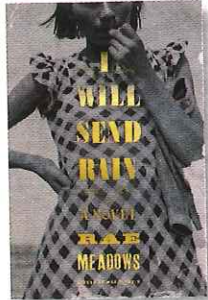


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★ I Will Send Rain

Rae Meadows. Holt, \$26 (272p) ISBN 978-1-62779-426-8

Meadows's (*Calling Out*) dark, moving novel chronicles a turning point in the lives of the Bells, a farming family in 1930s Oklahoma. After severe droughts and several dust storms, families are known to pack up and suddenly disappear from the once populous town of Mulehead. Annie Bell recognizes the restlessness in her teen daughter, Birdie, and hopes that Birdie gives herself a shot at a better life elsewhere rather than marrying local boy Cy Mack. Annie feels particularly unmoored herself; her attraction to Mayor Jack Lily—formerly a Chicago newspaper reporter—grows as her husband, Samuel, becomes increasingly religious. Annie and Samuel's bond has been tenuous since their second child, Eleanor, died as an infant. It doesn't help that Samuel regards the drought as a test from God and thinks of his nightmares of an upcoming flood as prophecy. Meadows writes the youngest Bell, sweet eight-year-old Fred, especially well. Fred, who has been mute since birth and besieged with chronic breathing problems, has a love of animals and an endearing, thoughtful nature. Annie and John begin an affair around the time Samuel begins constructing an ark with Fred's help, and Birdie soon finds herself with a secret. Sinister imagery is restrained but has impact: a town rabbit hunt that turns into a bloodthirsty killing spree ends with Fred trying to cry out while protecting the last trembling animal in his lap. Meadows's strength lies in letting her story be guided by the shadow and light of her well-rendered characters. When tragedy strikes or hope emerges, it makes sense and comes to fruition organically. This makes for a vibrant, absorbing novel that stays with the reader. *Agent: Elisabeth Weed, the Book Group.* (Aug.)



vious novels, the plot is secondary to depicting the community, the comings and goings of the local eccentrics who congregate around the narrator's building to drink and gossip: there's the literary salon, which is inexplicably convinced that Teo is writing a great novel, the paranoid anarchist greengrocer called Juliet with whom Teo is mildly smitten, and a Mormon missionary from Utah named Willem Heda who finds meaning in the extermination of cockroaches. After a local dog dies, Teo becomes the leading suspect and amuses himself by matching wits with the main investigator, a would-be writer with a papaya-shaped head; Teo even goes so far as to enlist another local (a young Maoist named Mao) in the infiltration of the Society for the Protection of Animals. Meanwhile, Teo mourns for what he's lost—various dogs come and gone, his mother and sister, both killed in the 1985 earthquake—and applies to life the lessons of art (a copy of Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is his bible) until it dawns on him he may be writing a novel after all. Villalobos is a kind of miniature Proust, and the affable *I'll Sell You A Dog* finds lost time not in grand narratives but in the idle chatter of neighbors. (Aug.)

R.I., still feels alone, with her son abroad in Africa and her daughter studying in Florence. What Ava doesn't know is that her daughter has recently quit school and is now living in Paris under increasingly dangerous circumstances. Ava doesn't immediately enjoy the book group (she watches a movie adaptation instead of reading the first book), but bit by bit, book by book, she rediscovers her love of reading, makes new friends, and begins to heal. As the narrative focus moves among different characters and back and forth in time, suspense builds about what happened to Ava's mother and sister and what might happen to her daughter. Meanwhile, the book club allows Ava to

examine her grief and slowly learn how to move forward. This is a gripping, multifaceted novel about recovering from different kinds of loss and the healing that comes from a powerful story. (Aug.)

I'll Sell You a Dog

Juan Pablo Villalobos, trans. from the Spanish by Rosalind Harvey. And Other Stories, \$15.95 trade paper (256p) ISBN 978-1-908276-74-2

The latest slice of Mexican life from Villalobos (*Quesdillas*) is narrated by a 78-year-old onetime artist and full-time drunk known only as Teo, more renowned for his dog-meat tacos than his art, who retires to a cockroach-infested apartment in Mexico City. But, as in Villalobos's pre-

Moonstone

Sjón, trans. from the Icelandic by Victoria Cribb. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$22 (160p) ISBN 978-0-374-21243-8

A long-time collaborator with Björk, Sjón is an Icelandic writer, poet, and musician with a cult following. His latest work to be translated into English opens with a sex scene that sent ripples across his homeland upon release and sets the tone for a story both tender and explicit. Set in Reykjavik in 1918 as the Spanish flu runs rampant, this short, impressionistic work follows Máni Steinn, a cinema-obsessed 16-year-old boy who turns tricks for older men passing through his provincial city, and Sola G, a motorcycle-driving girl who infatuates him. As the epidemic's death toll rises, and his beloved movie theater is

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