

## **Silverview, by John Le Carré**

*Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy*

John Le Carré, the master of espionage fiction, was best known for writing *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* and his *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* trilogy. The esteemed late author's final novel, *Silverview*, was published posthumously this past fall.

*Silverview* begins in a contemporary West End London neighborhood. Lily, a young woman with her toddler son in tow, knocks at the door of a posh townhouse. She is adamant that she speaks only to a man named Proctor. When Proctor ("a stalker, bespectacled man in his mid-fifties' ") identifies himself, Lily hands him a white envelope containing a letter from her dying mother. After Proctor reads the message, he instructs Lily to give her mother a verbal reply: "Our immediate answer is yes to everything."

The next scene takes place in a seaside town in East Anglia where 33-year-old Julian Lawndsley is running a small bookstore. Julian, who had been a successful bond trader in London, forsook the high pressure city for a quieter lifestyle.

One afternoon, a new customer, with "a sixty-something face under a mop of white hair," pops into the bookstore. After the man introduces himself as Edward Avon, Julian wonders "Is the voice entirely English? It's rich, interesting, and compelling. But is there not a very slight foreign flavor to the cadence?" Edward explains that he is a "British mongrel, retired, a former academic of no merit, and one of life's oddjob men."

The next morning, the two men encounter one another at the village café. "A most amazing coincidence," Edward informs Julian, "I was a friend of your late lamented father." He goes on to explain that he and Henry Lawndsley had been schoolmates when they were boys. Julian, equally surprised and suspicious of Edward's claim, nevertheless is drawn into a friendship with the enigmatic gentleman.

Edward, with his vast knowledge of literature, offers to help Julian establish a classics book section in the bookstore's basement. Although Edward is reticent to discuss his private life, Julian discerns from locals that Edward lives in *Silverview*, "a big dark house on the other side of town" which his estranged wife Deborah had inherited from her father. The more Julian learns about Edward, the more intrigued he becomes.

The author deftly sets up his characters like pieces on a chessboard, each making a swift, unexpected move. *Silverview*, indeed, is vintage Le Carré—a worthy coda to a distinguished writer's stellar career.

(Note: *Silverview* is part of the Heritage Hills Library and Somers Library collections. For a list of new books at the Heritage Hills Library, please see pages 6 and 7.)