



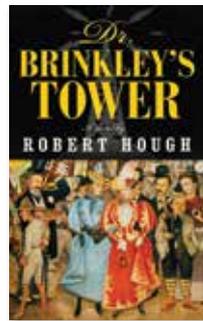
BOOKMARKS

By Carolyn Camilleri

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Dr. Brinkley's Tower

Robert Hough

House of Anansi Press
Paperback, 424 pages

John Romulus Brinkley was a real person, something I didn't realize until after I had finished the novel. (Okay, if I had paid attention to the notes, I would have known this, but I am a bit lazy about that sort of thing.) He was an American quack (1885 to 1942), and, apparently, he really did transplant goat glands into impotent men to, well, reactivate them. He was also an evangelist and a broadcaster, and he actually did build a million-watt tower in the town of Villa Acuña, Mexico. I had a hard time believing all that (whereas, I had no trouble believing the novel). Yes, truth is stranger than fiction.

The story? Well, it's hard to know how to begin: it is a busy book. It's set in Corazón de la Fuente, a small fictional town in Mexico, in 1931, and it tells the tale of the comic and tragic effects brought about by the influence of Dr. Brinkley and his radio tower. The main character is a delightful young man named Franciso who is in love with Violeta. They are joined by a whole town full of wonderful characters, many of them playing significant roles. When the novel opens, the town is poor and quiet. Then Dr. Brinkley arrives, the tower is built, and everyone is busy and working — prospering, in fact. But then the negative effects of the tower become apparent: everything metal became a transmitter, from wire fences to braces and cutlery.

For me, this book is pure magic. It made me think of Gabriel Garcia Marquez (*Love in the Time of Cholera* and *100 Years of Solitude*) and Louis de Bernieres (*Captain Corelli's Mandolin*). It's brilliantly told, with plenty of subplots, characters that leap off the page, romance and heartbreak, political scandal, heroes and villains, gunfights, and even witchcraft — it's everything I love in a novel.



One Good Hustle

Billie Livingston

Random House Canada
Paperback, 288 pages

Here is a teenage angst novel with a real twist. It covers all the usual adolescent girl topics: crushes, problems at school, squabbles with friends, clothes and hair, peer pressure, drugs and alcohol, efforts to fit in ... you know. But 16-year-old Samantha "Sammie" Bell has the added problem of her parents: they are professional hustlers.

Set in mid-80s Burnaby, *One Good Hustle* follows Sammie through a roughly two-month period that starts when she leaves home because she doesn't want to be there when her mom, who depressed and alcoholic, kills herself. Sammie's father makes only rare appearances in her life, but she idolizes him nonetheless. She even daydreams of joining him as his partner, not because she wants to be a criminal — far from it, in fact — but because she longs so much for his approval.

So Sammie "runs away" and spends the summer as a foster child at the home of her best friend Jill and her parents, all the while hoping her father turns up to rescue her.

On one level, *One Good Hustle* is a really thorough examination of a stage everyone goes through when coming to terms with growing up and finding their own identity. The first person voice is especially effective because, as someone I know who has also read it said, "You really get into Sammie's head."

On another level, the novel examines the relationships between men and women, the roles we learn from our parents — and how difficult it is to change patterns.

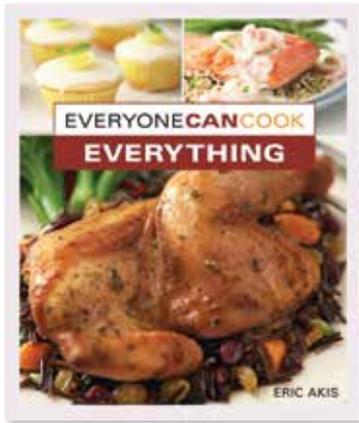
Although, it sounds a little like a young adult book, don't write this one off as being "too young." It's a good story that's beautifully written, one of those laugh-through-your-tears books that would probably make a pretty good movie.

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Everyone Can Cook Everything

Eric Akis

Whitecap Books
Hardcover, 434 pages

I love it when buying the right ingredients and following clear instructions can make me look like a culinary superstar — and Eric Akis is the creator of recipes that do exactly that. His *Everyone Can Cook* series of six cookbooks has been the secret behind some of my most memorable meals, so I was excited to hear that he had produced a seventh: *Everyone Can Cook Everything*.

With a background as a professional chef and pastry chef, Akis believes everyone really can cook — provided they have desire, confidence, and inspiration.

Nothing boosts confidence in the kitchen better than success.

This newest book features the “best of” all the recipes in his other books, along with tips that really help: handling phyllo pastry, grilling steak, mashing potatoes, shucking oysters, and roasting turkey.

Best of all are the recipes; for example, Braised Lamb Shanks with Hot Mustard and Whisky; Roasted Lobster Tails; Pan-Seared Scallops on Ginger-Spiked Mango Sauce; Halibut and Spinach Wrapped in Phyllo Parcels; and Asparagus, Roasted Pepper, and Mushroom Strudel. From quick and easy to special occasion, from appetizers to dessert, you really can make these! ::

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