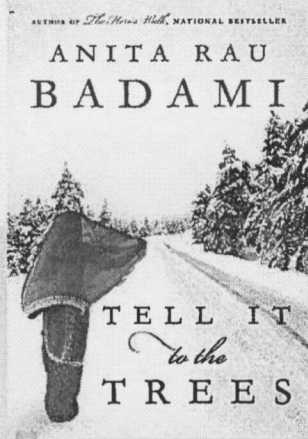


FALL
FICTION:
PORTRAITS OF
MOTHERS AND
FATHERS, LIARS
AND LOVERS

All in the FAMILY ALBUM



Tell It to the Trees
ANITA RAU BADAMI
Knopf Canada, \$30

THE SNAPSHOT It's the late '70s, and the Dharma family lives quietly and happily in a small house outside the fictitious town of Merrit's Point in British Columbia. **IN THE BEGINNING** "One of the searchers spotted two ravens yanking at something and walked over to investigate. I watched as he squatted and peered down at the ground, raised his arm and waved the others over. They had found her."

THE BIG LIE "Papa didn't do anything to her; I reminded my brother. 'She fell, Hem. Fell. On her own.' He was a baby. He needed to be taught how to keep secrets. Family secrets.... Nobody else had to know."

THE REAL TRUTH Beautiful, independent Helen, the "bad wife and a wicked mother," ran away from her husband, Vikram, who went to India and found a new bride — plain, compliant Suman — who manages the increasingly bleak reality of her isolated life with excessive cooking and cleaning. Vikram and Helen's fierce, bright daughter, Varsha, will do anything to protect the family unit. The facade cracks when a writer from the city rents out the little back house.

LINGERING IMAGE A sari glittering against the snow

Shelter

FRANCES GREENSLADE
Random House Canada, \$30

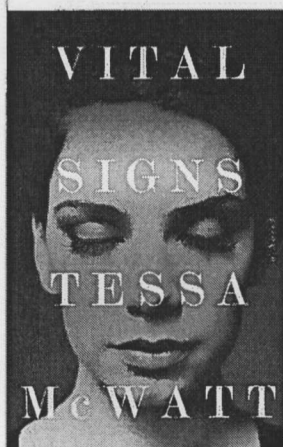
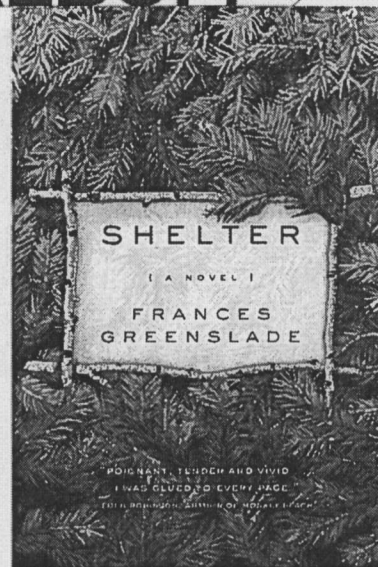
THE SNAPSHOT Maggie, a tomboy loved by her dad, is growing up happy in the wild and beautiful Chilcotin region when her father is killed in a logging accident. Her mother leaves Maggie and her sister, Jenny, with family friends in Williams Lake and never returns.

IN THE BEGINNING "Jenny was the one who asked me to write all this down. She wanted me to sort it for her, string it out, bead by bead.... But I started writing it for her, too. For Mom, or Irene as other people would call her, since she abandoned a long time ago whatever 'Mom' once meant to her."

THE BIG LIE "We were a normal family; that's our story. Our days were full of riverbanks and gravel roads, bicycles and grasshoppers."

THE REAL TRUTH After her husband's death, Irene is increasingly unable to cope and leaves her children in the uncertain care of Bea and Ted. Maggie finds solace in the bush with her Native Canadian friend Vern; Jenny with Barbie dolls and boys. When Jenny is in crisis, Maggie sets out to find Irene, discovering the people her mother had loved and left behind.

LINGERING IMAGES Maggie's shelters: a fort in dappling aspens, a snow cave, a deserted cabin



Vital Signs

TESSA MCWATT
Random House Canada, \$25

THE SNAPSHOT Anna, a mother of three grown-up children, is the beautiful, serene wife of Mike. Theirs is a long, contented marriage challenged by a sudden event: a brain aneurysm rendering Anna incoherent and unreachable.

IN THE BEGINNING "Anna is wearing an electrode cap. Eighteen ultrasensitive electrodes are listening to her brain.... I am slain by the look on Anna's face that says this is how we end up, this is how the rakes of decades gather the scatterings of a single being: poorly."

THE BIG LIE "I would do anything she ever asked of me."

THE REAL TRUTH In the weeks leading up to Anna's dangerous surgery, Mike looks back at their life together, puzzling over his complicated feelings for her and his urge to tell her a secret, compressing his feelings with pen and ink into small, cryptic images. But Anna's truths are obscured by her garbled, strangely beautiful new language: "The hummingbird is nursing...."

LINGERING IMAGES Mike's enigmatic little drawings (by Aleksandar Mačaveš) that he uses as a way to communicate with his wife.