

The Girls Next Door



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著者:

出版者:

出版时间:

装帧:

isbn:9780453006651

It is that last season of America's innocence, the summer of 1963, in quiet suburban Baltimore. No one is looking for signs of trouble, least of all George Willus—one of eight grown children, all of whom are named after the starting players of the 1927 Yankees. A forthright young man, only George could have instructed three comely prostitutes to "remove their drawers" in order to help them move a particularly heavy dresser. And only George could have believed that he knew what there was to

know about love and life and temptation beckoning over the backyard fence.

At first, Eve, Kristen, and Dusty-the girls next door-seem happy to comply with George's hands-off policy. Sure, they sunbathe nude, but only in the privacy of their own backyard (where George can barely see them-even with binoculars). And since they spend their off-hours renovating their house, the girls can hardly be called homewreckers-until Dusty asks George for help in fixing her lawnmower. Good neighbor to a fault, George does get her motor going (and in an unexpected way, she does the same for him). Now, he has stopped thinking of himself as a happily married man, and started thinking that he is, well, simply married. As George's best friend counsels, "These are the times that try men's souls." A wise and funny literary debut, *The Girls Next Door* scrutinizes love and marriage, baseball, commitment and sex and the feelings of loneliness that can take up residence in a young husband's heart.

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