

From the Stacks
By Julie Orf
Dunklin County Library

The force that propels a story forward or the reason it "happens" is either plot-driven or character-driven. *Breakfast at Tiffany's* by Truman Capote is a character-driven book because the complex personality and peculiar habits of Holly Golightly are the focus. All the action is secondary as the reader learns about the main character through her conversations and interactions. A plot-driven novel relies heavily on the external circumstances as in *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn. Characters and plot must co-exist to have a successful novel.

Joy Fielding's latest psychological thriller, *Jenny Cooper Has a Secret*, has surprising twists and turns but the characters are definitely the best part. When 76-year-old Linda Davidson moves in with her daughter and son-in-law after her husband's death and her best friend's dementia diagnosis, she expects comfort. Instead, their constant arguments send her looking for an escape. While visiting her friend at a memory care facility, Linda meets 92-year-old Jenny Cooper, a dementia patient who claims to be a killer. Linda writes off Jenny's confession as confusion, but as Jenny shares details of her many victims, Linda begins to wonder. When a fellow patient dies, Linda cannot shake the feeling that Jenny might be telling the truth.

With fast pace and quick-witted characters, David Housewright has readers going on an archeological dig with P.I. Rushmore McKenzie in his 22nd novel, *Them Bones*. Recluse millionaire and unofficial private detective Rushmore McKenzie never turns down a challenge or a friend. So when his friend, doctoral candidate Angela Bjork, comes to him for help, he cannot say no even if the case is unlike anything he has ever handled. Angela was on a dig in Montana when a rare Ankylosaurus skull she had just unearthed was stolen. Worth millions on the black market, the chance to recover it is fading fast. McKenzie will have to contend with a group of people who are willing to do anything to get what they want.

Reeling from a botched CIA mission, former paramilitary officer Skwerl is down on his luck. So is former Afghan pilot, Big Cheese Aziz, who now works the graveyard shift at a gas station. The two are recruited by a shadowy network to steal a multi-million-dollar private jet from a remote airfield in Africa. But as their mission unfolds, they discover that their contact has vanished, their handler is acting suspiciously, and the true reason for their payday is a mystery. With the women in their lives now in danger and the stakes higher than ever, Skwerl and Cheese must navigate the lies and hidden agendas of the modern world of war and intelligence. With dark humor, quirky characters, and espionage, *Sheepdogs* is from the creative mind of Elliot Ackerman.

Fade In by Kyle Mills is a novel with plenty of action and a main character with plenty of one-liners to keep the story light. Shot in the line of duty, former Navy SEAL Salam "Fade" al-Fayed is given a second chance at life by a shadowy organization, but it comes at a price. After an intense recovery, Fade is drafted into an elite paramilitary unit run by a group of powerful billionaires who have decided to take control of the world's governments. When a deadly pathogen is unleashed from China, Fade is sent on a high-stakes mission to stop it. He must now question if he is helping to save humanity or enslave it.

Admittedly inspired by John Grisham's *The Firm*, Steve Berry creates a tense thriller with two lead characters trying to dig out the truth in *The List*. A Georgia paper mill, Southern Republic's prosperity is built on a highly unusual and lethal system for controlling costs, a secret known only to the company's three owners. Now, one of them, Christopher Bozin, has a change of heart. He personally orchestrated Brent Walker's return to Concord, seeing it as his chance at redemption. When attorney Brent Walker is hired as assistant general counsel, he and his friend, union official Hank Reed, uncover a cryptic list of nine-digit numbers. The company's leaders fear charges, and Brent and Hank's investigation puts their lives on the line.