



# The "Novel-Teas" Reading Group

Wednesday May 27TH, 2020 @ 6:30p.m.

## Blackberry Winter by Sarah Jio

A #1 international, *USA Today* and *New York Times* bestselling author, Sarah has written nine novels with Penguin Books and Random House. To date, Sarah's novels are published in more than 25 countries, including Italy, France, Brazil, Turkey, Slovenia, Russia, China, Norway, Germany, Lithuania, Poland, Spain, and many others. Her novels have become major bestsellers in countries such as Turkey, Norway, Poland and Russia. Most recently, her new novel in Turkey, *BACK TO YOU*, became a #1 bestseller.

A magazine writer and former columnist for *Glamour* magazine, Sarah has written thousands of articles and blog posts for national magazines and newspapers including *The New York Times*, *Redbook*, *O*, *The Oprah Magazine*, *Cooking Light*, *Glamour*, *SELF*, *Real Simple*, *Fitness*, *Marie Claire*, *Hallmark magazine*, *Seventeen*, *The Nest*, *Health*, *Bon Appetit*, *Gourmet*, *The Seattle Times*, *Parents*, *Woman's Day*, *American Baby*, *Parenting*, and many others. She has also appeared as a commentator on NPR's Morning Edition. Sarah lives in Seattle with her three young sons and is at work on her tenth novel.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- The novel is set both in the 1930s and the present day, and the narration switches back and forth between Vera Ray and Claire Aldridge. Why do you think the author chose to set up the narrative this way?
- In the opening pages of the novel, Claire alludes to a "phantom pain" in her abdomen. Did you have a sense of what had happened to her before the details of her accident were revealed?
- This novel deals closely with the gulf between the rich and the poor, particularly in the 1930s. Were you surprised by the apathy the police demonstrated over Daniel's disappearance?
- Did you believe that Daniel, only being 3, was left at home while Vera went to work?
- How would you characterize Claire's relationship with Dominic? Why do you think Claire turns to Dominic instead of her husband initially?
- What do you make of Vera and Charles's relationship? Vera leaves because she doesn't want to be the reason Charles loses all that he has. Do you think if she hadn't left, they could have stayed together?
- Why does Vera believe that Lon Edwards will help her find her son? Would you have done the same thing in her position?
- How does researching Daniel and Vera's story allow Claire to heal? How does learning what happened to Vera compel Claire to move forward with her own life?
- Vera and Claire's storylines intermingle in many ways. What did you make of the revelation that Charles was a Kensington? In what other ways are Claire and Vera tied to one another?
- Do you believe that Josephine pointed Vera towards the leaky rowboat? What were her motivations for kidnapping Daniel? Did she believe she was doing the right thing?
- What did you make of Warren's revelation? Were there any hints earlier on that might have clued the reader in to this piece of the puzzle?
- How does the significance of the title come into play at the end of the novel? What does it mean to Claire to have the gardener tell her that blackberry vines "choose souls to protect?" Are you hopeful for Claire and Ethan's future?

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Hi all! So many of you have asked for my blackberry scone recipe (which pairs really well with *Blackberry Winter*, of course!) so I thought I'd share it here. Enjoy!

## Blackberry Scones (Makes 8 scones)

### Ingredients:

1 cup blackberries (frozen or fresh)  
4 cups all-purpose flour  
4 teaspoons baking powder  
1 stick butter  
2 eggs  
1 1/3 cup milk + 2 tablespoons + 3 tables spoons (the final three tablespoons are for brushing)  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
3 tablespoons sugar

### Preparation:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Mix dry ingredients with a whisk. Mix egg with 1 1/3 cup + 2 tablespoons milk, then add blackberries to the milk mixture. Set aside. Cut the butter into the flour mixture, either using a food processor, or with a fork or pastry mixing tool, and mix until the dough looks like course meal. Create a well in the dry mixture and add the wet to the dry, mixing until just combined (without smashing the blackberries too much). If the dough looks too dry, add one or two more tablespoons of milk. Form the dough into a ball, then press down into a circle on a cutting board (dough should be about 2.5 inch thick). Take a sharp knife and cut into 8 wedges. Transfer each wedge to a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 400 degrees for 15-20 minutes (watch them toward the end (as all oven temps vary...you don't want the centers too get too dry or the tops too brown).

## Blackberry & Cabernet Caipirinha

For this punch-like take on the [caipirinha](#), Cantina uses a Cabernet blended with a good amount of spicy Syrah.

### Ingredients

- 24 blackberries
- 4 ounces [Simple Syrup](#)
- 12 ounces [cachaça](#) (potent Brazilian sugarcane spirit)
- 4 ounces Cabernet Sauvignon
- 8 ounces fresh orange juice
- 2 ounces fresh lime juice
- Ice
- 6 orange wheels
- 6 lime wheels

### How to Make It

In a pitcher, muddle 12 of the blackberries with the Simple Syrup. Add the cachaça, Cabernet and the orange and lime juices and refrigerate until chilled, at least 1 hour. Stir well and strain the drink into ice-filled white wine glasses. Garnish with the remaining 12 blackberries and the lime and orange wheels.

