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STARTING *from* SCRATCH

A Novel

by

SUSAN GILBERT-COLLINS

Advance Praise for STARTING *from* SCRATCH:

"Gilbert-Collins has an ear for the inflections and cadences of upper-midwestern speech, which adds to the book's other charms." - **Booklist**

"What a wonderful story of familial love, loss, and the healing power of made-from-scratch food. I was completely absorbed by the lives of the Tschetter family, and I very much want to be invited to their house for dinner on a night when Olivia is cooking. Susan Gilbert-Collins has written a fantastic debut novel: warm, witty, and redemptive."

– **Susan Rebecca White**, author of *A Soft Place to Land*

"Take one part Jane Hamilton, one part Julie Powell, season liberally with originality, and you have *Starting from Scratch*, the tender, humorous, debut." – **Sally Koslow**, author of *Little Pink Slips* and *With Friends Like These*

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 ossobuco? In **STARTING *from* SCRATCH: A Novel** (Touchstone Books/A Simon & Schuster Trade Paperback; August 3, 2010; ISBN: 978-1-4391-4316-2; \$15.00), novelist Susan Gilbert-Collins paints an honest and moving portrait of the many forms grief takes, and the new ways siblings must come to understand each other as adults.

Olivia Tschetter is the youngest of four in a Midwestern family composed of intellectuals. Unbeknownst to her

family, she had passed her dissertation defense on linguistics just before the death of her mother. Unlike the rest of her family, she is not ready to re-enter the real world. Instead she hides from her life by living at home with her father and spending most of her time cooking her mother's old recipes.

After a sort of family intervention, Olivia begins to work temporarily at the local Meals on Wheels and slowly attempts to finish her mother's final cooking newsletter. While doing both, Olivia stumbles upon a woman

from her mother's past who begins to unfold old family secrets that have been hidden for years. By digging up these secrets Olivia finds purpose in finalizing the things her mother was working on before her death.

STARTING *from* SCRATCH not only gives you insight into the grieving process itself, but also shows an interesting family dynamic. **STARTING *from* SCRATCH** resonates with anyone who has dealt or is dealing with loss. But surprisingly, it is also perfect for someone who has a love and passion for food and family. Olivia uses both to help her cope with the loss of her mother. Whether she is cooking or meddling in family and friends' lives, there is never a dull moment. From an unplanned pregnancy to a surprise marriage, a childhood secret to an unrequited love – this novel explores the many dimensions of a big family.

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, Olivia's story explores grief, the comfort of good food and the shifting of family dynamics in the wake of shattering loss.

About the Author:

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 focus on her first love, fiction. Susan was born and raised in South Dakota and now resides in Rochester, New York with her husband and son. This is her debut novel.

STARTING *from* SCRATCH: A Novel

By Susan Gilbert-Collins

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For more information on **STARTING *from* SCRATCH** please visit: www.simonandschuster.com.