



thisweek

Readings & signings on LI

Today

Author **Sandy Lanton** reads and signs copies of her Passover picture book, "The Littlest Levine" (Kar-Ben Publishing). At 1 p.m., *Bloomington's at the Walt Whitman Shops, 270 Walt Whitman Rd., Huntington Station, 631-425-6700, bit.ly/1hN94AX*

Wednesday

"The Real Housewives of New York" star **Carole Radziwill** speaks and signs her new novel, "The Widow's Guide to Sex & Dating" (Henry Holt and Co.). At 7 p.m., *Book Revue, 313 New York Ave., Huntington; 631-271-1442, bookrevue.com*



Author of "Crooked Numbers" (Minotaur Books), **Tim O'Mara** visits and signs his book. At 7:30 p.m., *The Bryant Library, 2 Paper Mill Rd., Roslyn; 516-621-2240, bryantlibrary.org*

Thursday

Uniondale resident **Natalie Naylor** speaks and signs her book "Women in Long Island's Past: A History of Eminent Ladies and Everyday Lives" (The History Press), \$6, refreshments served. At 12:30 p.m., *David Conklin Farmhouse Museum, 2 High St., Huntington; 631-427-7045, bit.ly/112fMnd*



Friday

Holbrook resident **Marilyn Levinson** speaks and signs her new mystery, "Murder a la Christie" (Dark Oak Mysteries). At 7 p.m., *Book Revue, 313 New York Ave., Huntington; 631-271-1442, bookrevue.com*



reviews

Love, hope and wordplay

BARK, by Lorrie Moore. Alfred A. Knopf, 192 pp., \$24.95.

BY MARION WINIK
Special to Newsday

If you adore Lorrie Moore, as so many of us do, you'll find much to enjoy in her new collection of eight stories, "Bark." All the sparkly balls are in play — puns, politics, pop culture details, sometimes all at once, as when a character confuses an unnamed torture prison with a line from Jabberwocky, "the mome raths outgrabe." (Abu Ghraib for \$500, please.)

Every story delivers the classic Moore club sandwich of melancholia and humor, and if none is the equal of the best stories in "Birds of America," the book is still a strong recovery from her iffy 2009 novel, "A Gate at the Stairs."

The Moore-ish obsession with wordplay begins with the title: Nowhere in "Bark" except its epigraphs does a dog appear. The cover image is a tree trunk, covered with bark, natch; the first story is called "Debarking," and in the last, a gun-toting motorcyclist shows up wearing "a football helmet with some plush puppy ears which had been snipped from a child's stuffed animal then glued on either side."

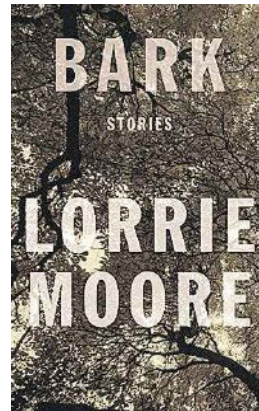
At 40 pages, "Debarking" is one of two longer stories in the book, both dealing with the end of a relationship. The "debarking" in question is Ira's



Lorrie Moore combines puns and politics in her new collection.

so-far-unsuccessful attempt to get over his divorce. Though he has burned his wedding tux, he hasn't yet removed his ring, and now his finger has swelled around it. He has moved to a depressing house in a neighborhood with streets named after fishing flies — Caddis, Hendrickson, Gold-Ribbed Hare's Ear. Friends invite Ira to dinner to meet their pediatrician friend, Zora. But between his difficulty with debarking, and her unusually intense relationship with her son, Bruno, their dates are fraught with misfires.

"At the restaurant, the sound system was playing Nancy Wilson singing 'For All We Know.' The walls, like love, were *trompe l'oeil* — walls painted as viewful windows, though only a fool wouldn't know they were walls. The menu, like love, was full of delicate, gruesome things —



cheeks, tongues, thymus glands. The candle, like love, flickered — in the brass tops of the sugar bowl and salt and pepper shakers." Then, just as Ira's trying to convince himself that everything's fine, Zora starts crying. "I just miss Bruny," she explains.

The other long story, "Wings," tells of a couple of washed-up musicians, KC and Dench, who are running out of reasons to stay together. One of the signs of the end is that KC stops making sure to bring home Dench's half of the venti latte the two share every morning, slurping it down herself while stopping to visit the elderly neighbor she's becoming quite close with.

"Are we perhaps unlovable?" she asks Dench. This reader sort of thought they were, but Dench's reply shows how Moore just keeps

roping you back in: "It's because we're not named, like, Birth Hearse for Dog-Face," he says.

The shorter stories also focus on the mishaps of love. "Paper Losses" begins with the wonderful lines: "Although Kit and Rafe had met in the peace movement, marching, organizing, making no nukes signs, now they wanted to kill each other. They had become, also, a little pro-nuke."

In "Foes," Bake McKurty, author of a George Washington bio, and his wife, Suzy, attend a posh Washington benefit before the 2008 election. Bake gets in a huge argument with the lobbyist he's seated next to but is afraid to tell his wife much about it. "He did not know how much time he and Suzy might even have left together, and an endgame of geriatric speed dating — everyone deaf and looking identical: 'What? I can't hear you? What? You again? Didn't I just see you?' — all taking place midst bankruptcy and war, might be the real circle of hell he was destined for."

The final story, "Thank You For Having Me," features a wedding. The marriage is ill-advised and is interrupted by small-time terrorists, but it rolls on, nonetheless, to the dancing. Michael Jackson's "Shake Your Body" comes on, and the narrator grabs a partner, confiding to the reader, "I wanted this song played at my funeral." I count this as ending on a note of cautious hope.

A real oil spill, pumped up

BLACK HORIZON, by James Grippando. Harper, 384 pp., \$25.99.

BY JENNIFER KAY
Associated Press

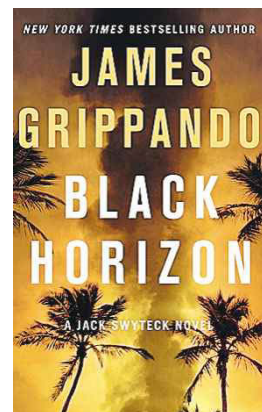
'Black Horizon,' the 11th book in James Grippando's Jack Swyteck series, revisits the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010 and then does it one better, sending oil straight at the Florida Keys.

Intrepid criminal defense attorney Swyteck is on his honeymoon at a sleepy Keys resort when an oil rig explodes during a tropical storm in Cuban waters. In reality, exploratory oil drilling off Cuba's shores has come up dry, but Grippando conjures up a worst-case scenario. Here, an oil consortium is stacked by hostile companies, the Cuban government won't allow the United States to offer its cleanup expertise, and a gusher of oil can't be stopped.

Swyteck gets more than he

bargained for when he agrees to take a Key West waitress' wrongful death lawsuit seeking compensation for her husband who died aboard the rig. The courtroom drama quickly escalates into kidnapping, government secrecy and sabotage.

Somewhere, a cheerful yet firm commercial is probably still airing to remind tourists that Florida's beaches are oil-free. Meanwhile, Grippando's fun legal thriller offers a breezy tour of the policies that shape life in South Florida and its Caribbean neighbors.



"Black Horizon" is the 11th novel featuring lawyer Jack Swyteck.