

Thrilling Summer Reads

April Ide, Library Director

In the summer I gravitate toward fast-paced, frothy, and fun thrillers and mysteries. Oh, who am I kidding? That's what I prefer most of the time! Here are a few I've enjoyed lately that would pair well with a patio and a cold refreshment.

Author Emily is recovering from a long illness and going through a rough divorce. She's also trying desperately to meet the deadline for her next cozy mystery while facing a nasty case of writer's block. So, when her lifelong best friend Chess invites her to spend six weeks in Italy, all expenses paid, Emily immediately books a plane ticket. Their villa is breathtaking, and Emily is quickly enthralled by the tragic history of the place: the villa was the setting for a murder in the 1970s, one that involved famed musician Lana Larchmont and infamous horror author Mari Godwick. As Emily learns more about the women's past, she begins to write a new story, one that she finds herself jealously guarding from Chess. Rachel Hawkins cleverly mirrors the stories of two pairs of women as they grapple with creative passion and romantic betrayal in her latest, "The Villa."

Finlay Donovan and her nanny/accountant/partner-in-crime Vero are back for a second installment in "Finlay Donovan Knocks 'Em Dead" by Elle Cosimano. I won't say too much about the plot in case you haven't read the first book, "Finlay Donovan Is Killing It." The second book picks right up where we left Finlay and Vero, in a mess at least 30% of their own making, trying desperately to keep their friends and family safe while in way over their heads. The "Finlay Donovan" series has great characters, lots of action, and is funny to boot. I read the print version of the first book and moved to audiobook with the second, and I highly recommend listening to the audiobook. It really adds intensity to the action.

Alex is still reeling after the ugly end of her friendship with Wren, so she is dismayed to learn that Wren will also be attending an exclusive writing retreat with famed author Roza Vallo. As the retreat begins, the two reach an unspoken agreement to avoid each other. Their uneasy truce proves hard to sustain because Roza seems determined to cause friction between them and with the other women in the group. Roza claims she is merely trying to spark inspiration, but Alex suspects a darker motivation. When bright and friendly Poppy goes missing during a ghostly game, the tenuous peace is broken and the women must decide if they can trust one another or anyone else at the retreat, including Roza. I devoured "The Writing Retreat" by Julia Bartz.

Assistant Library Director Meggin Kitterman recommended "The Golden Spoon" by Jessa Maxwell in a recent article, but I think it's worth a second plug. Betsy Martin is the beloved host of "Bake Week," a long-running baking competition show that is set at her family's estate in Vermont. Six bakers join Betsy and her new (and unwanted) cohost Archie to film a new season of the good-natured competition. But things quickly devolve as the first two contestants are eliminated after suspicious mishaps with their bakes, Archie insinuates himself into Betsy's spotlight, and someone dies on set. The structure of this book is what really worked for me. We know right away that someone dies, but

we don't know who dies or who kills them. I spent the first three quarters of the book getting attached to characters and becoming increasingly worried that one of my favorites was going to be killed or was a murderer; delicious suspense indeed. This is not quite a cozy mystery, but is very light on the gore, which I also appreciated.

New Ulm Public Library is located at 17 North Broadway and is open Monday-Thursday from 9:30 a.m.-8 p.m. and Friday-Saturday from 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m. The library will be closed on Monday, June 19 for Juneteenth. We look forward to seeing you at the library.