

From the Stacks
By Julie Orf
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After reading an emotionally heavy, complex, or dense book, readers often turn to these lighter, faster reads. A palate cleanser book is the literary equivalent of a refreshing sip of water between rich courses. A palate cleanser might be a cozy mystery, a romantic comedy, a short thriller, or any engaging story that is easy to slip into and enjoy without much mental effort. The goal is not necessarily depth. The goal is giving your reading brain a chance to reset before diving into the next big book. Because a good reading life, like a good library, thrives on variety.

The Method is the new twisty thriller from Matthew Quirk, the author of *The Night Agent*. Actress Anna Vaughn is fearless on screen, often playing doomed brunettes with a dangerous edge. She has spent years training to fight, shoot, and drive for her roles. Off-camera, Anna's life is quieter, more focused on keeping her career afloat so she can care for her younger sister. When her best friend Natalie suddenly disappears after a date with a mysterious man, the clues point to foul play and a shadowy ring of spies in Manhattan. Determined to find her, Anna joins forces with FBI agent Kevin Matthews, who is tracking a string of killings tied to a powerful group of oligarchs. Anna goes undercover in the world of New York's elite following Natalie's trail. As the danger closes in, Anna must become as tough and deadly as the characters she once only pretended to be.

The Great Depression rages, Prohibition is ending, and Al Capone sits in federal prison. Former strikebreaker turned private eye Hicks McTaggart thinks he has found steady work until a routine job sends him searching for the runaway heiress to a Wisconsin cheese fortune. Before long, Hicks is shanghaied onto an ocean liner and stranded in Hungary, where the language is baffling, the pastries endless, and the missing heiress nowhere to be found. When he finally catches up with her, he is swept into a tangle of Nazis, Soviet agents, British spies, swing musicians, and assorted trouble he is neither trained nor paid to handle. Lost in a world he barely understands, Hicks' one advantage is the dawn of the Big Band Era because he happens to be a pretty good dancer. *Shadow Ticket* by Thomas Pynchon is a fast-paced caper with a dash of humor.

Number 11 in the Chicago Stars book series by Sarah Elizabeth Phillips, *And the Crowd Went Wild*, brings together a professional quarterback and an actress. After public humiliation, former sex symbol Dancy Flynn retreats to the secluded lake house of her high school boyfriend, hoping for a quiet place to regroup after nearly twenty years apart. Chicago Stars quarterback Clint Garrett is no longer the sweet kid she

remembers. Still bitter over his broken teenage heart, he banishes her to a refurbished railroad caboose in the woods and tries to keep his distance. Dancy has never been good at staying out of sight. As she struggles to rebuild her career and Clint fights to regain his focus, meddling family, unexpected troubles, and lingering sparks force them to confront their past and the possibility of a second chance.

Freida McFadden is known for her 30 or more published psychological thrillers. The latest, *Dear Debbie*, pleases fans as well. For years, Debbie Mullen shared practical wisdom in her advice column helping women cope with difficult marriages. Lately, Debbie's own life is falling apart. She has lost her job, her teenage daughters are acting strangely, and a tracking app suggests her husband is hiding something. Tired of being patient and sensible, Debbie decides it is time to follow her own advice. This time that advice might include a little payback.