

The It Girl, by Ruth Ware

Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy

The lazy, languid end of summer is the perfect time to dive into a brisk British murder mystery while lounging by the pool. *The It Girl*, best-selling English author Ruth Ware's new whodunit, is one such guilty pleasure.

The It Girl begins with Hannah Jones, happily married and expecting her first child, working in a bookstore in Edinburgh, Scotland. Hannah had won a scholarship to study English literature at Oxford with the hopes of becoming a professor. However, she left the university without obtaining a degree after her roommate April ClarkeCliveden was tragically killed. The conviction of John Neville, a porter in the girls' dorm, was largely based on Hannah's testimony at his trial.

As first-year Oxford students, Hannah had been assigned to share a dorm suite with April. Hannah was from a working-class family, while April was wealthy, confident, and glamorous: "She had the kind of beauty that hurt your eyes if you looked at her too long, but made it hard to tear your gaze away...as if a different kind of light were shining on her."

With her magnetic charm, April quickly drew a group of close friends into their circle including handsome, affluent Will de Chataigne and his socially awkward pal Hugh Bland, who was studying medicine. Rounding out their clique was left-leaning Ryan Coates and quickwitted Emily Lippman, aiming for a career in mathematics.

Beneath April's charisma, however, was a mischievous side. The beautiful flirt often played practical jokes on her friends, much to their displeasure. April's hold on the group was so powerful, nevertheless, that her pranks were often forgiven. Hannah, the one friend April never targeted, was fiercely protective of her roommate, and she was devastated by April's murder.

Ten years later, Hannah is content with her quiet life in Scotland. But her calm world is upended when she's informed that John Neville has suddenly died in prison, putting "It Girl Murder" in the news again. Neville apparently had maintained his innocence to the end, and his lawyer was looking into new evidence. A reporter delving into the case tracks Hannah down, forcing her to confront her past friendships and to question the testimony she had given at Neville's trial.

In the mode of Agatha Christie, Ruth Ware scatters clever clues throughout *The It Girl*. For arm-chair sleuths, *The It Girl* indeed is a cool diversion on a hot, late summer day.

(Note: *The It Girl* is part of the Heritage Hills Library and Somers Library collections. For a list of new books at the Heritage Hills Library, see page 12.)