



LGBT Reading Group



February/March 2008



The Read... The Collector Collector

By **Tibor Fischer** ~ ISBN: 978-0099268192

To a small flat in South London comes a Sumerian bowl, but the bowl is a clay with something to say, an object d'art who will offer Rosa, its owner, vast swathes of unrecorded history from the last 5000 years. From this unusual "fly on the wall" perspective, Fischer constructs an inventive and entertaining tale that begins in the near-present, focused upon three central characters: a hypochondriac millionaire, a sultry kleptomaniac and an uncomfortably-single art critic.



The Author... Tibor Fischer

Tibor Fischer was born in 1959 in Stockport. His parents were Hungarian basketball players, having fled Hungary in 1956. He grew up in South London before going to Cambridge University to study Latin and French. He has worked as a journalist and, in 1992, his novel *Under the Frog* won a Betty Trask Prize for literature and was shortlisted for the prestigious Booker prize. The following year, he was selected by the influential literary magazine *Granta* as one of the 20 best young British writers.

Our Opinions... As people tend not to suspect that their ornaments might be watching, they will do all sorts of things right in front of them... this is the extraordinary premise on which this story begins. This ancient Sumerian bowl is an observant narrator with metamorphic powers and an irrepressible ability to catalogue absolutely everything about everyone he (is the bowl a he?) has ever met or been owned by over many, many years. The bowl's present owner is the lonely Rosa who allows her friend, the calculating Nikki, to stay at hers for a while. The ensuing story of theft, prostitution, an obese angel, a kidnapped agony-aunt, more theft and several assassins is intertwined with historical tales from the bowl's vast back-catalogue, as well as a bit of mischievous shape-shifting. Although a couple of readers felt that Fischer simply invented words to suit his purpose (you might need a dictionary at hand!), different types of effective word-play reoccur throughout the book. Despite this title not officially having an LGBT theme, there are a couple of unanticipated moments that can be counted! This was a very unusual book and, although it might take a few chapters to get into, is well worth a go.



What Next? Fun Home by Alison Bechdel

In this graphic novel autobiography, illustrator Alison Bechdel explores the life and death of her father and chronicles her own growing-up years within an unusual family. The family funeral home business serves as an accidentally apt metaphor for the emotional austerity of a home where Alison's father is gay, closeted and often unhappy with himself and others; and where, seemingly unnoticed, the young Alison is growing into her own sexuality and her identity as a lesbian.

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