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Dear MBA Bookseller,

The Midwest Booksellers Association and Touchstone are delighted to present ***Starting from Scratch: A Novel with Recipes*** by **Susan Gilbert-Collins** as a Midwest Connections Pick starting in August. In this heartwarming, honest, and clever debut novel, a grief-stricken daughter cooks herself and her family back to life, uncovering secrets both painful and joyous along the way.

Why is someone who just defended her doctoral dissertation still wasting her time at her childhood home, two months after her mother's funeral, making *coq au vin* and *osso buco*? Olivia Tschetter, the youngest of four high-achieving South Dakotan siblings, is not returning to "normal"—or to graduate school—quickly enough to suit her family. She wants only to bury herself in her mother's kitchen, finding solace in their shared passion for cooking.

Threatened with grief counseling, Olivia accepts a temporary position at the local Meals on Wheels, where she stumbles upon some unfinished business from her mother's past—and a dark family secret. Startling announcements from two siblings also challenge the family's status quo. The last thing she needs is a deepening romantic interest in a close but platonic (she thought) friend. But while Olivia's mother is gone, her memory and spirit continue to engage Olivia, who finds herself daring to speak when she would never have spoken before. Told with humor and compassion, *Starting from Scratch* explores the shifting of family dynamics in the wake of shattering loss and the healing power of cooking.

“Take one part Jane Hamilton, one part Julie Powell, season liberally with originality, and you have *Starting from Scratch*, the tender, humorous debut. Blowing away preconceptions about contemporary Midwesterners, this novel will be of particular interest to anyone who's clashed with a sibling, mourned the passing of a parent or wondered, even in young adulthood, what they're going to do when they grow up.” --Sally Koslow, author of *Little Pink Slips* and *With Friends like These*.

Born and raised in South Dakota, **Susan Gilbert-Collins** studied English at Oberlin College and holds an M.A. in English as a Second Language from the University of Minnesota. While she enjoyed teaching international students and adult immigrants, she now freelances as a technical writer in order to have more time to focus on her first love, fiction. She lives with her husband and young son in Rochester, New York.

If you are interested in scheduling an interview, book club event or event with Susan Gilbert-Collins, please contact Shida Carr at Touchstone publicity by email: shida.carr@simonandschuster.com or telephone at 212-698-4384. More details about *Starting from Scratch* and Susan Gilbert-Collins will be available soon on the MBA website. If you would like to order copies of the book please contact your local Simon & Schuster sales representative or your preferred wholesaler.

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