



Transcript



Arts, Literature and Music

A Good Read - 01

Twisted, by Jeffrey Deaver (Simon and Schuster)

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Staff from the Salisbury Library Service, preparing for their contributions to A Good Read

You'd think that being a librarian, I'd be reading ALL the time....I guess I do read, but mostly equipment instructions, bills and emails and occasionally the newspaper!

Even at home, it's really hard to find time to sit and read – everything else seems to take control of those few hours after work, and on the weekends. My husband isn't a "reader", so I feel rather anti-social if I sit there silent or hide in another room. I love it that he likes to talk with me, but it means he asks me questions while I try to read – and in spite of women being able to "multi task", I'm not one of those - I can't read and hold a conversation at the same time.

That's why it's so important for me to make sure the bit of reading time I do have, is spent on a really enjoyable book. I have, in the past, started some books and never finished them

Although I have read many novels, they often take me weeks to finish, and I guess the story gets a bit old by the time I finish it. That's why I've decided that short stories are perfect for me . I can start one AND finish it in one sitting (even if I do ignore the pile of washing for yet another day). A short story packs all the characters and plot into a brief explosion of imagination. The details must be concise and rich to make sure you engage with the personalities straight away, and have just enough background to develop the suspense. The stories are completely self-contained and are very satisfying because I can take in the whole story in one sitting..

I started many years ago reading the Patricia Cornwell series about a Chief Medical Examiner, who often with the FBI. That series started well before the huge popularity of TV police and crime shows – like CSI, NYPD and Law & Order. I enjoy the jigsaw puzzle way that crime stories follow, but also the scientific information that comes out along the way. The TV shows tend to over discuss and simplify the details of crime scene evidence, almost spoon-feeding the audience to make sure they follow each step. Then I watched the movie "The Bone Collector" starring Denzel Washington and Angelina Jolie. It had twists and turns, new ideas on how crimes could be solved, and interesting characters.

I enjoyed it so much, I looked up other books written by Jeffrey Deaver. He writes mystery thrillers, with a "cat and mouse" style, much like James Patterson. The details and processes within the story are very scientific, using state of the art forensic technology (without very much actual gorey stuff. If it's going to be messy, he usually leaves that up to your own imagination). Deaver

uses very real characters. They come from all backgrounds and have some really interesting points of view on life - and death. Sometimes they're quirky, sometimes sweet and innocent.

I have read Deaver's two collections of short stories. The first one titled "Twisted" and the sequel is "More twisted". Be warned - Deaver's short stories ALWAYS have a great twist at the end! That's why I love them.

The stories are all very different, and all have different characters and plots. Many of the stories have been published before in the Alfred Hitchcock and Ellery Queen Mystery Magazines.

Deaver enjoys what he calls "sleight of hand" - while he has you following the story in one way, he's actually coming around from behind, to throw in the twist. He uses lateral thinking to develop the plot - he has you believing it's going along one direction, until you realise you've seen what he wants you to see, what you expected to see, but not what actually happened. The endings are both satisfying and frustrating at the same time. I usually sit there for a few moments, going over the details in my mind like a flash-back, to discover where I guessed wrong and where the clues were. Most times it is my own prejudice and emotion that lead me to accuse the wrong person of the crime.

Deaver uses a very deep understanding of the strangeness and quirks of human nature, to develop his alternative story lines. In "Born Bad" the story follows the despair of a mother, who's daughter hates her, refused to help her family, had unacceptable friends and ran away from home, leading a terrible life. The evil daughter suddenly turns up at the front door, and the Mother is afraid she's going to shoot her. In the struggle that follows, you discover that the mother has always been a drug dealer, and abused the daughter. The daughter refused to become part of Mother's sordid life, and ran away to join the police. Now she is back, with a gun, to arrest her mother. The twist is from the slant of the details and the way you interpret the information you're given....

One of my favourites is titled " Beautiful ". The successful life and career a beautiful young supermodel becomes unbearable when she becomes the target of a stalker. We are led to the understanding that it's just something she has to put up with, as part of her fame. The police are helpful, but can't end her uncertain fear.. She decides it must end with either his death, or hers. She takes the matter into her own hands , with a totally unexpected outcome. The stalker finally tracks her down again, to a new address, a new life, only to find that the supermodel has indeed died - she has transformed herself into a very ordinary looking suburban housewife using "reverse" plastic surgery. She defeats the stalker at his own game, now no longer an object of beauty, she is no longer worth stalking. That's the kind of twist I like.

It's always disappointing to reach the end of the book.. Even more disappointing to find you have read ALL the books by your favourite author! I hope Jeffrey Deaver writes more short stories, but in the meantime, I'll have to try a few other authors to get my " twisted thrills". I'm going to see if the Library has any short stories by Cathy Reichs, Anne Perry or Michael Connelly. I can always find a few minutes for a good twisted read.....