

When East and West Ways Collide

By Christina Chiu

G.P. Putnam's Sons; 2001

Meet the Wongs, Shengs, and Tsuis, and learn of their secrets and desires. Bound by friendship, love, and family, these wild and eclectic clans – whose members include a matriarch who talks to dead relatives, her nymphomaniac granddaughter, an old man living in the past of yellowing newspapers, and a young street punk – clash and connect, illuminating one another in extraordinary ways.

Who are the troublemakers? Who are the saints? All of these characters are at a crossroads, confronting their own particular life struggles. In "Doctor," a family's golden child marries a black man and is shunned by her family. In "Mama," traditional parents come to the rescue of their bisexual daughter. And in the closing story, a thief stumbles across his past while committing what he intends to be his final robbery. Everyone in these stories is offered a chance to change – and it is surprising to see who will rise to that challenge.

"Troublemaker and Other Saints" has the spark of flawed yet lovable people dealing with



the often painful, sometimes funny, and always complex predicament: Do we surrender to selfish impulses, or do we follow what is deep in our hearts? Whatever the choice, Christina

Chiu's stunning and spirited fiction debut illustrates that just as there is a bit of troublemaker in each of us, there is also something beautiful and, ultimately, redeeming.

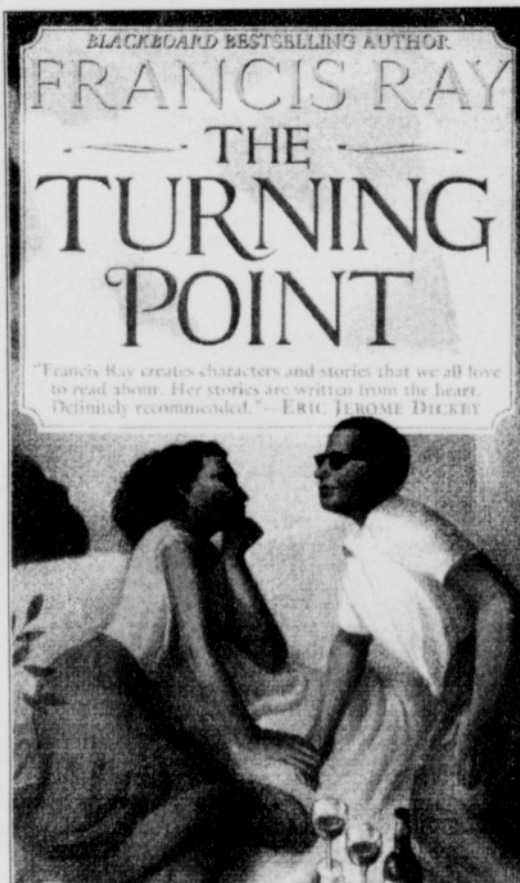
Facing Life's Turning Points

By Francis Ray

St. Martin's Press; 2001

"The Turning Point" is a story of hope and triumph, of self-discovery and second-chances. Lilly Crawford's abusive husband stole her dreams of a loving marriage and children. On a desperate plight towards independence, she meets a neurosurgeon who is uncertain if he will ever recover from blindness due to a beating he received by two muggers. Fearing that his blindness is permanent, Adam Wakefield faces the fear that he may never be in control of his life again and sinks into a deeper depression as each day passes. Fate throws the two together and in their uneasy alliance they face pain and joy as they fight to turn their lives around. Can the bond that develops between the two be strong enough to overcome their plan to aid them in picking up the pieces of their shattered lives?

Once again Francis Ray has created an enticing world of struggle, passion, and the strength it takes to overcome the hardships of reality. "The Turning Point" is a romantic fictional tale mixed with the outward and inner conflicts encountered in daily life. This is what makes Francis Ray's audience concrete and coming back for more.



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