



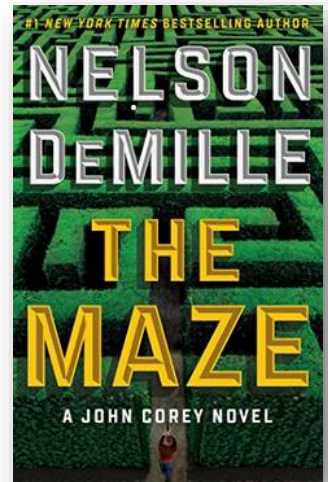
Book of the Month

The Maze by Nelson DeMille

Book Review by Eddie Keith, Friends of the Starkville Library Board Member

The Maze is the eighth in a series of books by the author featuring John Corey, who in past DeMille novels has worked as a New York City homicide detective, a Joint Terrorist Task Force operative, an FBI agent, and as an agent with the Diplomatic Surveillance Group. DeMille is a Baby Boomer who served as a lieutenant in the Vietnam War, and he has been a fairly prolific writer, and his protagonist fits his generation (as I, also a Boomer, can attest). John Corey first appeared in DeMille's *Plum Island* in 1997, and he has reappeared in new novels in the series roughly every three or four years since then.

Corey is a maverick whose style, though usually effective in obtaining results, tends to wear on his bosses, as well as his ex-wives/lovers. (Think Clint Eastwood's "Man with No Name" with a knee-slapping sense of humor operating in settings of contemporary intrigue rather than Westerns.) His behaviors and attitudes are the antithesis of politically correctness, and the novels in which he appears are sometimes describe as "men's/boys' books"—probably none more so than *The Maze*. While I understand that perception, I think they're also books for those who enjoy laughing, suspense, contemporary villains/antagonists, and twisting, turning plots what keep the reader guessing. While it's fair to label Corey's behavior as sometimes cocky, juvenile, sexist, rebellious, devious, and self-



destructive, it is equally fair to characterize him as clever, insightful, brave, determined, and deadly. And reading his inner dialogue is downright hilarious.

In past novels in the series John Corey has battled international assassins, domestic terrorists, Russian SVR (formerly KGB), etc. Events like the 9/11 attacks and the mysterious crash of TWA Flight 800 shortly after takeoff from Long Island in 1996 have provided the backdrop to some of his storylines. In *The Maze* Corey has finally retired—with strong hints that no one was sad to see him go—and is restlessly passing time and contemplating the fate of his marriage to an FBI agent (who is featured in some of the previous Corey novels), when a former colleague/lover and an old law enforcement colleague begin trying to talk him into taking a job with a private investigative agency on Long Island. As one would imagine, going from hunting down international terrorists to following allegedly wayward spouses has minimal attraction for Corey. For the firm, however, it's great business hire and a PR boon—a former NYC homicide detective and FBI agent has joined the firm. Eventually Corey is persuaded to give it a try, and the fit appears predictably awkward from the start.

As Corey begins his new job, stories begin to circulate of murders of prostitutes and other women, whose bodies are discovered. The personalities of the firm, some of its questionable activities, and the “demotion” of the job from his previous ones all make him question his decision ... so in or out? Yet his perceived friends pressure him to hang in there and keep going. Why? Are these so-called friends telling him everything he should know about his new employer and motives for keeping him employed with the PI firm? Are they **really** his friends? Are some of the “yo-yos” in the firm as inept as they seem? Is John **really** that much smarter and more skilled than they are?

Of course, this is a book review, and I won't answer those questions for you. You'll have to read the book. I can tell you that you'll often be amused, as well as entertained and riveted by the plot as it picks up speed. You'll be deceived and puzzled as you're yanked through some twists and turns, as you would on a good roller coaster ride. I recommend that you go along with DeMille on this ride!

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