

Featuring 308 Industry-First Reviews of Fiction, Nonfiction and Children's & Teen

# KIRKUS

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# REVIEWS



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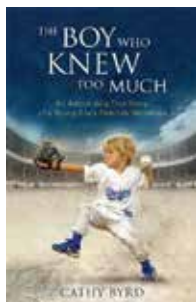
**THE BEST  
BOOKS  
OF  
2016**

★ ★ ★

THE BEST 100 INDIE BOOKS OF THE YEAR,  
PLUS OUR FULL DECEMBER 15 ISSUE

healthier fare such as “Apricot Cherry Muesli,” a yogurt topper made with wheat germ. This isn’t a typical mac-and-cheese-for-teens cookbook, as many of the more than 200 recipes in this volume are culinary delights, including, for example, “Lemony Orzo With Hazelnuts.” It begins with two baking sections featuring breads and desserts, and later entries showcase a wide array of hearty food choices, such as gravy, meats, pastas, salads, soups, and seafood. Some user-friendly recipes—including the festive “Candied Mixed Nuts”—can be created in a moderate amount of time, and some more advanced dishes, such as “Layered Vegetable Custard,” are time-consuming and challenging, especially for beginning chefs. Family favorites, such as Burton’s traditional Polish-American “Easter Soup,” take center stage, but other dishes from around the world, such as pad thai, are also included. The easy-to-understand instructions include relatively accessible ingredients that readers can purchase at local grocery stores or farmers markets. The conversational, numbered steps are well-spaced and simple to follow. However, adults may want to supervise younger chefs when frying is involved, and novices may need help zesting oranges or scalding milk. Upbeat color photos and illustrations of teenagers in the kitchen adorn the text, as do color images of several dishes. It’s not entirely clear what makes this specifically a teen cookbook and not an adult one; recipes such as “Zesty Salmon Mousse Tarts,” for example, seem geared for older palates (raw red onions are recommended as a garnish but aren’t required). Nevertheless, parents and teens can cook together, making memories and creative family meals with this lively collection.

**A fun, easy-to-use kitchen addition.**



**THE BOY WHO KNEW TOO MUCH**  
**An Astounding True Story of a Young Boy’s Past Life Memories**

*Byrd, Cathy*  
 Hay House (240 pp.)  
 \$19.99 | Mar. 21, 2017  
 978-1-4019-5342-3

In Byrd’s touching debut memoir, a little boy stuns his parents by declaring that he was the baseball player Lou Gehrig in a previous life.

When Christian Haupt was only a toddler, he was singularly enthralled by the sport of baseball. Although he was still too young to play the game, he talked about it constantly, refused to wear anything else but a baseball uniform, and seemed peculiarly disinterested in other, typical attractions of his peers, including toys, television, or even other children. He also sometimes referred to himself as an alter ego named “Baseball Konrad.” Byrd, Christian’s mother, recorded a video of him playing ball in 2011 and posted it on YouTube in the hope of winning him the privilege of throwing out the first pitch of the season for his beloved Los Angeles Dodgers. The video was a sensation and ultimately led to Christian making a cameo appearance in the 2012 Adam Sandler movie *That’s My Boy*. It turned out that

Christian’s indefatigable enthusiasm was coupled with genuinely precocious athletic talent. Byrd writes that one day in 2011, the young boy, still only 2 years old, started to share information about baseball from the 1920s and ’30s, including some that was esoteric even for avid, adult fans. Then Christian began to relate memories of what seemed like a past adult life as a baseball player; Byrd figured out that Christian believed that he was Hall of Famer Lou Gehrig of the New York Yankees. Byrd was initially unsure what to make of her son’s disclosures and sought counsel from multiple sources, including Jim B. Tucker, a well-known professor of psychiatry and neurobehavioral science. Byrd’s memoir almost reads like a suspenseful novel, and readers are sure to be gripped by the possible explanations she provides for Christian’s seemingly inexplicable memories. She also thoughtfully reflects on her own spirituality and the ways in which her son’s revelations challenged her Christian faith: “I was particularly interested in finding out why the concept of living more than one lifetime was incompatible with Christianity....Much to my surprise, I could not find a single scripture in the Bible that repudiates reincarnation.” On the whole, this is an affecting portrayal of parenthood and an affectionate love letter from a mother to her unusual child.

**An eclectic mix of mystery, memoir, and the supernatural.**



**SCOURGE SHIP**

*Chambers, John*  
 CreateSpace (448 pp.)  
 Oct. 19, 2016

In this fiction debut, disaster stalks a vacationing doctor, his family, and thousands of fellow cruise ship guests.

Dr. Martin Walker, podiatrist, has just embarked on a cruise out of Galveston, Texas. He and his family are on the 14-deck ship *The Grand Decadence*. The trip is meant to help Martin and his preteen daughter, Haley, spend some time together, as they’ve grown apart lately. His mother-in-law, Veronica Covington, hasn’t helped the situation, with her incessant commentary on Martin’s generous weight and supposed cowardice. The journey begins forbiddingly when the lobster dinner makes a guest named Linda violently ill. Martin helps Linda’s husband carry her to the infirmary, where he meets Dr. Floros. As a germophobe, Martin suspects more than indigestion and realizes the ship is understaffed to handle an outbreak of norovirus, or other easily communicable diseases. Meanwhile, Yegor Petrenko, CEO of the pharmaceutical company Petretech, watches *The Grand Decadence* from monitors in a secluded Alaskan village. He also follows the progress of Cindy, a tropical storm growing in the Gulf of Mexico. As more people become sick on the ship, Dr. Floros narrows the disease down to a parasite. She then notices that the parasite contains the DNA of two separate species, which, she tells Martin, “can’t occur naturally. The odds against that happening are staggering.” Chambers infuses his novel with terrific dollops of medical science, wit, and bathroom humor (often literally), presenting audiences with a