

Midnight at the Bright Ideas Bookstore ~ Matthew Sullivan

Page Turners Meeting – March 13, 2018 @ 6:30

Discussion Questions:

1. While talking with Raj, Lydia reminisces about her relationship with Gas 'n Donuts: “but her nostalgia for the place had never been strong enough to outweigh her dread of dredging up the past” (138). How is Lydia’s relationship with the past presented, and how do you see it evolve over the course of the novel?
2. What were your initial impressions of the characters, specifically Lydia’s father? How did these impressions change over the course of the novel?
3. As Lydia assesses her own muddled memories of the Hammerman, she visits Moberg, who has long suspected that Lydia’s father was the murderer. Hurting and suspicious, Lydia also seems to believe that her father might be behind the murders. Did you find yourself believing that her father might be guilty? At what point did you realize who really had committed the murders?
4. Sullivan weaves a tight web of a story with characters whose lives are significantly intertwined yet all of these characters feel acute loneliness and isolation.
5. Mrs. Patel feels immense guilt about the O’Toole murders, believing that “their blood was on [her] hands” (302). Once she learns of Joey’s suicide, she experiences further emotional upheaval. Take a moment to think about the “justice” of Mrs. Patel’s final act. Did it take you by surprise? How did it resonate with you?
6. Lydia lives her life hiding in plain sight among books. Is that realistic?
7. What metaphorical gesture might Sullivan be making with Joey’s cutouts in books as a means of communication.
8. Using the quote below as a starting point, discuss Lydia’s drive to uncover the mystery.

But then *not* having answers had always been the point: the point of her childhood, the product of her hours in the library, the sum of [her father’s] philosophy when she was a little girl. You leave yourself open to answers, he’d always taught her. You keep turning pages, you finish chapters, you find the next book. You *seek* and you *seek* and you *seek*, and no matter how tough things become, you never settle (208).

9. Despite her long-term relationship with David, Lydia is still “fully aware of the one thing she could never reveal: her night with the Hammerman” (137). Once Lydia discovers that David has been communicating with her father, and he knows about the night of the murders she feels betrayed (213). Did you imagine that Lydia and David would ever recover from the secrecy?
10. Sullivan ends the novel with Raj and Lydia happening upon a television show about the O’Toole murders and “Little Lydia,” ending the novel with this line:

And though [Lydia] wanted to close her eyes and feel the promise of this moment, she couldn’t help but look beyond his shoulder, hoping to see for one last time the girl he’d just erased from the screen.

Where do you think Sullivan leaves us with Lydia and her relationship to the murders and to herself?

***Midnight at the Bright Ideas Bookstore* ~ Matthew Sullivan**

Page Turners Meeting – March 13, 2018 @ 6:30

Enhance Your Reading Experience...

The description of the Bright Ideas Bookstore was based on Sullivan's own experience working at the **Tattered Cover Bookstore in Denver, Colorado**. Look up images of the interior of the bookstore. Does the description of the wooden rafters and staircases remind you of the novel?

JOTTINGS...