



The Nest, by Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney
Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, August 2016

Contrary to its title and cover design, *The Nest*, Cynthia D'Aprix Sweeney's bestselling novel, isn't about birds. "The Nest" is what the four adult Plumb siblings call the trust fund they can access when Melody, their youngest sister, turns 40.

Their late father Leonard, a self-made New York City businessman, had expected that his children would work hard to gain financial independence. However, all their lives, the entitled Plumb siblings have slacked off, counting on "The Nest" and its big pay-out. Each has been living beyond his or her means. The Plumbs assume that when "The Nest" kicks in, it will take care of everything.

Leo, the oldest son and their mother's favorite, goes through business ventures, expensive cars, and beautiful, shallow women with equal abandon. Jack, an antiques dealer, hides several bad loans from his longtime partner. Bea, once a promising writer who hasn't published a thing in years, soon will have to pay back the advance of her yet-to-be written second novel. And petulant Melody and her husband, struggling to maintain their lavish suburban lifestyle, want to send their twin daughters to expensive colleges. The Plumbs rely on "The Nest" to solve all their problems.

However, just before Melody's all-important 40th birthday, Leo recklessly causes an accident with far-reaching consequences for the Plumbs. To bail out Leo from an impending lawsuit, their mother Francie evokes a little-known clause in "The Nest" that allows her to give Leo the trust funds to settle the case. His three siblings are furious that Leo has squandered their coveted inheritance. They invite Leo to a family meeting at the famed Oyster Bar in Grand Central Station, eager to hash things out. But will Leo show up? Given his past history of disappearing for long stretches, one never knows.

The darkly comedic storyline kept my attention. Secondary plots, including one about a missing World Trade Center artifact, rounded out *The Nest* nicely. But try as I might, I couldn't quite warm up to the four self-absorbed Plumb siblings. None

of them seems to have grown from experience or learned much in the process. Perhaps it's generational on my part. We Boomers were quicker to spread our wings.