

Off the Shelf

Tale of teenage investigative adventure really well-done

Missing Persons: The Chocolate Lover

by M. E. Rabb
Speak, 2004
185 Pages
Retail Price: \$5.99
Paperback

By Elyse Thibodeaux
Staff Writer



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Note: Now that we are fully immersed in summer break, a parents' most daunting task is to keep their children reading. It is certainly a challenge to get children to come inside, take a deep relaxing breath and sit still and read when the lure of the summer sun, the beach and their friends beckon. So, in hopes of engaging children's interest in books, I have selected two books that make fine summer reading. The first was written for junior high and high school readers and the second, for those in elementary through intermediate school.

father died and their horrid stepmother stood to inherit his money and become their legal guardian, they dyed their hair, got new identities and took off to Indiana to begin a new life. Throughout the summer months the two girls found themselves in the small town of Venice where they established a residence, found jobs with a private investigator and began to make new friends. All seemed to be going as planned until Sophie began high school and found herself face-to-face with a flyer for a lecture to be given by a man sporting her real last name. Having thought they were the only family that

remained since the death of their father, Sam and Sophie sought to discover if this man could truly be related to them.

Missing Persons: The Chocolate Lover is a wonderfully light investigative tale. The two girls, Sam and Sophie, two under-aged Jewish girls from Queens, NY who are portraying themselves as both older and from Cincinnati, not to mention Christian, are multi-dimensional characters instilled with a longing for love and family and the "chutzpah" to take on the world together.

I really enjoyed the way author M. E. Rabb infused this work with history of the holocaust and its importance in most Jewish families while keeping the storyline light and entertaining. Considering the subject matter, I believe it is quite a feat to manage. She did it well. She also delved into young love with both girls as they find ways to deal with their situation.

The mystery side of the story was cleverly prepared

using the lecturer's character, Leo Shattenberg's long lost love, Ruth, as the person they must find. Leo and Ruth, having survived the war, came to America in love and with thoughts of a long and happy life together. But when Ruth disappears and Leo, his heart broken, is unable to find her, he begins a new life.

But, some 60 years later, a painting previously belonging to her turns up in a nearby museum, prompting his search for her again with the help of Sam, Sophie and their boss, Gus.

Rating: Books
(out of five)

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BOOKSELLERS

Best-seller List
July 8-14

HARDCOVER	1. <i>The Da Vinci Code</i> - Dan Brown	NONFICTION	1. <i>My Life</i> - Bill Clinton	PAPERBACK	1. <i>The Wedding</i> - Nicholas Sparks
	2. <i>Sams Letters to Jennifer</i> - James Patterson		2. <i>The South Beach Diet</i> - Arthur Agatston, MD		2. <i>The Secret Life of Bees</i> - Sue Monk Kidd
	3. <i>Ten Big Ones</i> - Janet Evanovich		3. <i>Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim</i> - David Sedaris		3. <i>The South Beach Diet Good Fats/Good Carbs Guide</i> - Arthur Agalston
	4. <i>The Rule of Four</i> - Ian Caldwell & Dustin Thomason		4. <i>Father Joe</i> - Tony Hendra		4. <i>Devil Wears Prada</i> - Lauren Weisberger
	5. <i>The Five People You Meet in Heaven</i> - Mitch Albom		5. <i>Eats, Shoots and Leaves</i> - Lynne Truss		5. <i>Lovely Bones</i> - Alice Sebold
	6. <i>Angels & Demons</i> - Dan Brown		6. <i>Shadow Divers</i> - Robert Kurson		6. <i>The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time</i> - Mark Haddon
	7. <i>Dark Tower VI: Song of Susannah</i> - Stephen King		7. <i>The Purpose-Driven Life</i> - Rick Warren		7. <i>Anna Karenina</i> - Leo Tolstoy
	8. <i>The Bourne Legacy</i> - Eric Van Lustbader		8. <i>The Automatic Millionaire</i> - David Bach		8. <i>The Time Traveler's Wife</i> - Audrey Niffenegger
	9. <i>Blowout</i> - Catherine Coulter		9. <i>The South Beach Diet Cookbook</i> - Arthur Agatston, MD		9. <i>Reading Lolita in Tehran</i> - Azar Nafisi
	10. <i>Bergdorf Blondes</i> - Plum Sykes		10. <i>Big Russ & Me</i> - Tim Russert		10. <i>Under the Banner of Heaven</i> - Jon Krakauer

'Smart' pets rule in this fun read

I Was a Third Grade Bodyguard

by Mary Jane Auch
Holiday House,
2003
73 Pages
Retail Price: \$15.95
Hardcover

By Elyse Thibodeaux
Staff Writer

Arful is in most ways your normal dog - except that he can talk "peoplespeak." This was the outcome of a science project gone awry some time ago. Brian - his human - Josh and Dougie are the only ones who know that Arful can really talk, so when Brian brings a surprise home for him right before Christmas, he thinks he his getting the best present a dog could ever wish for - a fresh, plump chicken. Little does he know that this chicken is Brian's third grade class chicken, an egotistical math wizard and definitely not for eating.

I Was a Third Grade Bodyguard is an amusing and off-beat children's book that will capture the heart of both dog and chicken lovers

alike. The affectionate main character, Arful is basically just a dog, though one who believes he is way smarter than he truly is. But like most owners and dogs, Brian loves him no matter what.

On the other hand, Talullah, the chicken - the pride of Brian's third grade class - is off-the-wall funny with her scathing wit and her better-than-thou attitude. When Emily, another of Brian's classmates, feels cheated that she was not the one honored by the privilege of taking Talullah home over the Christmas holidays, she confronts Brian regarding the chicken's safety and care. The situation provides the perfect avenue for humor.

Now a full-time writer and illustrator of children's books, Mary Jane Auch was formerly a textile designer and occupational therapist for children with cerebral palsy. She resides with her husband and collaborator, Herm Auch, in Rochester, NY. This is her third book in the "I Was a..." series.

Rating: Books
(out of five)

Books 1/2 Price All the Time!

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