

People & Places

Books

Tale of courage in 'Dead'

Fake allure evolves in Guillory's latest

By Alicia Rancilio

'While We Were Dating,' by Jasmine Guillory (Berkley)

Jasmine Guillory has built a universe with her six romance novels, where each story stands by itself but a character in one book can pop up in another. They're fun Easter eggs for her loyal readers.

In her new book, 'While We Were Dating,' Guillory brings back Ben Stephens, the fun-loving playboy brother of Theo, the central male character in her third book "The Wedding Party."

Ben's landed his big break at work as an advertising executive where he's tasked to lead an account featuring famous actress Anna Gardiner.



Guillory

Sparks immediately fly between the two but neither is looking for a relationship. Anna's Hollywood star is fading and Ben is not serious boyfriend material.

A flirty friendship develops but when Gardiner needs some good press, the pair begin a relationship for the cameras. Over time they realize there's more to this coupledom of convenience, but is it enough to actually make the relationship work?

This beach read has some bite as there are also themes of mental health struggles, body image, cultural differences and race, present throughout the novel.

"Dead by Dawn," by Paul Doiron (Minotaur)

As Mike Bowditch leaves a cluster of mobile homes known as "Pill Hill" and steers down a twisting mountain road in the dark, he is driving straight into an ambush.

He sees it too late, a line of metal spikes intended to tear his tires to shreds. He hears them burst as his truck topples over a ledge and crashes through the ice into the Androscoggin River.

So begins "Dead by Dawn," the 12th novel in Paul Doiron's unwaveringly superb series about a courageous, battle-tested Maine game warden.

Mike's first thought as the cabin fills with water is not for himself but for Shadow, his fierce half-dog, half wolf companion locked in a metal cage in back. He manages to free the animal, but when he pulls himself from the truck, the swift current and drags him under the ice.

Just when it appears that he is done for, he surfaces in a small area of open water and hauls himself to land. But his ordeal has just begun. It is the dead of winter, the ground thick with snow. He is in the middle of nowhere with no matches to start a fire. He is soaked to his bones, and hypothermia is setting in.

When it looks like things couldn't get worse, a bullet finds his leg. He is being hunted.

What follows are two compelling, alternating narratives. In a series of flashbacks, we learn the events that led to the ambush as Mike tries to uncover the truth behind a cold-case murder. In the other, he fights for his life in a wilderness survival story as compelling Jack London's classic short story, "To Build a Fire."

Doiron draws on both meticulous research and his own wilderness experiences in Maine to give the struggle an unmistakable feeling of authenticity. And as always in a Bowditch novel, the prose is as sharp as an arrow and so lyrical that it sometimes borders on poetry.

"People We Meet on Vacation," by Emily Henry (Berkley)

A truly good romantic comedy, whether it be a novel or a movie, justifies why two people are drawn to each other. It builds a case for the relationship so it makes sense why they're together.

In Emily Henry's latest book, "People We Meet on Vacation," she does just that, introducing Poppy and Alex, two polar opposites who met in college but happened to both be from the same town in Ohio. It's a shared ride home for the summer (hello, wink to one of the greatest rom-coms ever, "When Harry Met Sally") where they talk about everything and anything, and a friendship is born.

The two remain best friends even beyond college when their lives take them to different places. Poppy moves to New York to become a travel writer. Alex moves back home to teach. They establish a tradition to take a vacation together every year to catch up. Each time they reunite, Poppy and Alex reestablish their rapport, as if no time has passed. The vacation is a sacred ritual to look forward to, no matter who they're dating or what they're doing.

Except something happened on their last trip to Croatia two years ago that caused a rift, and now Poppy and Alex haven't spoken in two years. Poppy gets up the nerve to propose another trip with the hope of getting her friend back, and to her delight, Alex agrees.

The book jumps around in its timeline, to past vacations and present day — detailing their history and orbit around the other.

What Henry is especially skilled at is writing dialogue. The banter between Poppy and Alex is so natural, quick and witty that it would make Shonda Rhimes do a slow clap. It also reminds the reader why these two come alive with each other in a way that they do not with anyone else.

Whether or not Poppy or Alex can resolve their difference remains to be seen, but Henry creates a story where you'll want to stick with it to see what happens.

Also:

NEW YORK: One of the country's most popular picture book authors is ready to add a few more words.

Adam Rubin, known to parents and kids for "Dragon Loves Tacos," is working on his first middle-grade book. "The Ice Cream Machine" is a collection of six humorous stories ranging from science fiction to adventure narratives.

"My message to kids has always been 'Reading is Fun,'" Rubin said in a statement recently. "But as my fans grow older, I want to show them that writing is where the real magic is. I hope to encourage young readers to write their own stories and share their imagination with the world."

Penguin Young Readers announced Wednesday that "The Ice Cream Machine" will be released in February. Each of the stories will feature black and white illustrations from a different artist, including Daniel Salmieri, who worked on "Dragon Loves Tacos." Rubin's other books include "Those Darn Squirrels!" and the upcoming "Gladys the Magic Chicken," scheduled for this fall. (AP)



Buddy Guy poses for a portrait to promote the latest installment of the PBS biography series, 'American Masters' on Wednesday, July 28, 2021, at his blues club Buddy Guy's Legends in Chicago. (AP)

Music

Blues guitar legend finds his own style

Guy looks back on a special career

NEW YORK, Aug 2, (AP): Blues guitar legend Buddy Guy has influenced some of the greatest rock guitarists of all time, including Eric Clapton, Jimmy Page and Gary Clark Jr. But the factors that led to his inspiration may not have happened if Guy hadn't taken a stand — literally.

"When I came to Chicago, most blues musicians, including Muddy Waters, they all was sitting in a chair playing. And I said, 'I can't play like them, but I think I can outdo them. I can stand up and jump off the stage and get some attention,'" Guy recently told The Associated Press.

Jumping around on stage, playing the guitar behind his back, and picking with his teeth brought him lots of attention, especially from an experimental guitarist from Seattle who was recently discharged from the Army named Jimi Hendrix. The future virtuoso not only reinvented the sound of the electric guitar, but he also drew on the showmanship Guy displayed.

"I'm blessed with that because I didn't know that many people would look at me and feel that way," the multi-Grammy winning Guy said.

Now the 84-year-old blues great becomes the subject of the latest installment of the PBS biography series "American Masters." The episode, "Buddy Guy: The Blues Chase the Blues Away," dives into his lengthy career.

Honored and humble about being recognized, Guy says he saw his contemporaries as better guitarists, so he had to find his own style. That came from being inspired by different types of music, ranging from gospel to country — a mix he equates to a Louisiana culinary specialty.

"You can call my guitar playing gumbo, because if you cook a gumbo in Louisiana, you throw every kind of meat you can. And that makes it more delicious than what it was if you just put one meat in it," he says.

Yet, all of the styles he put into his playing required extreme persever-

ance. Growing up in the Jim Crow era South and raised in a sharecropping family, Guy became fascinated the first time he saw someone play guitar. But actually having one to put in his hands and play created an obstacle he needed to overcome.

He would try and make his own, including using rubber bands as strings, before increasing his ingenuity to the wire strands from the window screens in the family home. But the ever-dwindling screens came to the attention of his mother. "My mom noticed mosquitoes in the house because something was wrong with the windows."

He recalls getting his hands on a real guitar during a Christmas celebration when its player took a break to get drunk, providing Guy with some time to figure out how to play what he had seen. His dad eventually bought him a guitar for "a couple of dollars" and he never looked back.

Instrument

But mastering the instrument was one thing, finding an audience was another. By the time Guy came on the scene, there was nothing lucrative about playing music in those days because there wasn't a crossover to a mainstream audience.

At the time, he says white audiences didn't have an appetite for the blues, with a few turning up at shows every "once in a while."

"Nobody was making a decent living off of playing the blues," he says. "It was going from town to town." Sometime he said he just made enough money to make it to the next town.

It was the love of music that kept him and his counterparts playing. But that would soon change in the 1960s with the arrival of a new sound on the airwaves.

"The British," Guy said succinctly.

More appropriately, he credits the Rolling Stones, whose guitarist Keith Richards and singer Mick Jagger especially admired Guy's playing and the

blues in general.

When the TV variety show "Shindig!" wanted the Stones to appear, Jagger had one condition. "Jagger said I'll come on the show if you let me bring Muddy Waters. And they say, 'Who in the hell is that?' And he said, 'You mean to tell me you don't know who Muddy Waters is? We named ourselves after his famous record, 'Rolling Stone.'"

After that, Guy says the blues exploded.

Riding the wave of Waters, BB King, Otis Rush, and other players, Guy found his own style and became one of the most recognizable blues artists of the Chicago blues sound. In 2005, Clapton and King inducted Guy into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

While Guy saw the blues rise from a personal passion to main influence of the biggest rock bands in history, he said his passion has not changed. "I'm playing my guitar for the life that I'm living in this point and time," he said.

Also:

LOS ANGELES: Charles Connor, known for being Little Richard's drummer who performed with other music greats including James Brown and Sam Cooke, has died. He was 86.

Connor's daughter, Queenie Connor Sonnefeld, said her father died peacefully in his sleep early Saturday while under hospice care at his home in Glendale, California. She said her father had been diagnosed with normal pressure hydrocephalus, a brain disorder that causes fluid buildup.

Connor Sonnefeld called the drummer a "great father" who was always positive and a person who never gave up on his dreams.

"He was one of those drummers that was a bricklayer of creating that rock 'n' roll genre," she said. "He played behind so many legendary musicians in the 1950s. He was a loving grandfather and was very proud of his family and took a lot of pride in his contributions to rock 'n' roll."



Actor and television personality Terry Crews poses with a replica of his new star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame following a ceremony for him, Friday, July 30, 2021, in Los Angeles. (AP)



Smollett



Wong

Variety

HONG KONG: A prominent Hong Kong singer and pro-democracy activist was arrested by the city's anti-corruption watchdog Monday over accusations that he broke the law by singing at a political rally three years ago.

The arrest of Anthony Wong in the latest official move against those who had been pushing for greater democracy in the semiautonomous Chinese territory.

Hong Kong's Independent Commission Against Corruption said Wong performed two songs at the 2018 rally and urged attendees to vote for pro-democracy candidate Au Nok-hin in a legislative by-election.

The watchdog also charged Au, who won the election, in part for publicizing the rally on social media and saying that Wong would be performing.

The watchdog said in a statement that providing others with refreshments and entertainment at an election event is "a corrupt conduct and a serious offence" and is against the elections ordinance.

Local media reported that Wong was released on bail. Au, meanwhile, has been in jail since March. Au was one of the 47 pro-democracy activists arrested for alleged subversion over an unofficial primary election they held last year.

The arrests come as authorities crack down on dissent in Hong Kong following 2019 anti-government protests sparked by concerns that the former British colony was losing the freedoms it was promised when it was handed over to Chinese control in 1997.

Beijing last year imposed a sweeping national security law that has since been used to arrest more than 100 pro-democracy figures. Changes have also been made to Hong Kong's election laws to reduce the number of directly elected lawmakers and give a largely pro-Beijing committee the leeway to nominate lawmakers aligned with Beijing.

The crackdown has drawn criticism from many governments around the world.

Wong rose to fame in the 1980s as the vocalist for pop duo Tat Ming Pair and later embarked on a solo career.

He became an outspoken supporter of the city's democracy movement, backing the 2019 protests as well as the so-called Umbrella Revolution protests that hit the city in 2014. His support for the 2014 protests led to a ban on performing in main-

land China and saw his music removed from streaming sites. (AP)

CHICAGO: A judge on Friday said he would not kick one of Jussie Smollett's attorneys off the case even though he

believes the attorney spoke to two men the actor allegedly hired to help him carry out a staged racist and homophobic attack.

In his ruling, Cook County Judge James Linn took the unusual step of prohibiting Smollett attorney Neny Uche from questioning the two brothers, Abinbola and Olabinjo

Osudairo, should the case go to trial, and that someone else on the actor's legal team would have to do it should the need arise.

Special Prosecutor Dan Webb argued that the alleged conversations between Uche and the brothers in 2019, shortly after Smollett said he was a victim of a hate crime, created a conflict of interest. However Linn found that it was in the court's interest to allow Smollett to retain his chosen lawyer "when his liberty is at stake," even if the judge found Webb's concerns to be legitimate.

"The totality of the evidence shows clearly and convincingly that at different points, Mr Uche talked to both brothers and their mother," Linn wrote.

The ruling came two weeks after Linn held a hearing that the media and public were not allowed to attend. So it wasn't immediately clear if Uche continued to deny that he spoke to the brothers. Uche didn't immediately reply to a phone message seeking comment.

But the judge said there was convincing evidence that Uche had talked to the brothers and that the subject of those discussions included a \$3,500 check. The judge didn't elaborate, but at the center of the case against Smollett is the \$3,500 he allegedly paid the brothers to carry out the January 2019 attack in which the Black, openly gay actor told police, two masked men beat him and looped a makeshift noose around his neck before running off. (AP)



Brittany Howard performs on Day 4 of the Lollapalooza Music Festival, Sunday, Aug. 1, at Grant Park in Chicago. (AP)