

Booklist

Advanced Review – Uncorrected Proof

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A Flaw in the Design.

By Nathan Oates

Mar. 2023. 304p. Random, \$28 (9780593446706); e-book (9780593446713)

A fortysomething college professor is living a comfortable life in Vermont with his wife and two teenage daughters. Gil admits to himself that he has not achieved the literary success he had thought he would, but he manages to get by. He goes toxic, however, when his newly orphaned, 17-year-old nephew, Matthew, comes to live in their home. Good looks, brains, and a hefty inheritance make Matthew seem arrogant and rude, but is he really evil, as Gil suspects? Maybe Gil is overreacting because Matthew, surprisingly, has everyone in his household, including the family dog, in his thrall. Or is Gil simply letting his own insecurities blind him to Matthew's devastation by his parents' gruesome deaths? Does he go too far in concluding that the boy may have arranged for the elimination of his mother and father? A highly literary yet suspenseful debut from Oates, who weaves a stunning tale of obsession, with a surprising ending that begs for a sequel. Perfect for fans of Mary Kubica and Shari Lapena.

— *Jane Murphy*