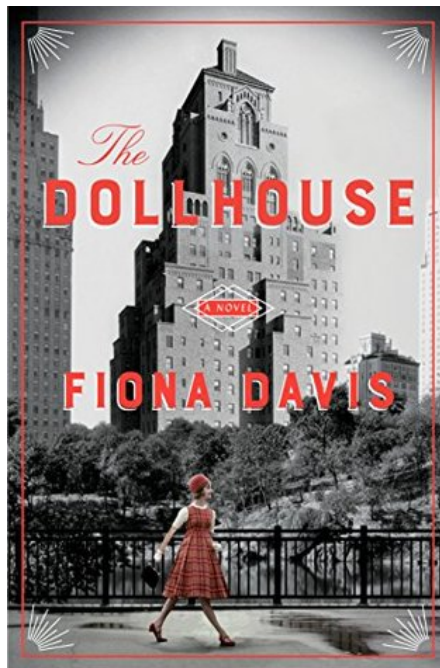




The Dollhouse

Fiona Davis

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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 1950's 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.

From the Hardcover edition.

The Dollhouse Details

Date : Published August 23rd 2016 by Dutton

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Author : Fiona Davis

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From Reader Review The Dollhouse for online ebook

Jeanette says

This was a toss up to rate it either a 3 or 4 star novel. I went with the 4 primarily because of the "feel" of 1952. Knowing little of NYC Manhattan hotels or rooming houses of that era, I still felt that Fiona Davis pretty well matched in clear prose the dichotomy of that particular decade. The gloves, the girdles, the posture, the "tone" desired for female workplace advance- nearly all of it. And especially in Darby's Mother, she grabbed that very common "what will the neighbors think" wall on nearly everything or every manner of doing. Not only for females either. It was SO much stricter and narrow, and I remember it pretty well. Even in our corner store, and NOT anywhere near high income surrounds, it was address. Miss, Mrs., Mr. etc. Sir, Mame- if you didn't know their surnames. And kids were NOT the focus of anything, least of all for specially planned child centered activities. I felt Fiona Davis was not over harsh in the choices and mindset of Darby either. VERY common.

But once again, when there are two switching time periods quite far apart, I often seem more invested of interest in one or the other. This time I found the 2016 and Rose's story nearly worthy of a speed read to get to the 1952 detail. Seriously, I doubt with that kind of work application and onus for her job that Rose would come close to "making it" within a 2016 NYC publishing or news "worthy" world. WordMerge itself- as bad as the current "news" quips and interpretations have become? I don't think she would ever make the grade. Her methods are devious and sneaky enough- YES! But her association and video/ copy outputs would never be "enough". I know, this is fiction and about the "feelings". Especially for the women towards their men.

The best part and the fully 4 star was the story of the Dollhouse Women's Hotel itself. I would LOVE to read a non-fiction. With the real dollars and cents of who is living on such rent controls now. Doubt it is even 3 people, if any at all. And if they are, I would love to hear this from the horse's mouth.

The one aspect that truly made me want to round down to a 3 star, was the ending. Not impossible, but very, for me, tasteless and just about a cop out. Too easy and it also rather unsettles the very core of Darby wanting more than just the role "cut out and planned for her". And Malcolm coming up with his brother after all that time? But then Bird made me want to go to 4 star at the same time.

Fiona Davis writes period chick lit well. Quirky enough to hold your interest, a tad bit too repetitive at the same time, but that's seems to be what many women readers like in these "getting what I want" stories.

Lastly, the character of Esme was a deep well she could have investigated FAR more. But didn't. That was a negative for me. This was the age of the bebop nasty drug demise as much as it is today with the opiod mess. At least in certain urban or occupation circles. And worse in health and outcome for women too, because birth control and medicine for disease didn't hold a candle to what exists today. It's interesting how she didn't ever "look" through Esme's eyes in this book, and only Rose and Darby had "voice". That's why it is chick lit genre and doesn't seem historical fiction genre. Except possibly in the most widest sense of "historical" as having some components of recent history. Davis didn't even put the real into the musicians' lives with dire outcomes or how much they were "outsiders" either. It sure wasn't one big party for them in any sense. And it was MUCH more "the other" in their identity to the larger society than musicians have it now. Any type of musicians. Even those who consider themselves goth or total form outlier style.

It's entertaining. 3.5 stars rounded up and I'll read her other one next. It's in the pile already.

Kathryn says

What a fascinating story. The Barbizon Hotel for women really did exist in New York City in the 1950s as did the Gibbs secretarial school for women. This story follows two entirely different women, one who lived there and one who worked there as well as a journalist in 2016 who comes across the story. It was very compelling, interesting and wonderful.

Sherri Thacker says

I really enjoyed this book. I loved how each chapter went back and forth from the 1950's to the present and it was easy to follow. I'm adding this author to my list of favorites!

Sandy *The world could end while I was reading and I would never notice* says

EXCERPT: "Patrick, when did you start working here?"

He turned to face her, eyebrows raised in surprise. She gathered that few residents asked him personal questions. "Back in the seventies. Things were very different then."

She liked the way things came out as 'tings'. "Do you know many of the older residents?"

"The ladies? Of course. I know them all."

"What about the woman who left a little while ago? The one with the dog."

He smiled. "Miss McLaughlin. And Bird. Odd woman."

A woman with buttery blond hair clopped toward them carrying several packages. Patrick left Rose's side and scuttled over to her. Rose checked her watch. She really should get back upstairs, not stand around chatting, but Patrick quickly reappeared. "Can I get you a taxi, Miss Lewin?"

"No,no." She waved a hand in front of her. "I was hoping you could tell me more about Mrs McLaughlin."

"Miss McLaughlin." He was about four inches shorter than she was and he lifted his ruddy, round face to hers. "I don't like to talk too much about the other residents, you know. "

Patrick loved to talk about the other tenants, but Rose put on a serious expression and nodded.

"She's from way back, the fifties, that was when she first moved in. Came here to go to secretarial school."

"She seems like an interesting woman, the way she dresses and all."

"Not many friends in the building. Management can't stand her. She kicked and screamed when they said she had to move from her apartment down to 4B, with the rest of the longtimers. Threatened to call her lawyer. But she never did. In the end, I helped her to pack up and move. She's a retired lady, couldn't afford proper

movers, and I was happy to do it. She always remembers me at Christmas with a card and a small token."

Apartment 4B was the one directly under theirs. The one with the music. "That was very kind of you, to help her move."

"Terrible story, what happened to her."

ABOUT THIS BOOK: 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.

MY THOUGHTS: 4.5 jazz trumpeting stars for *The Dollhouse* by Fiona Davis. This is a simply exquisite story divided between the early 1950s and the current day, between Darby McLaughlin and Rose Lewin.

I can't believe that this was Davis's debut novel. Her characterisation is masterful, as is her talent for setting the scene. The writing flows seamlessly from era to era, character to character. Davis brings to life the jazz dives, the condescension and petty rivalries between the 'Ford girls', or giraffes as Esme describes them, and the lesser mortals residing in what was the premier hotel for ladies.

The sharp contrast in lifestyle between the two time periods, and the similarities, are well used to further the plot which evolves into a mystery, and a romance, that had me hanging onto the author's every word.

I listened to to the audiobook of *The Dollhouse* by Fiona Davis, narrated by Tavia Gilbert and published by Penguin Audio via OverDrive. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own personal opinions.

Please refer to my Goodreads.com profile page or the 'about' page on sandysbookaday.wordpress.com for an explanation of my rating system.

This review and others are also published on my blog sandysbookaday.wordpress.com
<https://sandysbookaday.wordpress.com/...>

DeB MaRtEnS says

3.5 rounded up to 4.00 stars

The name, "Barbizon Hotel", for any woman who loves the aura of vintage New York, becomes an immediate lure, offering glamour, high society successes and the understanding of the privilege of being chosen as one of its lodgers. Ford models, Katie Gibbs secretarial students, Mademoiselle magazine interns and acting class students were safely housed in what was euphemistically named, in the 1940's, "The Dollhouse", the slang of the day noting the rigorously chaperoned, attractive single women within.

Fiona Davis has given life to that famous building, neatly wrapping her fictional story around the actual history of The Barbizon Hotel. Casting from the present with Rose, a single journalist living in its present state as condominiums and back to 1952 to Darby, recently arrived for school from Defiant, Ohio, the author has created an intimate diorama where their stories overlap. In reality, the Barbizon's residents broke the rules; in The Dollhouse, mystery and intrigue are part of that story. New York has its glitter, its darkness and power, well evoked in the drama of the novel.

I very much enjoyed debut author Fiona Davis' attention to the details of the 1952 setting; the hotel as it was then, the cosmetics, apparel, HATS, and gloves so essential to a properly attired young lady. The restrictions, not only in their living conditions, but their life choices were keenly contrasted by Darby, in 1952 and Rose, in 2016, which was a very strong theme in the novel. Overall, a good little book with lots of information about the Barbizon Hotel, a compelling mystery and just the novel to accompany a pot of tea and your most comfortable chair.

Published: August 23, 2016

Review of Draft, from NetGalley and Dutton: Penguin RandomHouse Publishing, and thanks to Fiona Davis.

Loretta says

Meh. Fiona Davis's descriptions of the buildings (The Dakota, The Barbizon Hotel) in her stories are quite good. Sadly, her stories within the buildings are lacking.

Molly says

I wanted to like this book SO much. It has so many things I love: New York in the 50s, a famous hotel for single ladies, a gorgeous cover, an intriguing historical mystery. And I did like it for the first few chapters...but then it started to go downhill.

First off, the characters are poorly drawn and inconsistent. There's Stella, who first knowingly sets Darby up with a guy who, according to his account, always ends up with "the ugly ones," and who also has a reputation for assaulting women. Then she runs off--apparently without her shoes--and leaves Darby in the park with the guy, without checking on her, or looking for her, or, y'know, warning her that she's on a date with a rapist. GOSH, WHAT A GOOD FRIEND. Most of us at this point would probably stay away from Stella, right? But not Darby. Nope, she continues to be friends with Stella, on into their 80s.

There's Esme, who seems to have been dropped right out of West Side Story into the Barbizon to be a maid in a dowdy uniform--a maid who doesn't seem to ever do any cleaning, between dashing out to auditions and drug buys, comforting Darby, and sneaking around the residents' rooms to use their record players. Then there's Sam, who was smart enough to foresee that Americans would someday love "exotic" flavors, so spent his time as a soldier in World War II collecting spices.

And of course, there's Darby herself, who somehow manages to combine the naivete of a sheltered Midwestern girl in the 50s with the worldliness of... I don't even know what. It didn't bother me when she overlooked finding Stella on the stairway with a man, after hours--that can't have been unfamiliar or unexpected, even to an inexperienced small-town girl. But then, after apparently not even knowing that lesbians EXIST in the first chapter, she's not surprised, let alone confused, when Esme--out of freakin' NOWHERE, btw--kisses her. She was brought up by an extremely protective mother, in the 40s; it's just not believable that she wouldn't have more of a reaction than she did, whether positive or negative.

And then there's the abominable kitchen scene with Sam. I can buy that a veteran (one quite a bit older than Darby, at that; the war's been over for seven years at this point, so he's no younger than 24, and probably older than that) might have the experience to perform that kitchen maneuver, but he's just not the kind of guy who would jump from first kiss to third base without so much as a dinner--and especially not with an 18-year-old "good girl." But the fact that Darby, who has surely been brought up to not even allow a kiss until at least the third date, just accepts it and doesn't think he's a total cad? Nope. If she had decided, as she decided to be a career woman who doesn't need a man to support her, that it was time to start experimenting, I would have bought it, but that wasn't what happened. And the foodie foreplay was just... ugh. There was some cliché about a groan escaping her lips when she tasted one of Sam's awesome spice combos that almost made me put the book down right there. Note to authors and editors: Nobody groans involuntarily when they taste food. Quit using that to signal arousal.

My character issue continues in the 2016 story. Rose regrets not acting with integrity--a mistake that got her fired--but then does something illegal, unethical, and just plain bizarre: She moves into a stranger's apartment, without the stranger's knowledge, and starts messing with stuff. She snoops through Darby's books, pictures, and documents. She sleeps on her sofa for two weeks. She presumably uses her bathroom, and her kitchen...ewwwwww. And she justifies it as a way to get closer to the source of the story she wants to write about the women who lived in the Barbizon in the 50s. I kept thinking that at some point she was going to wake up from her fog of being dumped (in a way that seems unrealistic, although I know people--plural--who have been dumped in exactly the same way) and her grief over her father's condition and go "OMG OMG I AM SQUATTING IN A STRANGER'S APARTMENT I MUST CLEAN EVERYTHING UP AND GET OUT IMMEDIATELY AND SEND A CHECK ANONYMOUSLY FOR TWO WEEKS' RENT" but SHE NEVER DID. Even when Jason calls her out, and Darby calls her out (and then, in that inexplicably forgiving fashion that at this point is starting to seem like an odd character trait, decides it's all cool), Rose never seems to quite comprehend what she's done. And then, instead of ending up lodging in a jail cell (which is where she would be if I were Darby) she ends up with a darling, affordable little apartment of her very own.

There's so much more, but honestly, at this point I'm just venting, because I wanted so much to love this book. But like so many others I've read this year that have good premises and intriguing settings, all the good stuff seems to be in the setup. The further I got in the book, the shakier it got. The plot became more ridiculous; the characters quit being people and became game pieces moved around on a board; the red herring was obvious and unnecessary. It felt--again, as many books I've read this year have--like everything after the halfway point was written and edited in a hurry. It's frustrating to get invested in a book and then have it just fall off a cliff (or a terrace) halfway through.

Suzanne Leopold says

Rose Lewin has just moved in with her newly divorced boyfriend. A former network reporter, she is at a new job that she considers a career setback. At the moment, she is unsure of the decisions she has made in her life. She is living at the former Barbizon hotel which used to house women pursuing modeling and secretarial careers.

While walking through the condo lobby one evening, Rose comes across an unfriendly elderly resident. By way of the doorman, she finds out that this woman and a few others are long-term tenants of the former hotel. She learns that this woman was involved in an accidental death that took place back in the '50's. Rose sees a possible story to report and decides to investigate this further.

As Rose investigates the death in the building we are introduced to Darby McLaughlin. With a flashback into 1952, she has just moved from Ohio to start classes in Katherine Gibbs secretarial school. Upon arrival, Darby is not treated nicely by the women on her floor. Having a hard time fitting in, she is friended by a maid at the hotel named Esme. Through Esme, she is introduced to a darker side of New York City. The more information Rose obtains about Darby during her research, the more obsessed she becomes with getting the whole story. We learn how Darby's and Esme's relationship develops, the accidental death, and who Darby is today in 2016.

The chapters alternate between present day and the '50's. The stories of Rose and Darby are well interwoven. I enjoyed the creativity of the author in providing the reader with two parallel lives that ultimately converge into one. This book is filled with suspense, dilemma and mystery. The book also supplied interesting and informative detail on the lives of those living in the hotel in the 1950's. This is a debut novel, and I look forward to reading more books from this author .

Paperback edition release 7/11 - 2 copy giveaway on my blog until 6/23
<https://www.facebook.com/suzyapproved...>

Melissa says

Silly chick lit. Also another of those current day/historical period dual storylines that are all the rage. Had the author focused entirely on the 1950s, it would have been a much better book: more believable and less fluff.

Cindy Burnett says

4.5 stars

The Dollhouse provides a fascinating glimpse into life at the Barbizon Hotel for Women in the 1950s. The story opens in 2016 with Rose who lives in the Barbizon, which has been renovated and now contains high end condos. She learns that a few of the women who lived there until the hotel closed were granted rooms on the 4th floor so that they would have a place to live. Rose, who is a journalist, decides to pursue the stories of these women, particularly Darby McLaughlin. The Dollhouse shifts back and forth in time between 1952 and 2016. Fiona Davis connects the two stories seamlessly, and the effect is outstanding.

Davis includes so many entertaining details about the Barbizon (the Odeon chandelier, the art deco décor and

furnishings) and what it was like to live there in the 1950s and 1960s – women living there could not cross the lobby wearing pants, only skirts. She also references the famous women who lived there such as Sylvia Plath, Liza Minelli, Candace Bergen and Joan Crawford. The jazz and bebop scene in Manhattan in the 1950s is included too with big names such as Charlie Parker and Thelonious Monk making appearances.

The Dollhouse was a ton of fun to read and very well-written. I loved the story and was so glad I read it. Thanks to First to Read for the chance to read this ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Alicia says

<http://wordnerdy.blogspot.com/2016/09...>

I keep starting books and just not feeling them, which honestly was also the case with this one, but I was determined to just finish one and to break my curse! The writing here is just awkward as hell and both storylines are completely ridiculous and full of majorly unrealistic moments. In the present, a woman living in the Barbizon (everything about her is basically a terrible rom-com, so I'm not even gonna get started) becomes intrigued by the mystery of one of the long-term residents, and that woman's story--of arriving at the famed hotel in the 1950s to go to secretarial school, though eventually things turn tragic--is interspersed throughout. This book is basically about a bunch of sad-sacks with a super stereotypical Puerto Rican friend for good measure. I just thought this was so dull and cliched, though I did chuckle a little when someone threatens to go to Gawker with a scoop--how untimely this book's publication was. Content warning for attempted rape. B-/C+.

Marla says

I loved this book! It was such a fascinating story! I remember reading about the rooming houses in New York where women could go and there were set rules they had to follow. I didn't know this one was famous with several famous people living there like Sylvia Plath (one month) and Liza Minelli. I liked how the story went back in time to 1952 when things were actually happening to 2016 with Rose doing research for her article. The ending did have a twist and then another twist. This was so well worth my time!

I received this copy from Penguin Random House's First to Read program.

Brooke Banks says

Another #ARCAugust read down!

Trigger Warning: Rape

I won a copy from Meaghan Walsh Gerard's ABEA giveaway.

First of all, the blurb is misleading. No, the “rumors of Darby’s involvement” DO NOT haunt the halls. No one knows or gives a shit. Rose only found about it by being nosey with the gossiping doorman.

And glitz? I didn't see much glitz. There's like one pricey dinner and a floor full of model 'gazelles' and that's it.

The rest is spent in secretary school, a hotel room, and the jazz club. While the jazz club rocked, it's drab like it's supposed to be.

It wasn't fun finding this out the hard way. My expectations were off and that's the wrong foot to start on. I didn't regret reading in the end, but it wasn't smooth sailing. Hopefully, this helps ya'll!

The Dollhouse introduces Rose as she's preparing dinner for her and her recently divorced-with-children boyfriend. It's a whirlwind romance and he's coming home with news.

Quickly, it establishes Rose's shame and mystery regarding why she left her TV station job. Yet I did not care and its subsequent reveal didn't help Rose's case.

It's easy to see through the relationship bullshit while Rose is oblivious and doesn't listen to her best friend, a catty soap opera star married with step-children. She's so wrapped up in her romance woes and I did. Not. Get. It. I wasn't sold on their romance in the first place so it was hard to be sympathetic.

I didn't like Rose for most of the story. She kept getting worse until she finally crashed into reality.

From there, she made steps in the right direction, I just couldn't forget everything she put me through. It wasn't all bad though, I loved her interviews with people, her character progression and standing up to her boss. That glimpse into the startup e-mag was interesting. In the end, I'm glad she screwed her head on straight but I was happier to be done.

Darby's tale kept the story going while Rose sunk to new lows. I loved Darby's perspective of coming to New York City from a small town. Watching her explore, survive, and blossom was a thing of beauty. Except the fucking rape scene.

I couldn't wait to see what she did next. Her love of bepop, relationship with a certain beau, and friendship with Esme were outstanding. It's too bad Esme wound up as just another Spicy Latina. I didn't see the twists coming in her tale, until the final outcome.

That's when these perspectives switched roles: the past was a letdown and the present was pleasantly worthwhile. WC? I called who, how, and why once the drama was amped up and the actual confession reaction? "Oh." That's it. No oomph. No feeling. Just oh. Okay, anyways...

But once it's clear what's happened, they start wrapping the threads up in the present. It's sweet and I loved seeing things righted. Not a bad way to end the book, but it didn't make up for the ride there.

It's okay, I guess. Nothing wrong with the writing, flow or anything, but I really did not like Rose and her downward spiral, which ended up killing the book.

Unless you have a specific hankering for this time period or Jazz and can like Rose or enjoy her terrible decisions, I'd pass on *The Dollhouse*.

If you want a contemporary drama intertwined with a historical mystery, I'd recommend June by Miranda Beverly-Whitmore instead.

Cheri says

3.5 Stars

The Barbizon of 1952 groomed young women who were living away from home – the ever-watchful eyes of parents were replaced with a housemother's watchful eyes, looking after all of the girls. Not just their safety, but how they would present themselves every day, eventually present themselves to the world, in a fashionably, socially acceptable, manner. Maybe most went there to find a suitable entrance into a society where they could find a suitable husband, but there were others who went to find another life. Some went in with one ideal, and left with another.

"The Barbizon Hotel for Women, packed to the rafters with pretty little dolls. Just like you."

It was a combination of a charm school / finishing school and girls' dormitory, but it also had its own charms. Like Tiffany's, the name implies the best of quality. It exuded glamour, class, promoting itself as an institution that attracted a "certain kind of lady." Dress codes were enforced; residents were not allowed to leave the building in less than acceptable attire. In early 1950 this meant no pants, no exceptions. Among its list of to-be-discovered "dolls" include Sylvia Plath, Joan Crawford, Ali McGraw, Grace Kelly, Cybil Shepherd, Candice Bergen, Cloris Leachman, Gene Tierney, Peggy Cass, Jaclyn Smith, Dorothy McGuire, Eudora Welty, Joan Didion, Ann Beattie, Molly Brown, the unsinkable, died there in 1932. The Ford modeling agency placed their models there, the Katherine Gibbs Secretarial School placed their future secretaries there, safely supervised. An induction and introduction to their future life.

In 1952, the novel centers on Darby McLaughlin, who is a Katie Gibbs student, and Esme, a Barbizon maid. Darby is from Ohio and has never experienced anything like NYC, and Esme has lived and breathed the streets since she arrived as a child from Puerto Rico. Esme introduces Darby to a life outside her comprehension, seedy jazz clubs, each step outside Darby's comfort zone. It's dark, it's scary, but it also has its own magic. The music, the way it makes her feel.

In 2016, Rose, a journalist, is looking for a story, happens to be staying in one of the apartments in the now renovated Barbizon – no longer just a haven for young women, it is now a modernized condominium. Rose's life has just been turned upside down several times, and feeling like she's just been tossed around inside a snow globe, her gaze lands on one of the women of the "old" Barbizon, still there, grandfathered in by New York's rent laws. She wears a hat with a net veil down across her face, and Rose is seized by a need to know more about her. About the few women who stayed, who found a life there that didn't include the then standard husband and 2.5 children. But how to convince these women to share their stories? She's particularly eager to speak with the veiled woman– Darby McLaughlin – who seems just as eager to avoid her. But Darby's story is one she feels drawn to; she knows there's more to the story than the papers wrote

about back then.

The characters are mostly entertaining, if occasionally trite, predictable. Most of this story it is compelling. At a point where, in most stories, I would feel more invested, it began to drag a little. Where it had once seemed to flow effortlessly, even with some rather hard to believe segments, it began to feel slightly forced. Some characters, some sections could have been removed completely, or their storyline ended earlier – for me.

Rose's ethics seem fairly high, so it was noticeable when they change to somewhat questionable, but then again I really enjoyed the things she discovered, I felt that if they needed to have been added to the story when they were. A dilemma.

Overall, this is an enjoyable read. It's a fun look at another era, another way of life. It was perhaps a bit more entertaining to me as my mother lived in a similar set-up as a young "Air Hostess" for PCA Airlines. The photos I have of them sitting around their room in curlers, or around the piano singing are priceless.

Pub Date: 23 August 2016

Many thanks to Penguin Group/Dutton, NetGalley and author Fiona Davis for providing me with an advanced copy

Chelsea Humphrey says

This was very realistic feeling historical fiction! I was immersed in the culture of the period and fascinated by the mystery and goings on of such a controversial time. I have never felt more grateful to be a woman in such a time as this as I am after finishing this book. Full review to come.

*Thanks Dutton for my copy!
