



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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'Matterhorn' by Karl Marlantes is a novel set in the northwest corner of Vietnam in 1967. This story of a marine battalion is sprawling, at times shocking, and always engrossing. The author was a Marine in Vietnam; this permeates the book with experiences that can only be described by someone who lived through them. It is a testament to both the waste of war and the bonds forged in combat. Matterhorn is a hill that is taken, lost and taken again. The grim struggles fought in the unforgiving tropical environment are complicated by senseless orders from rear guard commanders. There is a lot of Marine Corps lingo that even with the helpful glossary can be a bit confusing. That's a minor criticism for a book that is genuinely riveting.

'The Man from Saigon' by Marti Leimbach is also an exceptionally well written saga of Vietnam in 1967, seen through the eyes of a female journalist. Susan Gifford is assigned to report "lifestyle" stories but is quickly subsumed into the grisly realities of war. She has a complex relationship with a married reporter but is perhaps closest to Son, the enigmatic Vietnamese photographer who is with her when they are captured by the Vietcong. Alternately suspenseful and heartbreaking, this book is recommended for anyone specifically interested in combat reporting or generally interested in the war.

'This Body of Death' by Elizabeth George marks the return of Inspector Lynley to police work. George has never written one word when six will do, but she got away with that when her story lines were more thrilling. The back stories behind the mystery of who stabbed the young woman found in a cemetery are more engaging than the actual detective work. The introduction of the unpleasant Acting Supervisor Isabelle Ardery doesn't help. For fans only, since it is always great to spend time with Barbara Havers.

'The Imperfectionists' by Tom Rachman takes place within the offices of a struggling international newspaper in Rome. It contains a very witty cast of characters that interact over the course of the book. The love stories don't hang together all that well, but the author's command of newsroom nonsense is really brilliant. Humor and pathos are a potent combination. Both are well integrated in the chapters covering stringers' lives in Cairo and Paris, copy editing in the home office etc., and the intersecting chapters covering the history of the paper's founding.

'Elegy for April' by Benjamin Black (the pen name for John Banville) is the third in the series featuring the beleaguered Irish pathologist Quirke. Set in Dublin in the 1950's it spins the tale of April Latimer, a doctor in training and a friend of Quirke's daughter Phoebe. April is the



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somewhat wild child of a distinguished local family. Naturally there are secrets around every corner, the biggest one being April's disappearance. This is one of my favorite series; it's very atmospheric and it's spoiling to have as fine a writer as Banville penning a mystery.

'Once a Spy' by Keith Thomson is highly recommended for those looking for something both well written and laugh out loud funny. This is a spy thriller with a major twist. Drummond Clark and his feckless son Charlie are pursued by a seemingly endless supply of spy agency and freelance goons bent on making sure Drummond's Alzheimers addled brain doesn't inadvertently spill any secrets. Go ahead and suspend a little belief and join a wild ride as the parent/child bond is tested in many ways. The dialogue and wry observations are quite clever.

'The Long Song' by Andrea Levy is a gem among historical novels. It's the captivating story of July, a Jamaican house slave who recounts her history in the context of the broader panorama of island slavery in the years prior to the 1832 revolt. July is writing from the vantage point of her older years, but her memory is sharp and the events she matter of factly recounts are heartbreaking and shocking. Jamaican plantocracy society in all its contradictions is vividly described by July, and readers have the benefit of learning a tremendous amount about daily plantation life thanks to Levy's extensive research.

Deborah Madison's book 'Seasonal Fruit Desserts' is particularly timely, as soon our markets will be loaded with CT fruits. The stunning photographs are mouth watering, and the recipes are user friendly. I can particularly urge you to try the various fold over pies or galettes. They are easy and delicious!

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