

Three Days in June, by Anne Tyler

Reviewed by Cindy Kennedy

Prolific author Anne Tyler won the Pulitzer Fiction Prize 35 years ago for writing *Breathing Lessons*. Her novels center on family life and marriage. Several of her books, most notably *The Accidental Tourist*, have been made into successful movies.

Three Days in June, Ms. Tyler's 25th novel, takes place in Baltimore, a familiar locale for many of her works. As its title might suggest, the book's plot spans three days: the day before, the day of, and the day after the wedding of Debbie Baines.

Gail Baines, the bride's 61-year-old mother, is Assistant Headmistress at a private girls' school. The morning of the wedding rehearsal, Gail had a meeting with Marilee Burton, the school's Headmistress. When Marilee announces that she would be retiring in the fall, Gail assumes she would be in line for the position. Marilee, telling Gail that "social interactions have never been your strong point," said that a younger candidate was being considered for the role.

Returning home in a huff, Gail is surprised to see Max, her ex-husband, at her front door with a duffel bag slung over his shoulder, holding a cat carrier. Divorced for 20 years, they have maintained a cordial relationship for the sake of their daughter Debbie. Max, "a 65-year-old man who still believed human beings were capable of change," teaches at a school for at-risk teens in Delaware.

The bridal couple had invited Max to spend the weekend with them, but Kenneth, the groom, was allergic to cats. Max asked Gail if he could stay in her guest room. Reluctantly, she agreed. "The trouble with Max," Gail thought, "was that he didn't take things seriously. He had a tendency to wander off course halfway through a project, as if his life were a causal experiment."

A few hours before the church rehearsal, Debbie went to Gail's house to seek her parents' advice. That morning, Debbie discovered something troubling that Kenneth may have done, and she is thinking of calling off the wedding. Guiding Debbie through the crisis, Gail and Max confront the issues that had caused their own marriage to fail.

Anne Tyler's novels have sold over 13 million copies worldwide, and her fan base is loyal. Some critics, however, have disparaged her books for being "charming and cozy." *Three Days in June* might best be read sitting in a comfy chair with a cup of tea nearby. In these uncertain times, that would be a pleasant way to spend a summer afternoon.