

Information, Answers & Reviews

The Flight of a Painting of a Little Yellow Bird



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?Bad artists copy, good artists steal.? Toward the end of this novel, Hobie, the elderly painter of masterpiece copies, says this to Theo, his sorta-kinda adopted son. Is it ironic that Theo has stolen a famous painting, *The Goldfinch*? This long, convoluted, powerful novel tells the story of a young boy whose life was transformed at age 13 by this random act.

And a random bombing in the art galleries of New York?s Metropolitan Museum that killed his mother. Theo?s mom had left him to buy a present in the museum store when the bombing happened. After the blast, Theo crawls amid bodies on the floor to find one older man alive. With some of his last breaths, the man points to the painting and says, ?I beg of you.? Theo interprets this as a plea to rescue it. The dying man Welty also gives the boy an elaborate ring and the name of a business in Manhattan: Hobart and Blackwell. ?Ring the green bell.?

Thus begins the travels/travails of Theo. His dad, an alcoholic is alive, but in no shape to care for him.

Ditto for his one surviving grandparent. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on March 25, 2014

[The Goldfinch](#)

[Art](#)

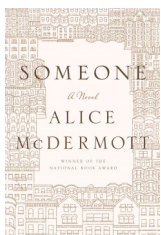
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Someone



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No one else writes with the lyric flow of Alice McDermott. Or covers childhood and adolescence with so much immediacy as though it were happening right now. When I surfaced for breaths while reading this novel, I had to remind myself that I wasn't in a stuffy walk-up in Brooklyn listening to children play ball and jump rope in the street.

The novel tells the story of Marie Commeford as a child, teen, young woman and as an older woman with grown children of her own. Marie is the stubborn second child of Irish Catholics. Her brother Gabe is remarkably obedient and good, already in grade school, on a path for the priesthood, whereas Marie is rebellious, adventurous, and not one for rules.

Her dad takes her on walks to speakeasies and encourages her fiery temperament; her mother tries to discipline her and tamp down her rebellious spirit. Saturday mornings, she runs to her best friend Gerty's house and buries herself in her mother's lap, but Gerty's kind mother dies in childbirth. This tragedy convinces Marie to refuse to learn how to cook. Gerty had learned and look what happened to her. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on March 19, 2014

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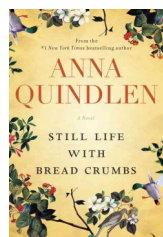
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Still Life with Bread Crumbs



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‘Make it new!’ Ezra Pound once said about writing and art. Quindlen’s seventh novel explores a New York City woman photographer doing just that by relocating temporarily to a small town upstate and taking entirely different kinds of photographs. Rebecca Winter has just turned sixty, gotten divorced, and her 20-something-year-old son hardly needs her anymore.

One of the first people she meets in this unnamed town is Jim Bates, a blond, pink-cheeked roofer, who blushes easily and is very kind. The first thing he helps her with is getting rid of her attic raccoon which he immediately shoots—saying it’s the only way to truly get rid of a coon because otherwise it will keep coming back.

Rebecca always fusses about money. Money only dribbles in from a famous photograph from decades ago, the one that gave this book its title. Rebecca shot the picture after one of her ex’s myriad dinner parties that she always had to clean up after. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on March 10, 2014

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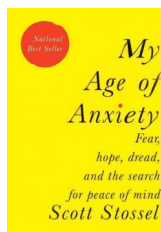
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My Age of Anxiety



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This is both a personal and a historical overview of anxiety, a mental illness that far too many Americans share. In the first decade of this century, the numbers grew to 16.2 million?in fact more Americans see a doctor for anxiety than for back pain and migraine combined. Stossel, who suffers terribly from panic attacks, fear of flying, a nervous stomach, and severe social anxiety, has been remarkably successful as both an author and the editor of *The Atlantic*. My favorite section is the opening one titled "The Riddle of Anxiety." Here he compares how philosophical and psychological greats described the disease. Plato believed that anxiety and other mental problems arose "not from physiological imbalances but from disharmony of the soul." Hippocrates believed that "body juices" caused madness. He said, "You will find the brain humid, full of sweat and smelling badly." This description came very close to the author at his wedding, except that it was his body that sweated profusely. He had such a panic attack at the altar that his best man was afraid he would faint. [Read more](#)

Posted by Dory L. on February 26, 2014

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