



***Before the Fall*, by Noah Hawley**  
***Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy, July 2017***

Summer is time for backyard barbecues, warm-weather vacations, and beach books. Noah Hawley's fast-paced thriller, *Before the Fall*, won the 2017 Edgar Award for Best Novel. The contemporary page-turner, an engrossing summer read, keeps readers guessing until the very end.

Central to the storyline of *Before the Fall* is a corporate jet bound for New York from Martha's Vineyard. David Bateman, head of a Fox-like news network, chartered the flight. It's late August; his wife Maggie and their kids—nine-year-old Rachel and four-year-old JJ—had spent the summer at the Vineyard. Workaholic David joined his family briefly before they all head home. He's distracted by a brewing scandal involving the network's star anchor, Bill Cunningham, who is more interested in making news than reporting it.

Ben Kipling ("a blue-eyed shark in a blue button-down shirt") and his wife Sarah are also returning to New York. On the spur of the moment, Maggie invites the Kiplings to join them on their chartered jet. Unbeknownst to the Batemans, Ben, a Wall Street titan, is about to be indicted on federal corrupt charges.

Seasoned pilot James Melody, as scheduled, is due to fly the jet. Also onboard is Gil Baruch, an Israeli "domestic security agent" (aka bodyguard), who has been with the Batemans for years, ever since their daughter Rachel's kidnap-for-ransom when she was a toddler. In his pre-boarding security check, Gil questions flight attendant Emma Lightner about her previous relationship with Charlie Busch, who joins the crew as the first-officer replacement.

Just before take-off, the last passenger, Scott Burroughs, an artist, boards the plane. Maggie had met Scott at the island's farmers market during the summer, and she enjoyed his company. Knowing that Scott needs to return to the city, she asked him to come along. Scott, who is waiting for his breakout moment in the art world, has a propensity for painting disaster scenes. And Scott, as we readers soon discover, is an excellent swimmer.

You might enjoy *Before the Fall* on your next vacation. But word to the wise: don't read it on the plane when you are flying to or from your destination.