

## this week

Readings & signings on LI

### Tuesday

Former New York Times editor **Katherine Bouton** discusses and signs her book "Shouting Won't Help: Why I — and 50 Million Other Americans — Can't Hear You." Make reservations; free copies to first 50 attendees. At 2 p.m., **Hillside Library, 155 Lakeville Rd., New Hyde Park, 516-355-7850, ext. 301, hillsidelibrary.info**

### Wednesday

Giants linebacker and cancer survivor **Mark Herzlich** discusses and signs his new book, "What It Takes: Fighting for My Life and My Love of the Game." At 7 p.m., **Book Revue, 313 New York Ave., Huntington; 631-271-1442, bookrevue.com**

### Saturday

Book signing with mystery/thriller writers **Tatiana Boncompagni** ("Social Death"), **D.B. Shuster** ("Kings of Brighton Beach — Gangsters With Guns"), **E.J. Simon**, "Death Never Sleeps") and **Elyse Salpeter** ("The Hunt for Xanadu"). At 2 p.m., **The Dolphin Bookshop, 299 Main St., Port Washington, 516-767-2650, thedolphinbookshop.com**

**plus**

## bookclub

Avid readers of Newsday's Books section online and in print can now join the lively conversation at the **Newsday Book Club**, launching this summer. Once a month, from June through August, we'll convene online to discuss a selected book with its author. The first pick is **Alice McDermott's "Someone"** (FSG), a 2013 finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award in fiction. "Someone" offers a portrait, in vivid prose snapshots, of an ordinary Irish-American girl as she grows up in Brooklyn, marries, and makes her own modest way in the world. McDermott will join us for an **online chat** about the novel and answer your questions on **June 16 from noon to 1 p.m.** To read an excerpt from "Someone," go to **newsday.com/bookclub**

## reviews

# It must read better in French

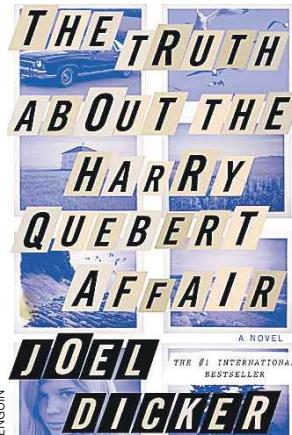
**THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HARRY QUEBERT AFFAIR**, by Joel Dicker, translated from the French by Sam Taylor. Penguin Books, 640 pp., \$18 paper.

BY MARION WINIK  
*Special to Newsday*

I just finished "The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair," by 28-year-old Swiss writer Joel Dicker, and all I can say is, God save Europe.

According to the jacket copy, this book sold a million copies in France, won three literary prizes there and was a finalist for the Prix Goncourt, while knocking Dan Brown from No. 1 spots in Italy and Spain. I am not a Brown fan, but this book makes him look like Marcel Proust.

Let's assume that part of what makes the novel seem so awkward and high-schoolish — there is not one fresh image, non-stereotypical character or interesting sentence in this lumbering contrivance — is that it is set in



the United States, a country the author knows only from summer vacations in his youth. Perhaps it also lost something in translation from the French.

One hopes so, for the sake of the Prix Goncourt.

Typical of this book is the long-dead character at its center: a 15-year-old blond nymphet, whom we meet "barefoot by the ocean, her sandals in her hand, dancing in the rain and skipping in the



JEREMY SPIERER

Joel Dicker's "The Truth About the Harry Quebert Affair" is a European bestseller.

waves" — but will before long see performing a sexual act, described in the crudest terms, with the police chief. "With her wide eyes full of love, she made me feel ten feet tall," is how Harry Quebert, supposedly America's leading literary novelist, describes his obsession with the girl.

Her name was Nola Keller-gan and now Quebert is suspected of her 1975 murder. His protégée, the narrator of the current volume, is a handsome

sap named Marcus Goldman who had a huge success with his first book but is having a terrible time with his second. He gets a \$3 million contract to go to New Hampshire and write about the investigation of his disgraced and jailed mentor. Almost every other character in the book does a turn as prime suspect until Marcus untwists the final kink in the story.

Probably the most annoying thing about "Harry Quebert" is its attempt to say something meaningful about writing. While zooming back and forth between the period of the murder and the present, and offering self-deprecating vignettes from the biography of "Marcus the Magnificent," it offers 31 golden rules of writing, as transmitted from Quebert to Goldman. These appear on pages with plenty of white space to guarantee their impressive import. Just one sample, and then I'll leave Mr. Dicker in peace.

"Learn to love your failures, Marcus, because it is your failures that will make you what you are."

## Just too many weddings

**SAVE THE DATE: The Occasional Mortifications of a Serial Wedding Guest**, by Jen Doll. Riverhead. 321 pp. \$25.95.

BY JEN CHANEY  
*Washington Post Book World Service*

The book jacket for Jen Doll's "Save the Date" — with the image of a woman's strappy sandals beside a slice of buttercream cake — suggests this memoir will be a "Sex and the City"-esque comedy in which a woman marches tipsily through a parade of lavish weddings where she's forever the bridesmaid but never the bride.

To be fair, there are splashes of Carrie Bradshaw in this memoir by Doll, a New York-based writer. She relishes a good cocktail and has been known, on at least one occa-

sion, to spend \$450 on a pair of platform pumps. But this book is more introspective than its cover suggests. Doll is a veteran of the nuptial circuit, which has taken her from modest New York City courthouse ceremonies to elaborately planned destination weddings in the Dominican Republic, and she uses her extensive experience to reflect on the way weddings serve as personal milestones in the lives of those who are tying knots and those who aren't.

"While one might assume a wedding is about *them* — the couple getting married — a wedding is about everyone," she writes in what essentially is the book's mission statement.

In the chapters that follow, Doll revisits weddings. These include one where she physically backed away from the bridal bouquet — the "flat sack

of impending floral decay," as Doll calls it — that a soon-to-be ex-best-friend tossed at her toes, and the one where she got so blasted she had to be yanked out of the after-party. There also are the plus-one chronicles, in which Doll recalls the relationship cracks that turned into full-blown fractures when she dragged boyfriends along on her ongoing wedding world tour.

Doll, who remains unmarried, is a sincere, highly detailed writer. Her attempt to explore contemporary wed-dinghood from a place of intelligence, as opposed to relaying another blizzard of Bridezilla stories, is admirable. The problem is that reading "Save the Date" is occasionally like thumbing through photos in a stranger's wedding album: the exercise can get tiresome after a while. By the end of "Save the Date," it may be



SARAH SHATZ

Jen Doll, never married, knows plenty about nuptials.

difficult to remember what happened at the many, many ceremonies and receptions described here. (Well, except the one at the inn in Vermont, where the bride suffered a nearly fatal allergic reaction to peanuts.) Weddings are, indeed, "about everyone." But they also tend to blend together in a haze of registry gifts, "I dos," hors d'oeuvres and stories that sometimes, but not all the time, are worth publishing.