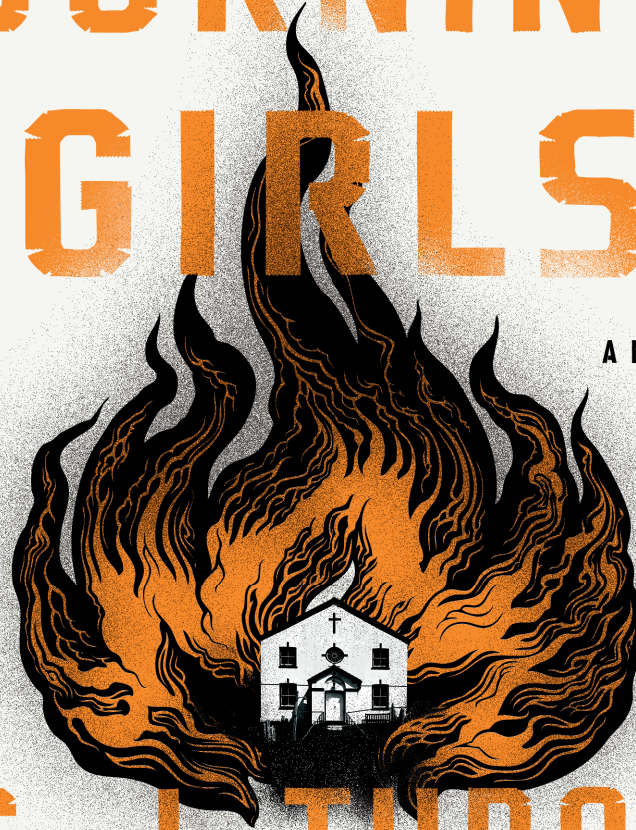


THE BURNING GIRLS

A NOVEL



C. J. TUDOR

AUTHOR OF THE CHALK MAN

BOOK CLUB KIT

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear reader,

First of all, thanks so much for choosing *The Burning Girls* to read. It's such an honor and I really hope you enjoy it.

Like most of my books, the idea for *The Burning Girls* came from real life events. Two years ago, my family and I moved from a large city in the north of the UK to a tiny rural village in the south. On the day we came to view what is now our home, we drove past a small, white-washed chapel on the outskirts of the village.

It looked strangely out of place, the sort of “American Gothic” type chapel you'd expect to find in a dusty, mid-western town in the US, not in the middle of the English countryside. And, right away, something about it struck me as odd, creepy. The hairs rose at the back of my neck and I knew the only way I'd get that chapel out of my head was if I wrote about it.

I started to research the history of the area and found that it had quite a macabre past. Five hundred years ago, eight martyrs (known as the Lewes Martyrs) had been burnt at the stake during Queen Mary I's purge of the Protestants. Every year the local bonfire societies make elaborate effigies which are burnt on huge pyres on Bonfire Night.

It put me in mind of one of my favorite films—*The Wicker Man*—and seemed to lend itself perfectly to a folk-horror-infused mystery featuring exorcism, pagan rituals, burning apparitions, and missing girls. Oh, and an unconventional priest with a few secrets of their own!

So, I'd like to bid you welcome to Chapel Croft—a village with a dark history and a dangerous present! I hope you enjoy your stay . . . and watch out for the locals . . .

Sincerely,
C.J. Tudor



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How do secrets and hidden identities affect the characters and their actions? When is keeping a secret better than telling it? Which character surprised you the most?
2. Religion is central to *The Burning Girls*, from Jack's job as a vicar to the legend of the burned martyrs of Chapel Croft. How does religion and its past—both recent and far away—influence the future?
3. Jack is not the traditional vicar and says she secretly enjoys watching people realize that she is, in fact, Jack. In what ways did the characters challenge your expectations?
4. Fire can be a destructive or purifying thing, and there is an old saying, “baptized by fire,” to describe people learning and growing through very difficult experiences. How was fire used throughout the book?
5. Jack is haunted by the past, both literally and figuratively, throughout the book. Has there been a time or place in your own life where you have felt the weight of your own past?
6. Chapel Croft is a tiny, remote village with an insular community that does not want to challenge the way things have always been (especially where the Harper family is concerned). How does village's burning martyrs legend and its small-town gossip work against Jack? How does it help her, if at all?
7. What components do you think are essential to writing a good thriller? In what ways did the author surprise you?
8. Jack's choices as a young woman led her down a dangerous road before she found the church. Can you understand or empathize with her actions? Why or why not? What would you have done in her position?
9. What did you make of the shocking revelations about Jack's past and Wrigley's true self? What clues did the author leave to let us know not everything is as it seems?
10. What did you think about the ending? What do you think is next for Jack and Flo in Australia?

RECIPE: HOT TODDY

Ingredients

1 cup water
1 tea bag
1 tablespoon honey
1½ ounces brandy, whiskey, or rum
1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
Garnish: Lemon wedge and cinnamon sticks

Instructions

1. Gather the ingredients.
2. Heat the water in a tea kettle or the microwave.
3. Once warm, add a tea bag and allow to steep for about 3 to 5 minutes (or according to the tea's recommended brewing time).
4. While brewing the tea, heat your mug or an Irish coffee glass by filling it with warm water.
5. Once the glass is warm, dump the water out and coat the bottom with the honey.
6. Add the liquor and lemon juice to the glass, then fill with the brewed tea. Stir well to incorporate the honey. Serve and enjoy.

Source: thespruceeats.com/hot-toddy-759692

