



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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I'm going to focus this review on well written novels in the hope that spring break will find people with time to put their feet up and escape.

'The Priveleges,' by Jonathan Dee is outstanding trashy reading about wealthy, young New Yorkers. Adam and Cynthia "have it all" but of course are ripe for a correction. The book traces the trajectory of their lives from marriage through middle age, with plenty of surprises to keep the pages turning. The author seems to understand the hedge fund world and the expectations a privileged life places on someone. It's also a good examination of good and bad choices and how you live with the outcomes.

Cathleen Schine's new book 'The Three Weissmann's of Westport' is a romp. Two middle aged daughters, Annie the librarian and Miranda the book agent, move into their Cousin Lou's Westport beach cottage with their newly separated mother Betty. It's a thinly disguised, modern version of Jane Austen's 'Sense and Sensibility'; complete with laugh out loud observations of some of the more absurd things in Fairfield County. The supporting cast is terrific, adding their voices to lots of witty dialogue.

'The Prodigal Wife' by Marcia Willett is set in a gorgeous old English estate. Over the generations the Chadwick family has gathered at The Keep, the family manse in Somerset. Squabbles and love affairs get equal time in the story lines, which predictably but pleasantly resolve themselves.

'Small Wars' by Sadie Jones shines a light on the British army presence in Cyprus in the mid 1950's, a little known piece of history. Hal Treherne, a Sandhurst graduate with a young family, is sent to Cyprus to serve at the air base. The horrors of even a small war are carefully rendered. The marriage stresses combat brings to families are realistically portrayed, especially among the stiff upper lip British army officers. Deeper and more timeless issues are also explored as Hal struggles with morally compromised policies that grow out of a desperate need to bring the conflict to a close.

'The Midnight House' by Alex Berenson is a ripped from the headlines thriller about the CIA, and the Pakistani intelligence service called ISI. Those readers familiar with the character of Ellis from Berenson's earlier novels will enjoy his take no prisoners approach to problem solving and



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his impatience with bureaucracy. Unlike many thrillers this one also has humorous dialogue to leaven the dark and ghastly doings.

'Dog On It' by Spencer Quinn, introduces Chet the wonder dog and canine narrator extraordinaire. He belongs to Bernie Little, a private investigator in Arizona who gets embroiled in trying to solve the disappearance of a teenage girl. Anyone with a dog will especially appreciate Chet's running commentary on human life and the pursuit of appropriate snacks. The follow up in the series, 'Therein Hangs the Tail', has just been published and continues their escapades.

'The Information Officer' is the new thriller by Mark Mills. Set in Malta during WWII, it is the story of Max Chadwick and his search for a killer that is probably one of the British military stationed on the island. The book is very rich in atmosphere and includes lots of details about life on Malta during the war (for example, they put up with more bombing than the Londoners during the blitz). Mills is an excellent writer who knows how to keep a plot in motion.

'Lunch in Paris: A Love Story with Recipes' by Elizabeth Bard is a charming romance with recipes. It is a more honest look at the City of Light than some memoirs; its warts are revealed along with the known pleasures of Parisian life and food.

'The Man from Beijing' is Henning Mankell's new thriller. The story begins with a terrible mass murder in a small Swedish village and quickly expands to include action in China, Mozambique and London. The heroine is a Swedish judge who follows the twisted trail left by the murderer. His writing is terse but richly textured as he pulls apart the motives and rationalizations of the main characters' actions. This author is in top form in this novel.

'Skeleton Hill' by Peter Lovesey brings back Det. Peter Diamond in all his oversized glory. Diamond is never short of clever observations and skillful readings of his peers and suspects alike. The city of Bath is a beautiful and complicated setting for the latest heinous murder. Watching Det. Diamond and his team track down the solution is great fun.

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