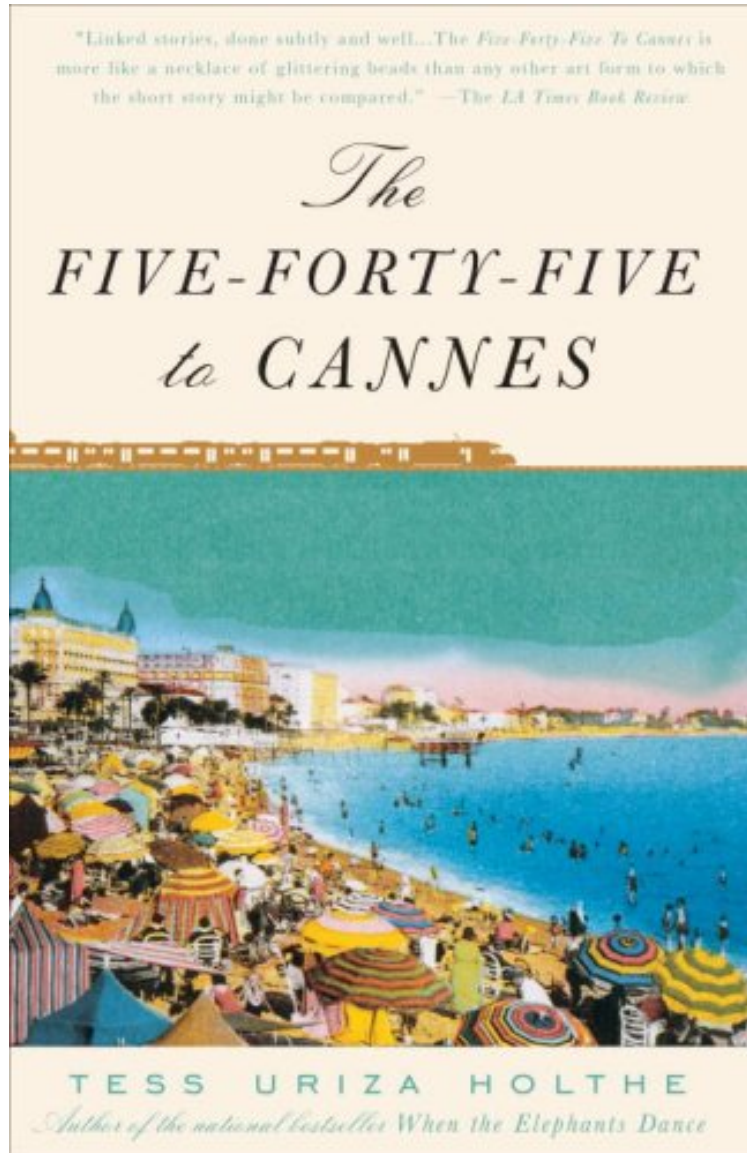


(Get free) The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes

The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes

Tess Uriza Holthe

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Tess Uriza Holthe : The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. tough, slapstick, delicate, witty, bawdy, rueful and superbly craftedBy Elevate DifferenceNo point beating about the bush. Might as well get the finale over with right now at the top, instead of coyly building to it with flourishes of logic and neat exempla. Here goes.This is one terrific book Tess Uriza Holthe has written. It's tough, slapstick, delicate, witty, bawdy, rueful and superbly crafted. One minute she throws her head back in laughter; the next she whips out a blade and knifes you in the ribs. Can't trust her at all,

meaning she's the best sort of writer. There are lots of good characters, too, women and men: a Scots enforcer, three widows all once married to the same man, a band of gypsy pickpockets, a hard ex-con who finds happiness with a street urchin and vice versa, a Jewish mother and son, a master lace maker, a snoopy wife who suffers migraines, a young French woman who marries a rich good-hearted American only to discover that he's mentally ill and drug-addicted. These characters are unusual and engrossing, including the not-so-likable ones. In fact, now I think of it, most of the good ones aren't so good all the way around, and the bad ones aren't so bad all the way around - which is to say that they have dimension and are recognizably human. However hard the surfaces are sometimes, and they do get hard, there are knots of love in these stories. But this ain't chick lit. No way. Rakish heroes and heaving bosoms do not abound in Holthe's worlds. She's too Annie Oakley smart. Miss Sure Shot, you know. Can throw a dozen glass balls in the air and get 'em all before they hit the ground. That good. A champ. And the dust jacket design is very nice, too, by the bye, and useful to see the locations, which are mostly the Italian and French Rivas, the Cte d'Azur. So, to put the conclusion before the facts: I highly suggest you pedal your Schwinn to an independent bookstore and buy this collection of interrelated short fictions by Holthe. Read it. Savor it. Dig it. You'll be glad you plunked down your bucks. You'll be advising your friends to do the same. So now that's clear, time for some convincing details. How about this fine, calm image of the exterior of a wealthy chateau in Cannes that the protagonist, Claudette, comes back to after a few years' absence in the U.S.: The chateau is heartbreakingly beautiful in the soft twilight. Mauve and rose light upon the clay-colored exterior and black wrought-iron railing... Blue cornflowers and red poppies rustling in the warm breeze. Cypress and plane trees leaning in to shade the house. Ivy climbing alongside magenta bougainvillea. Two small red birds flutter and hop on the faded red-tiled roof, craning necks down, small jerks of their heads as they listen to her fumble for the copper skeleton key... And those two birds! Or how about this, a nice contrast, in which Clara thinks Alberto, the man she has just intentionally knocked into the bushes, is a thief, and confronts him. He will become her husband, of course. [S]ince she was certain Alberto was a thief, albeit a good-looking one, ... she said, "You can stuff your hand up a pig's behind, you pig!" He blinked. "A pig's behind?" But she had called him a pig. Did she then mean for him to stick his hand up his own behind? The superbly crafted aspect of these stories turns up in their interrelations, not only in the excellent, concise writing. A character who is the protagonist in one story will turn up as a minor character in the next. Three typical, young, American male tourists pass through a couple of stories. That street urchin links the Scots heavy to the ex-con. The gypsy pickpockets have two stories, but figure prominently in a third, the one in which the rich American meets his unkind fate. And so on. A different facet of Holthe's craft is on display in the bashing but comic story "The Bruiser." She takes a big chance in this story with her Scots protagonist, Colin Ferguson. He's not exactly your typical enforcer: He likes yoga and aromatherapy, can't get a Ricky Nelson tune out of his head and admires American advertising. But even more, when he speaks or thinks, it's in the brogue of his country. Like this: In America ye couldnay smoke in certain public places. That's what he heard telt. Nay joke. Imagine that. People claiming the air around ye. He'd never make it there. He inhaled deeply and let the smoke oot through his nostrils. Worked like a charm in calming yer nerves. If he couldnay had a smoke at will he'd be a goner. Hoot mon, dialects are tricky. Some readers will turn off if it's not done perfectly. Well, Holthe not only pulls it off for Colin's speech and his interior monologues, she also has some fun by making the omniscient narrator's voice in brogue as well. Note above, for example, "He inhaled deeply and let the smoke oot through his nostrils." A sight quibble in this matter, though: To me, "yin" does not equal Scots for "one," and so every time this word appears it's a minor distraction. Is every story equally good, then? Almost, but not quite. "Weightless," about a young American woman who steps into an affair with an Italian fisherman who is having an affair with his brother's wife, goes on too long. And it also seems not very well borrowed from a Henry James American-innocent-abroad-in-Europe narrative. Nonetheless, she's a sly, funny coyote, Holthe is, when she tells her tales. And most of them, BTW, do not have little, pink bows at the end. Whew. Thank goodness. Just like life. Okay, that's it. Enough. End of review. Go to your independent bookstore; buy a copy of *The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes*. You'll be glad you did, but I already said that, didn't I? 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Action-filled story based in Cannes By Armchair Interviews Tess Uriza's Holthe's novel, *The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes*, weaves together a number of stories centering around the city of Cannes and the French Riviera. In the opening chapter, Chazz Jorgenson is traveling to Cannes on a whim, fleeing his wife and all the complications of his life. He has his medications, and when he is taken up by two brothers who are set upon relieving him of as much of his money and valuables as possible, he is both suspicious and too delusional to shake them off. As he exits the five-forty-five train in Cannes he sets out at a run, fleeing them, compelled by his fear and drug-fueled anxiety. He runs into traffic and is killed by a passing taxi. We pick up the story with another character who has witnessed the event. The gypsy brothers are indeed criminals--pickpockets of long standing, with a third brother who is trying to shake off their life and start new. They thread their way through all of the chapters of this book--whether Holthe is writing of three lace-making widows, the sorrowing mother of a son who has deserted her for a woman she doesn't like, the released criminal who is trying to make a new life without the complications of relationships, or the young boy who is abandoned in a doorway and picks out a new grandfather. This much complication and interweaving of stories takes a great deal of skill. This collection never quite achieves the satisfying level of integration that the premise should offer to a reader. Some of the characters are fascinating portraits of a time,

a place, a culture--like the three widows of Alberto Moretti. Others are a little too much like a Hollywood movie of the poor little waitress who marries money and love. Still, the setting and the glimpses of everyday life of people who are not in Cannes for the film festival is charming and attractive. Armchair Interviews says: If you're looking for an engaging read with plenty of action and lots of scenery, *The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes* is for you. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Magnificent Journey By Debi Simon Pure velvet, I lingered on each word like a sip of fine wine as I was transported in vivid detail to another place and time. The author delicately weaves enchanting stories of various characters in a seemingly unconnected way until they unexpectedly converge into one beautiful lace.

The 5:45 to Cannes. It links northern Italy with the French Riviera while running like a thread through lives that touch one another in unexpected and often secret ways: Chazz, the heir to a great fortune, suffers debilitating mood swings that threaten his once-perfect marriage. GianCarlo, a kindhearted young Italian, looks for a way out of the life of thievery he leads with his impoverished and orphaned brothers. Anais feels the insults of old age too acutely when her beloved son marries a woman who seems to despise her. Sophie, a talented young photographer reeling from the sudden death of her family, finds herself vulnerable to the pangs of a lovesick heart. And then there is the accident in truth it is an accident that joins each of these lives to the others in ways both profound and mundane. At the center we find beautiful, bereaved Claudette, wife of the doomed Chazz, taking the eponymous train to Cannes where she, like all the others, remembers her past and draws from it irresolvable feelings of strength and fragility, meaning and emptiness, permanence and loss. In these stories, Tess Uriza Holthe peers deeply into the inner lives of these women and men, while evoking with sensual grace the richness of the land and culture they share: the time-stopping quality of an exquisite and leisurely meal taken at a tiny ristorante in an unmapped village; the salty breeze that wafts through the open bedroom window of an elegant chateau by the sea; the pulse of life at the festival in Rapallo, in the bullrings of Pamplona, and on the streets of Cannes when the movie people have gone. Sad and lovely, often at the same time, *The Five-Forty-Five to Cannes* takes us to places where we are happy to linger, in the world and in the human heart. From the Hardcover edition.

From Publishers Weekly Great title and rich Mediterranean backdrop aside, this collection of linked stories doesn't quite fulfill the promise of its deft architecture and impressive range. A reader can't help wishing that more of the characters in these stories had the appeal of the Bruiser, an introspective Scottish strong-arm hired to find an AWOL debtor and a kidnapped boy while on vacation in Italy. Or the title characters in the Garcia Marquezesque "The Three Widows of Signor Alberto Moretti," whose daily hen parties in front of the Hotel Rapallo in Rapallo, Italy, reveal a shared disdain and love for one another that's so convoluted even the three widows can't sort it out. Other stories resonate, especially "The Ferry Driver of Portofino," in which an ex-con adopts an abused young boy, and "Homecoming," which sees the widow of a man killed early in the collection traveling to France aboard the same train her husband rode on the day he died: the 5:45. At times, Holthe's eagerness to link her stories leaves some encounters feeling forced. Though this collection doesn't eclipse Holthe's debut, *When the Elephants Dance* (2002), it provides a trove of pleasures and will have fans looking forward to the next. (May) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist *Starred* A bipolar heir off his meds, a trio of brothers who prey on travelers, a bereft young photographer mourning the loss of her family--one time or another, these characters find themselves on the train that runs between Italy and Cannes, whether they are rushing toward the future or trying to keep it at bay. In Uriza Holthe's linked stories, many characters are touched in unexpected ways by a shocking, accidental death. Chazz Jorgensen has impulsively fled to Italy to relive his early courtship of his French wife, who now might be on the verge of leaving him. Two impoverished, shifty Italian brothers have designs on his wallet, while the third, GianCarlo, pursues his dream of seeing the bulls running in Pamplona by tagging along with three privileged Americans, only to find the spectacle does not live up to his expectations. A paroled convict finds the last thing he ever expected, happiness, when a small boy appears on his doorstep claiming to be his grandson. Absorbing and graceful, often surprising and sometimes tragic, Uriza Holthe's brilliant collection of stories takes readers on a speeding train ride through the fascinating lives of her nuanced characters. Kristine Huntley Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved Vivid, intense stories that overlap each other in both profound and tangential ways. San Francisco Chronicle Absorbing and graceful, often surprising and sometimes tragic, Uriza Holthe's brilliant collection of stories takes readers on a speeding train ride through the fascinating lives of her nuanced characters. Booklist (starred review) From the Trade Paperback edition.