

Thrillers are great for summer afternoons

Not traditional mysteries, these novels explore the darker places in the human mind

By Lisa Britton
Go! Magazine

While I always have a book — or two or three — that I'm reading, it seems like the long days of summer are perfectly primed for hours and hours of losing myself in a story.

Especially in the dappled shade of my backyard, with a glass of iced tea close at hand.

Reading tends to be seasonal for me, similar to cooking. In the winter, I choose more complicated recipes that warm up the kitchen at the same time. These are the days when I also choose more literary reading or nonfiction that requires a bit more attention — and can fill the time while the pasta sauce is simmering.

Summer reading is like summer cooking — I want quick, easy recipes that don't take a lot of thought or energy. I choose my books the same way — I lean toward fiction that is either lighthearted, like an amusing romantic comedy that falls into the "beach read" category, or an absorbing mystery that keeps me turning the pages.

I recently read two thrillers in one

week: "The Girl from Widow Hills" by Megan Miranda and "A Flicker in the Dark" by Stacy Willingham.

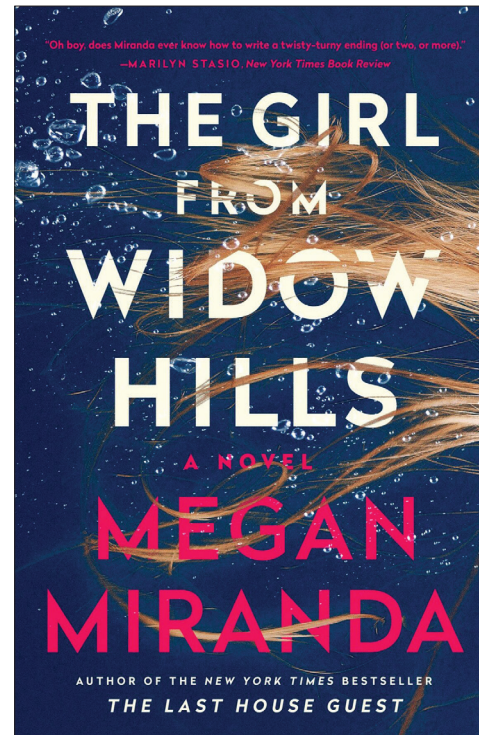
These are not murder mysteries, but psychological thrillers that had me guessing the entire time because I knew the most obvious culprit probably wasn't the bad one.

In "The Girl from Widow Hills," the protagonist is a woman who, 20 years prior, was swept away in a storm and rescued three days later from the sewer system. She struggles with claustrophobia, and sleep walks to the point that she'll wake up outside with no recollection of opening the door.

She also lives in a secluded, dark area with one neighbor — the perfect setting for a scary story. One night, she awakes outside and stumbles over a dead body ... who turns out to be the man who rescued her years before.

Thrillers can tend to be somewhat formulaic, but I do enjoy a compelling story with interesting characters who all are a bit suspicious. And I must admit, I did not see the end coming.

"A Flicker in the Dark" starts with a more sinister premise: 20 years prior to the start of the book (I'm seeing a pattern with 20-year anniversaries here) Chloe Davis' father was accused and convicted of murdering six teenage

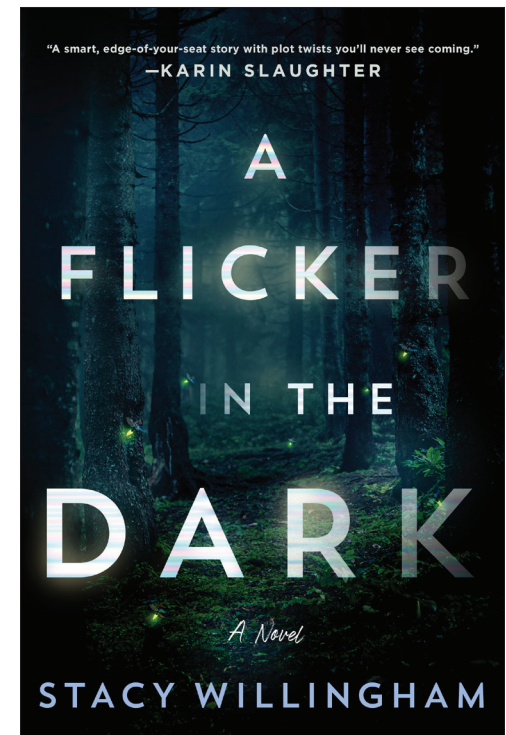


Goodreads

girls. He's been in prison ever since, and she's never visited him.

As the anniversary approaches, Chloe is now a psychologist in a different town. But then a teenage girl disappears and is found dead in the cemetery. Then another girl disappears.

The pattern is so close to the one from her childhood that she obsessively starts investigating on her own — but neither she, nor the reader, see the truth until quite near the end of the book.



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These novels reminded me a bit of "The Girl on the Train" by Paula Hawkins. Although we read thrillers with the mind that the author is using misdirection to fool us, it still takes skill to tell a story that zips forward at a pace that you want to keep reading.

Which is what I did, on a sunny afternoon in my yard.

Next up is "The Woman in Cabin 10" by Ruth Ware. The cover certainly looks scary...

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