



#### SCARLETINI

Combine in shaker  
3 oz. RémyRed  
Red Berry Infusion,  
1 oz. vanilla vodka,  
splash of cranberry  
juice, splash of lime juice  
and ice. Shake well.  
Strain into chilled  
martini glass. Garnish  
with berry or lime.

**RÉMYRED**  
red berry infusion

100% GRAPE VODKA • 40% ALC/VOL (80 PROOF)  
© 2009 Remy Martin, Cognac, France

## People are Talking about new year's revelations

**b**orn in India and raised in Minneapolis by an overprotective mother, Layla, the feisty young heroine of Samina Ali's accomplished debut, **Madras on Rainy Days** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux), is like "a ghost caught in... cultural ruins." Returning to India for an arranged marriage, she feels alternately trapped and fascinated by her family's Muslim traditions as she struggles with everything from her chador to her handsome new husband to the lost promise of her past.

In the title novella of Doris Lessing's winning new collection **The Grandmothers** (HarperCollins), two women, best friends since childhood, share everything, much to their sons' wives' consternation. Showing Lessing's trademark incisiveness, each of the four short novels here hinges on a life-changing discovery. The last, "A Love Child," is a stunning elegy to the youth of World War II.

Anne Tyler's **The Amateur Marriage** (Knopf) returns fans of her deft family portraits to her Baltimore stomping ground. Through the evolution of spoiled Pauline and devout Michael's postwar marriage, Tyler elegantly reveals the push and pull of merging lives. Lives merging are also central to Pat Barker's new novel **Double Vision** (Farrar, Straus & Giroux). Though Stephen goes to stay at his brother's house in the English countryside in search of solitude, he is perversely drawn into a passionate love affair with a younger woman and the artistic struggles of his best friend's widow. The author of *Regeneration* offers up a gripping meditation on finding one's path to creativity and identity.

Cassie Claiborne finds her purpose at



WRITE ON:  
AUTHOR SAMINA  
ALI MAKES HER  
LITERARY DEBUT  
WITH *MADRAS  
ON RAINY DAYS*

**books** the pool table in Haven Kimmel's stark yet compelling

**Something Rising** (Light and Swift) (Free Press). As if trying to hold on to her gambling father's breezy spirit, Cassie sinks shots with a confidence she never feels with her beautiful but remote mother.

Finally, two nonfiction books offer all the drama and romance of great novels. Brighter horizons are the theme of Lynne Cox's memoir **Swimming to Antarctica** (Knopf), a tale of remarkable physical prowess and heart: Cox was the first person to swim the Bering Strait, and her relationship to the ocean, from childhood on, is vividly captured in a series of epic encounters with fellow swimmers and the creatures of the deep. In Gavin Lambert's **Natalie Wood: A Life** (Knopf), it seems not even an overbearing mother or Machiavellian studio heads can stop true talent. The biographer of Norma Shearer and George Cukor is wonderfully insightful about Wood's transition from child star to starlet, her early career and myriad affairs.

Though writing with her family's authorization, he sheds little new light on her tragic end. No matter. The pleasure of the book lies in its rich trove of Hollywood lore.—SARAH HAIGHT and VALERIE STEIKER

