

BOOKS

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This fine novel keeps sailing on

Spartina by John Casey from Alfred A. Knopf at \$18.95.

So vividly has John Casey presented the characters in "Spartina" that a day or two after putting down the novel you may find yourself still living on Peleg Creek in Rhode Island, sculling through channels lined with the marsh grass called spartina and following them out to the sea.

They say on the East Coast that an old family is one which has its name on the charts, its heritage stunged on a river, a creek, an island, a cove. Pierce Creek and all of Sawtooth Point once belonged to the Pierces, but the land has been sold off to summer people, save for a single acre where Dick Pierce lives with his family and his partly built boat.

"Spartina," she will be called, more than 50 feet long with an 18-foot beam, a big boat that will change his life, freeing him from the boxes who start out admiring his work and wind up firing him for his sharp tongue.

Dick Pierce is starved up with pride, a man who knows his worth but sees how, on the open market, his pride has gone down. His life has been seeping away since childhood, drawn off by his too-strict father, by the cold comforts of his marriage, so that when his pleasure in his sons is blackened by the thought that he too may be a man with nothing to pass on.

Spartina is his dream and he holds to it with the sour determination most people give a grudge. She will rise up on the sea and he will rise with her, but she sits in the plastic-draped house, and he does not have the money to finish her.

Casey has written a wonderful book — lyrical, dramatic, believable — so that even when Dick Pierce leads the reader into his happy ending, you know that Casey, the author, is fully aware that somewhere past the last pages, the drama between Dick Pierce, May and Elsie goes on.

Book review

The banks refuse his loan, but Pierce finds other ways: a lot of hard work, a little smuggling and an enormous gulp of pride, and the Spartina floats free.

"He didn't understand it, but it was pretty clear that he'd been stuck for several years. He'd blasted himself loose," and blasted other things as well — his bitterness, his failure, and the dull certainty of his marriage to May.

Dick Pierce remembers Elsie as one of the rich summer kids, but now she is a woman grown, a uniform-wearing, gun-toting member of the Rhode Island Natural Resources Department living alone in a small house by a pond. She reminds him of a tern, with her determination "to draw everything in him up to the surface. The farther down it was, the more she wanted to get at it."

Elsie is the other side, familiar from childhood but different. Sex with Elsie is an adventure, but more than that it is a connection. With May, he watches himself evoke the known pleasures in a way his mind judges "indecently competent."

Dick Pierce is a moral man, or perhaps a man who accepts the community's mores. He knows "that he was being bad, that he was going to come to Elsie's house again, that he would be harmed by what he was doing, that he was willing." May is the soured helpmate in life's necessities. Elsie is the playmate who gives it meaning.

Dick tries to think what his wife would do if she knew. "It would be in her, stuck in her, a lump of contempt... No outburst, no keeping him on a leash. She'd do it worse, she'd accept it."

Casey has balanced his book between land and sea. It is at sea, riding out a burricane rather than letting Spartina smash to pieces in a harbor, that Dick Pierce along with his boat and his life are scored clean, his resentments washed away so that he comes back to his life purged, to balance in contentment between a new beginning and the comfort of continuity.

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— SUSAN DOOLEY

Current best-sellers

- FICTION**
1. "Clear and Present Danger," Tom Clancy
 2. "A Knight in Shining Armor," Jude Deveraux
 3. "Joshua and the Children," Joseph F. Girzone
 4. "California Gold," John Jakes
 5. "The Pillars of the Earth," Ken Follet
 6. "Deform 1," Joe Weber
 7. "The Old Silent," Martha Grimes
 8. "The Russia House," John Le Carré
 9. "St. Valentine's Night," Andrew M. Greeley
 10. "Blessings," Belva Plain
- NON-FICTION**
1. "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten," Robert Fulghum
 2. "Wealth Without Risk," Charles Givens
 3. "It's Always Something," Gilda Radner
 4. "Getting the Love You Want," Harville Hendrix
 5. "A Brief History of Time," Stephen Hawking
 6. "A Woman Named Jackie," C. David Heymann
 7. "Crazy Parents," Dr. Susan Forward
 8. "Personal Fouls," Peter Gold
 9. "Webster's Ninth Red College Dictionary," Eds.
 10. "Fighting Spirits," Lou Holtz



Tom Clancy

Secrets of a harem

Harem: The World Behind the Veil by Alew Lytle Crotlier from Abbeville Press at \$35.

The harem was a secret world, and because it was unknown to men, then and now, it became a sensual fantasy in which hundreds of willing women disposed themselves in diaphanous clothes, ready to do the bidding of their master. And if a woman was to have her own fantasy about life in that cushioned kingdom, it was to dream of days spent in voluptuous ease, covered with jewels while slaves brought baskets of dates and pomegranates.

The women in the harem did live in such luxury, with everything available but freedom, as Alew Lytle Crotlier makes clear in her fascinating look at the world behind the veil. It is not an easy world to penetrate. There were few women who kissed and lived to tell what life was like with a passionate pasha. For many the end came when the lord tired of them and had them put into sacks and drowned, the usual way of getting rid of aging or unsatisfactory concubines.

Crotlier's story is not one of sexual excess but of numbing boredom in a world where the thing one did was to wait: wait for an opportunity to become the favorite, wait for a chance to bear a son, wait in fear lest the son be killed by a rival mother, wait for small outings, where the women, heavily veiled, were escorted to a market or to a rural spot for a picnic.

Alew Lytle Crotlier herself grew up in Turkey in a world that long abolished. She tells of being befriended as a child by one of the last of the eunuchs, those unfortunate slaves who were stripped of their manhood so that they could safely serve as guards in the women's quarters. And she gives the book a depth that makes it far more than a titillating glance at an exotic custom by weaving in the stories of her own childhood, the experiences of older relatives in what was, after all, not merely a regal custom, but a religious one.

The richness of Crotlier's book lies not just in the fact that she has seen together all the little scraps of information about life in the seraglio, piecing together a whole, with the daily routines and the daily fears, but that she has also tried to give a context in which to view what seems an Eastern world of exotic cruelty.

She reminds us that in the West, "By the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus had promulgated their belief that women were capable of engaging in intercourse with Satan. On these grounds, the Inquisition identified and condemned certain women to be burned alive. Female submission was thus complete."

The secrecy of the harem fired the imagination of numerous artists and Crotlier's book is beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated with photographs, prints, and paintings from artists as diverse as Ingres and Matisse, showing how each reached into fantasy to render the image of the odalisque.

— SUSAN DOOLEY

Book review

"One of the slips of parchment that the Archangel Gabriel passed on to Mohammed said: 'If your wives do not obey you, chastise them. If one wife does not suffice, take four.'" And, writes Crotlier, "While the wealthy lords kept opulent harems that were smaller versions of the Grand Harem, with numerous eunuchs and odalisques, the poor contented themselves with keeping two wives in one small room, a mere curtain separating them."

At the top, in the palace where the Grand Harem stood hidden behind latticed windows, the Sultan reigned supreme and if he was cruel, as he often was, his brutalities were not just limited to women. The sons of the harem, the brothers and male relatives of the Sultan, were trapped too. Often they were murdered, rivals gotten rid of. Sometimes they were merely kept in the Golden Cage, in a luxurious isolation which matched that of the women in the harem and which occasionally drove its inhabitants into a frightened mania.

At the bottom, in the quarters of the Grand Harem stood hidden behind latticed windows, the Sultan reigned supreme and if he was cruel, as he often was, his brutalities were not just limited to women. The sons of the harem, the brothers and male relatives of the Sultan, were trapped too. Often they were murdered, rivals gotten rid of. Sometimes they were merely kept in the Golden Cage, in a luxurious isolation which matched that of the women in the harem and which occasionally drove its inhabitants into a frightened mania.

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Sunday Crossword Puzzle

Edited by James C. Bolth and Joyce Nichols Lewis.

By Betty Jorgensen	89 Easy-going	2 Tending to discharge	33 Cap for a clan member	58 Workers' assn.	85 Put off
80 CROSS	91 Decade	3 Riantorous	34 Dugout	59 Easy-going	87 Consumed
1 Balaque cap	94 Stand up to	4 Shoe	35 Payate	60 In	88 Iron
5 Unit	95 Principle	5 Merchants	36 Heart	62 Ring	90 Breadwinner
10 Sipre	96 Mouth	6 "Rabot, Run"	39 Confined	63 Sense sight	91 — and evening star
13 Flat or cook?	98 Distant	7 Chums	39 Musical symbol	64 Suffix for fabric	92 Vase
19 Mopem user	99 Spanish	8 Weight allowance	40 Sam or Vanya	65 Narrow opening	95 Rodeo
20 Hair line	100 Story element	9 Giant	41 Short letter	67 Shows	97 Expression of anguish
21 Lessor: Abr	102 Work unit	104 Stragghens	42 Guano note	68 Enlarge a butterfly	98 Enlarge a butterfly
22 Mily's arshalt	107 Carefree	11 Funicio	43 Home office	69 Cries about	99 Fit
23 Easy-going	110 Enchantress	12 Release	45 Buffalo	70 Conquerer of New Mexico	100 — Lisa
24 Philosophy	111 Transient	13 Mire measure	46 Disparaging look	71 Trailing	101 Everywhere
25 Bundled	112 Elizabeth's daughter	14 One, to a Scot	47 Martal	72 Ulong River	102 Pnyx
27 Literary monogram	114 Cubic	15 — 17, 1953	48 Olympian	73 Controll	103 Sanguary
28 Bachelor in Doc	115 Transparent	16 Easy-going	49 Fortly winks	74 Muscic spasm	104 Balam's beast
29 Theater award	116 Make lace	17 Make so	50 Measure period	75 Notable	105 ESE minus 90
30 Certan	118 Injure	18 Buttons	51 Turn over initials	76 Coins for the Fountain	106 Draft
31 Words with blue or yellow	119 Presidential bear?	24 Teachers' org	52 Threating tools	78 Jar —	107 Macinary
32 Tatted	117 DOWN	25 Oval	53 Evans of TV	79 Planted	108 Macinary
33 "An apple — keeps..."	1 Commersund's cousin	26 Truckee	54 Fastenings	80 Wetered part	109 Heggard novel
34 "An apple — keeps..."	1 Commersund's cousin	26 Truckee	55 Lean	81 Ph's place	
35 Fly like coop			57 Dramatic division	82 PFC's superior	
36 Outier					
37 Fly like coop					
38 Take the edge off					
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9/10/89 (Puzzle solution appears on Page B 11.) ©1989 Los Angeles Times Syndicate

The way she heard it should be
Carly Simon signs a copy of her new children's book entitled, "Amy the Dancing Queen" at a Martha's Vineyard bookstore last week. Looking on is Jackie Onassis, who edited the book.



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