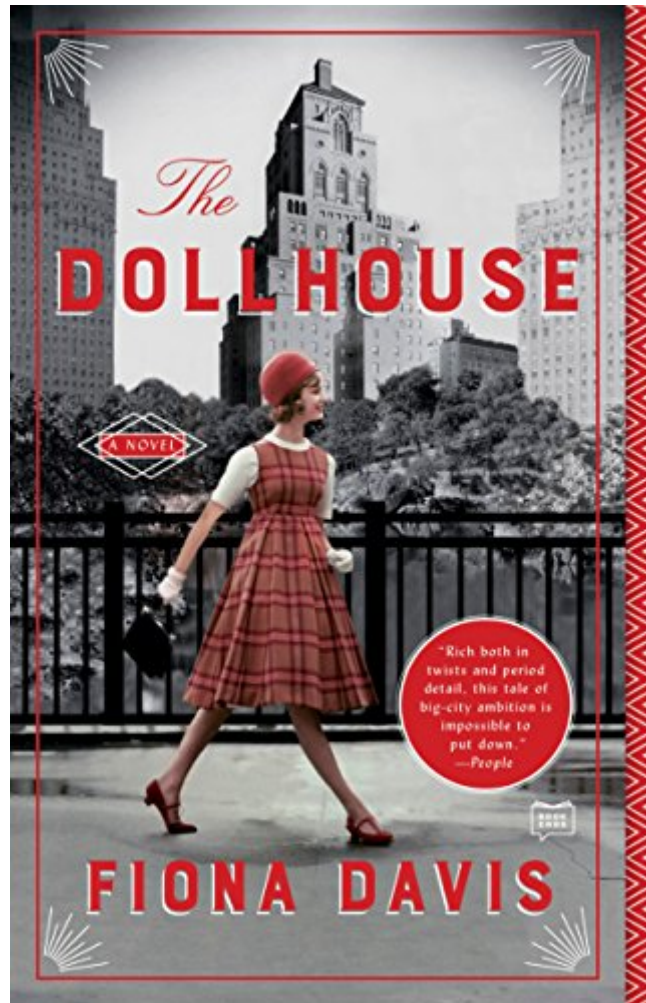




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The Dollhouse: A Novel



Synopsis

Rich both in twists and period detail, this tale of big-city ambition is impossible to put down. People Fiona Davis's stunning debut novel pulls readers into the lush world of New York City's glamorous Barbizon Hotel for Women, where in the 1950s a generation of aspiring models, secretaries, and editors lived side by side while attempting to claw their way to fairy-tale success, and where a present-day journalist becomes consumed with uncovering a dark secret buried deep within the Barbizon's glitzy past. When she arrives at the famed Barbizon Hotel in 1952, secretarial school enrollment in hand, Darby McLaughlin is everything her modeling agency hall mates aren't: plain, self-conscious, homesick, and utterly convinced she doesn't belong a notion the models do nothing to disabuse. Yet when Darby befriends Esme, a Barbizon maid, she's introduced to an entirely new side of New York City: seedy downtown jazz clubs where the music is as addictive as the heroin that's used there, the startling sounds of bebop, and even the possibility of romance. Over half a century later, the Barbizon's gone condo and most of its long-ago guests are forgotten. But rumors of Darby's involvement in a deadly skirmish with a hotel maid back in 1952 haunt the halls of the building as surely as the melancholy music that floats from the elderly woman's rent-controlled apartment. It's a combination too intoxicating for journalist Rose Lewin, Darby's upstairs neighbor, to resist not to mention the perfect distraction from her own imploding personal life. Yet as Rose's obsession deepens, the ethics of her investigation become increasingly murky, and neither woman will remain unchanged when the shocking truth is finally revealed.

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Customer Reviews

This novel hooked me early on. Each chapter alternates between present day New York City and 1950s New York City. In the present day, Rose is a journalist who becomes intrigued by an elderly neighbor who lived in her apartment building back when it was a hotel for women, nicknamed 'The Dollhouse'. In the 1950s, Darby is a resident of The Dollhouse who is enrolled in typing school yet struggling to accept this as her future. She becomes friends with a maid, Esme, and starts to step out of the perfectly laid path her mother set her on. I loved the descriptions of NYC- the culture, the neighborhoods, the fashion. It was also interesting (and a good reminder) to see how women were viewed back then. There were several twists and just when I thought I had it figured out, there was another! The end of the book wrapped up rather quickly but overall, I really enjoyed this novel.

I loved this book. I don't think a man would enjoy it much. I loved going back and forth to the lives of 1950's women living in a NY apartment building with rules and a woman to enforce them and no men allowed. Then to 2016 and a woman (Rose) is living in the same building in an apartment with a married man. How times changed! Rose is a journalist and does the research of the 1950's women so we get to know all the history and some mysteries are solved. I couldn't put this down.

This is a specific genre novel. It is not, nor does it pretend to be, high literature. It is a gem within its own kind. Each character goes through twists and turns that are very well crafted in a prose that is totally engaging. It was almost impossible for me to put it down. The suspense is great and the story takes the reader in unpredictable directions. In addition, even if it may be a bit superficial at times, as it is the rule in this particular genre, we are presented with issues of gender inequality and social expectations in a very sophisticated way. Each female character goes through life-changing events and is deeply transformed by them, often in a very unconventional way. Fiona Davis' debut is fabulous and she is a writer worth following.

OMG, what a great read. I'm going to recommend it to my book club. The main characters are beautifully drawn and described, the background of New York brings back memories and the juxtaposition of two times and places make this book so readable. A winner!

This book is incredible! I didn't want it to end. As soon as I finished, I wanted to start over again. I can't believe this is the author's first book! I can't wait to read her next book and I highly recommend this one! I wish I could give it more than five stars!

This book is set in a famous New York hotel: the renowned Barbizon Hotel. It weaves and integrates the multiple generations of women who lived there for part or most of their lives. Darby McLaughlin is the main character who is both lovable and easy to relate to. I really loved this book!

Descriptions of 50's New York were interesting, but the writing was rather juvenile. I felt like I was reading a script for "Days of Our Lives". Forced myself to finish it.

Very predictable...

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