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"Mindy Friddle has a great comic touch, and her novel is a touching, heartfelt debut."
-- Richard Russo, author of Empire Falls

"Here is a wonderful debut, a novel full of laugh-out-loud humor but also heartbreak as Friddle's women struggle to honor the past while accommodating the present. Cutter Johanson is a heroine Eudora Welty would be proud to claim..."
-- Ron Rash, author of One Foot in Eden

THE GARDEN ANGEL

By Mindy Friddle

There is something about the South that seems to breed great writers -- from Mark Twain to Willie Morris, Eudora Welty to Margaret Mitchell, Southern writers have always been able to portray the tumultuousness of everyday life with both poignancy and humor.

The newest addition to this roster of great Southern writers may very well be award-winning novelist Mindy Friddle. The winner of the 2003 South Carolina Fiction Prize, Friddle is set to release her debut novel, THE GARDEN ANGEL (St. Martin's Press; June 22, 2004) this summer. Set in the small, down-at-the-heels town of Sans Souci, a traditionally provincial community that is about to be swallowed up by the urban sprawl of nearby Palmetto, THE GARDEN ANGEL follows two women who are struggling against the onslaught of dramatic troubles in their personal lives and the perpetual push for modernity in the rapidly developing "new" South.

Cutter Johanson is nostalgic about her family's once glorious past. A reporter for the local paper (she writes the obituary section) and waitress at the Pancake Palace, Cutter is obsessed with holding onto her family home, going to outrageous lengths to ward off insidious developers and potential buyers looking to purchase the eroding estate so they can turn the land into a commercial property.

Elizabeth Byers, agoraphobic and stricken with panic attacks, is working on her dissertation on Emily Dickinson. Trapped in a dissolving marriage amidst whispers of her professor husband's infidelity, Elizabeth finally musters up the courage to venture outdoors and seek out the truth.

As Cutter and Elizabeth try to resolve their problems, their paths cross and they form an immediate bond. Together, they begin an odd friendship that provides each sanctuary from her troubles and slowly provides the hope that each is seeking. Populated with offbeat characters at every page, THE GARDEN ANGEL is a delightful portrait of an unlikely friendship. It is a novel infused with humor in the tradition of the best Southern fiction; at the same time, it tells an utterly contemporary story. THE GARDEN ANGEL marks the debut of a talented new writer.

*A Barnes and Noble "Discover" Pick

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mindy Friddle is a former newspaper reporter in South Carolina. She received the 2003 South Carolina Fiction Prize and a Fellowship in Fiction from the South Carolina Academy of Authors. This is her first novel. For more information, visit www.mindyfriddle.com.

THE GARDEN ANGEL

By Mindy Friddle

St. Martin's Press

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Please send two tearsheets for any reviews that run.

Mindy Friddle will be touring regionally through the South in July 2004.