

Must Summer Reading

[The Chronicle of Higher Education](#) recently published an article entitled, “Ms. Mentor’s Annual Guide to Academic Novels” written by, who else, Ms. Mentor (a popular contributor to CHE).

Question (from "Containing Multitudes"): O dear Ms. Mentor, we are languishing, awaiting your list of academic novels for us to peruse this summer. We yearn for Schadenfreude — along with frissons of recognition ("We must have the same provost!"). The worst academic novels excite our contempt or our "I could do better than that" feelings. The best inspire us. List on!
Answer: Ms. Mentor is happy to oblige...

Marc DePree’s comment

Let me begin by placing Choking Dead Chickens (CDC) in the context of satisfying Ms. Mentor’s criteria for academic novels worthy of your attention. “[Ms. Mentor] doesn’t want weather (she hates weather).” Yes, CDC satisfies this criterion. That was easy. “[S]he loathes rocks and rills.” Yes, again. So far so good. “One novel takes three chapters of transportation (plane, car, truck) to get to the action.” Yes, CDC’s okay here, too. I’m feeling pretty good about this. “Ms. Mentor prefers a fast story, with a hook, with a mystery, with something to be learned or someone to be smited.” CDC excels here.

Let’s do a few things different. First, I’m not a Lit prof. That by itself recommends a fresh, exciting edge to Choking Dead Chickens. Next, I’ll guarantee you’ll like the book. Guarantee? Here’s how the guarantee works. Send me an email requesting Choking Dead Chickens. I’ll email it to you. If you like it, mail me a dollar. If you don’t, you don’t pay. What other author offers such a guarantee? Many should. I made the same offer to a local audience and I was surprised how many mailed their dollar. An honor system works. Who needs publishing houses, agents, or amazon?

A brief synopsis: Like many people who move to take a new job, Rufus McCoy had no idea who his new colleagues were or what their current culture was. He was a neophyte New York academic lured to teach and do research in the “New South” at State University.

Rufus questions seemingly minor anomalies that don’t make sense to him. From his perspective his questions were simply a good faith effort to understand his new colleagues. From the perspective of the plantation mores of Mississippians,

his questions were not just impolite they were provocative.

An insider, Chad Holifeld, confidentially shepherds Rufus through a bureaucratic thicket meant to frustrate any inquisitive faculty member. Rufus needed a guide, but his insider's secret grand scheme dwarfed ongoing corruption.

When Rufus stumbled upon evidence that proved criminal behavior of faculty and administrators, the “New South” employed an old south solution.

PLEASE NOTE THAT REQUEST FOR A COPY CAN BE ANONYMOUS.

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fiona asked Marc DePree: Are there sex scenes?

Marc DePree answered fiona: An intense sex scene on the very first page along with a bombing. The couple (an administrator and faculty member) are at it while watching for the explosion.

Thanks for asking.