



## thisweek

Readings &amp; signings on LI

## Monday

New York Post writer

**Susannah Cahalan** discusses and signs copies of her memoir, "Brain on Fire: My Month of Madness."

Tickets \$35. At 7 p.m., Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center, 76 Main St., Westhampton Beach; 631-288-1500, whbpac.org



## Thursday

Novelist **Sheila Kohler** discusses and signs copies of "Dreaming for Freud."

At 8 p.m., BookHampton, 41 Main St., East Hampton; 631-324-4939, bookhampton.com



## Friday

Comedian **Joan Rivers** signs

copies of her new book, "Diary of a Mad Diva." At 4 p.m., but it could be later, Book Revue, 313 New York Ave.,

Huntington; 631-271-1442, bookrevue.com

Look for our interview with Rivers in Thursday's ExploreLI



## Saturday

**Paul Greenberg** reads and signs copies of "American Catch: The Fight for Our Local Seafood." At 5 p.m., Canio's Books, 290 Main St., Sag Harbor; 631-725-4926, caniosbooks.com



JUSTIN SCHEIN

## reviews

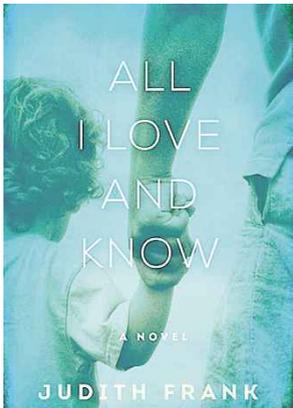
## Torah, tots and gay guardians

**ALL I LOVE AND KNOW**, by Judith Frank. William Morrow, 422 pp., \$26.95.

BY MARION WINIK  
Special to Newsday

The considerable power of Judith Frank's second novel, "All I Love and Know," comes from two sources not always found in combination: first, the seriousness of the social issues it takes on, and second, its psychological, nearly Jamesian style, following its characters tick by tick through their emotions and thoughts. The merger is a success, providing a nuanced and profound approach to politically volatile subject matter, like an upmarket Jodi Picoult.

"All I Love and Know" opens on a flight to Israel undertaken in terrible circumstances. Daniel Rosen's twin brother, Joel, and Joel's wife, Ilana, have been killed in a suicide bombing in Jerusalem. Daniel is traveling with his handsome younger partner, Matt Greene. What these two



WILLIAM MORROW

know that neither the American nor the Israeli set of grandparents has yet learned is that the dead couple has designated Daniel and Matt as guardians of their two very small children, even though they realized it would mean moving them back to the States. What Daniel and Matt are as yet unaware of is that Israeli law does not always honor the parents' wishes in this matter — particularly when nationalism and homophobia are in play. To make matters more

thorny, Ilana's parents are Holocaust survivors.

The rotating narration gives us access to the thoughts of Matt, Daniel, and Gal, the orphaned 5-year-old girl. All three contribute to the depth and nuance of the story, but Matt wins the popularity contest hands down. His good looks are such that "when Matt breezed into a room he seemed to change the very climate — to crisp and freshen the air there." Though he is stereotyped by Daniel's mom as a shallow partyer, Matt is a smart man and serious about left-wing politics. The interplay between his fierce anti-Zionism and Daniel's fondness for Israel — along with many other points of view represented — make a surprisingly non-tendentious book about this topic.

Matt is also a self-confessed "blurter," saying what's on his mind, even when it's inappropriate or politically incorrect.

In the narration, he offers observations such as: "The mother was kerchiefed and red-cheeked, joggling the baby with an expression of hassled professionalism, and the father pale, blond ringlets down the side of his face, reading a small prayer book. There was something a little hot about the guy's detachment, his look of being above it all." Judith Frank writes her gay characters beautifully — she even writes gay male sex well. Rare.

The book has two settings: besides Israel, Northampton, Massachusetts, Daniel and Matt's home, as well as Frank's. Descriptions of "honest, lesbionic Northampton" provide moments of comic relief throughout, enhancing the steady human warmth of this important novel. From the darkest moments to the lightest, Frank's empathy for her characters transforms front-page news into literary fiction.



Judith Frank

## Humor is the best medicine

**RUN, DON'T WALK: The Curious and Chaotic Life of a Physical Therapist Inside Walter Reed Army Medical Center**, by Adele Levine. Avery, 278 pp. \$26.

BY CHRIS LYFORD  
Washington Post Book World Service

Is it possible to find humor in the interval between a soldier's crippling encounter with a roadside bomb and his first confident steps on a pair of new limbs? In her new memoir, therapist Adele Levine puts this question under the microscope, balancing a comedian's touch for uncovering the exceptional in seemingly bleak subjects with all the tact of a doting nurse unbandaging a tender wound.

"If there's anything you need to be a physical thera-

pist," Levine says, "it's a sense of humor." It's this approach that threads through her honest retelling of her experience as a physical therapist in Walter Reed's amputee department, making for a book that's both uplifting and informative.

Levine is helpfully descriptive in explaining ailments common to war-torn amputees, their rehabilitative exercises — including learning to wear a prosthetic leg — and the jargon of P.T. culture. She's equally intent on describing the history behind the now-defunct Army Medical Center, with its "puffy pink cherry trees" and its "stone stairs [sagging] in the middle from a hundred years of footsteps."

But it's Levine's use of a colorful cast of characters and their anecdotes that forms the crux of the story,

dispelling what she considers the public's tendency to see the wounded soldier as a tragic figure. As she encounters a double amputee with a propensity for using foul language and ditching therapy sessions for cigarette breaks, a former lieutenant with a penchant for having baked goods smuggled into the hospital, and an errant service dog repeatedly disciplined for excessive napping and sneaking off to the cafeteria, the reader gets a feel for the camaraderie and redemption that come with the physical therapy trade.

Although Levine largely sidesteps the controversy surrounding the shuttering of the hospital in 2011, she's honest in turning a critical lens on her young self, "an unmoored dinghy, bobbing aimlessly around," who initially expected a "straight job,"



Adele Levine and friend

KYLE DUNLAVY

complete with a cushy salary and a Ford Mustang. Instead, she faced a rough-and-tumble world of late nights and work demands that sometimes put relationships on hold.

By the end of the book, some of the most rewarding moments have come from witnessing the simultaneous growth of the patient and therapist, the latter in many ways just as misunderstood as the soldiers. "I never talked about my job and no one ever asked," Levine writes. "I was just a good person stuck in the trenches of humanity."