

She never got her difficult relationship with her father ironed out, but when he died (mysteriously, and before "Icewater Mansions" began), he left Mitch the Crow's Nest anyway.

Establishment is the towering, lovable lesbian called Red. In this northwoods adventure (the action is set specifically in and around Thunder Bay, near Alpena), it looks as if the Crow's Nest is about to fall in around the ears of Mitch, Red and all their plainfolk customers.

Yes, a stranger has come to town. And, as you may suspect, this means Trouble with a capital "T," and that rhymes with "P," and that stands for the pools of black water Mitch will later mess around in — searching, unfortunately, for the body of this same tall stranger.

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To help her mess around, the stranger's brother, Ray, comes to town. Ray, as it happens, is also tall, and even better-looking than his little brother.

Ray is convinced that his brother is dead, although his body is not found with the car.

The trouble is, nobody really knows. Nobody can find Jimmy. But they can't locate his body, either. In the meantime, it comes to light that his father was once a well-to-do citizen of Huron Harbor.

Will either or both ever be found? Will Mitch have to close down the bar and starve to death because she can't get a loan to repair the roof and all that dry rot? Finally, will she be able to get hold of herself and not lose her heart to this Ray Calderon fellow, who has a way of making her feel warm all over, with that look in his eye and that way of actually listening to her when she pours her heart out, and, oh my, if he could just stop being so

tall and everything. Because Mitch doesn't need more trouble in her life, and it seems to follow Ray around like the proverbial black cloud.

Allyn is a writer who not only knows how to catch a reader's attention, but how to hold onto it, too. He seems to do this mostly through a kind of symphony of pacing, some colorfully wrought characters (who know pretty much how to speak, although he has trouble here with a female character in her 60s who talks like she's about two decades older) and some snappy scene-making.

titled "Womyn in Chains," plus a romantic encounter or two that shows Allyn's a pretty deft writer in that department.

One thing that clearly sets this book apart from others of the genre: I know of no other novelist who's writing as knowledgeably or vividly of the Great Lakes right now as is Doug Allyn.

My only real problem with this book is that Mitch Mitchell seems now and then to be speaking in a suspiciously deep voice. In casting a woman as his first-person narrator, Allyn appears (more here than in "Icewater Mansions") to be floundering a bit — enough to slightly blur his lead character.

Summer fun for young readers

BY SARAH NORDGREN ASSOCIATED PRESS

Armstrong has the noisiest house around — and one with family members that keep calling him a silly child, to boot. In Norman Silver's "Cloud Nine" —

(Clarion, \$15.95), Armstrong takes matters into his own hands.

When mom, dad, baby Bubbles and even the dog get on his case, Armstrong heads out the door and for the clouds. His makeshift

ladder climbs higher, higher, higher until, using a rope, he captures a soft, bouncy, cavern-filled cloud.

The mail carrier delivers a letter to him from his family, suggesting he consider a trip back to

earth, but Armstrong doesn't miss them very much: "They're a noisy bunch."

A pilot and a mountaineer also try to encourage him home, without success. But Armstrong's trip gradually becomes more frightening until eventually, he crashes in a field of long grass — where his noisy family welcomes him home.

Christine Heller has a deceptively simple but ingenious idea: tell two sides of the same story. In "Snow White: The Untold Story" — (Birch Lane, \$13.95), she presents Snow White's position in one half of the book. Then, flip the book over and she offers the wicked stepmother's side.

Bruce Hiscock's "When Will It Snow?" — (Atheneum, \$15) tells about a young boy named Robin in the North Country who is eagerly awaiting the first snowfall of the season.

Robin is not the only one awaiting the first snow. A deer mouse stores seeds in anticipation; a snowshoe hare grows a white coat to better blend with the scenery; and a gray fox prepares for a winter that will be made more difficult by the loss of a leg in a hunter's trap.

Hiscock's tale is a good story for youngsters age 5 and under.

BOOKSTORE HAPPENINGS

BORDERS BOOK SHOP (BIRMINGHAM)

Chelsea poet Laura Kasichko reads from and signs "Suspicious River," 7 p.m. Saturday, June 22; Lyle Crowliss visits storytime, 11 a.m. Saturday, June 22; Storyteller Ardith Laskowski reads animal stories, 1 p.m. Sunday, June 23; Frank De Caro reads from his memoir "A Boy Named Phyllis: A Suburban Memoir," 7:30 p.m. Monday, June 24; John Thorndike discusses his book "Another Way Home," 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 25; Ann Ripley signs her mystery book "Death of a Garden Pest," 7 p.m. Thursday, June 27, 31150 Southfield Road, Birmingham. (810) 644-1515.

BORDERS BOOKS AND MUSIC (DEARBORN)

Folk singer David Folks performs 7-9 p.m. Friday, June 21; Cellist Gideon Freudmann performs 7:30-9:30 p.m. Friday, June 21; Post Claudrean Jackson performs Sunday, June 23; Norman Abram, co-host of "This Old House," signs new book "Measure Twice, Cut Once," 7:30 p.m. Monday, June 24; Pat Niemeyer and Josh Peck discuss their book "Exploring Java," 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 25; 6601 Mercury Drive, Dearborn. Free. (313) 271-4441.

BORDERS BOOKS AND MUSIC (FARMINGTON HILLS)

Gideon Freudmann plays folk and blues, 8-10 p.m. Friday, June 21; Betsy, the live Vietnamese potbellied pig, visits storytime, 11 a.m. Saturday, June 22; Folk singer Will Hoppey, 2-4 p.m. Sunday, June 23; Gay and lesbian book group discusses "Five Minutes in Heaven" by L. Alther, 7:30 p.m. Monday, June 24; Jewish authors book group discusses "Hitler's Willing Executioners" by D. Goldhagen, 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 25; General literature book group, discusses "Independence Day" by R. Ford, 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 26; Storyteller Corinne Stavish reads "Men, Mirth and Marriage," 8 p.m. Thursday, June 27. (810) 737-0110.

BORDERS BOOK SHOP (NOVI)

The American Institute of Graphic Arts hold its annual book fair, 6 p.m. Friday, June 21; Bluegrass band Lonesome and Blue featuring Dennis Cyporin play 7 p.m. Friday, June 21; Cellist Gideon Freudmann performs 7 p.m. Sunday, June 23; Peter Gent, former Dallas Cowboy and author of "North Dallas Fort," signs his new book "The Last Magic Summer," Biblio-philie group discusses "The Book of Laughter and Forgetting" by Milan Kundera, 7 p.m. Thursday, June 27; 43075 Crescent Boulevard, Novi. Free. (810) 347-0780.

GRANT HILL

SIGNING HIS BOOK

CHANGE THE GAME: ONE ATHLETE'S THOUGHTS ON SPORTS, DREAMS, AND GROWING UP

Published by Warner Bks.

TUESDAY, JUNE 25

7:00 PM

FARMINGTON HILLS: 30995 ORCHARD LAKE ROAD BETWEEN 13 & 14 MILE RD. (810) 737-0110



FIND OUT. BORDERS

Advertisement for Lauren Colin, a four-year-old girl from Huntington Woods. She has eight Barbie dolls, two jump ropes, fifteen coloring books, and every Disney videotape. She also has leukemia.

If Lauren doesn't get a bone marrow transplant soon, she'll have nothing

The "A Match For Life" Dinner Drive will be held at Bank Financial. The Mortgage Bank, 30000 Telegraph Road (South of 13 Mile Road) 4th floor. Saturday June 23 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm, Sunday June 23 from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm.

"A Match For Life" (810) 540-6626

This ad runs in the Observer & Courier Newspapers

Heslop's FOUR DAY SALE advertisement. TAKE AN ADDITIONAL 20% OFF HESLOP'S EVERYDAY LOW PRICES ON SELECT DINNERWARE, FLATWARE, STEMWARE, AND GIFTWARE. Includes a list of participating stores and a list of brands like Atlantis, Block, Christian Dior, etc.