

BOOKS

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BOOKS

'The Fixer' turns personal for author

By **Amanda Orr** | June 5, 2015

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Joseph Finder's new suspense novel, "The Fixer," is his most personal book.

"My father died while I was writing it," Finder said in a phone interview. "The story started out differently than the way it ended up. It was important for this book to be about fathers and sons."

"The Fixer" centers on Rick Hoffman, a man who seems largely unlikable at first

glance. When readers meet him on the first page, he has hit bottom:

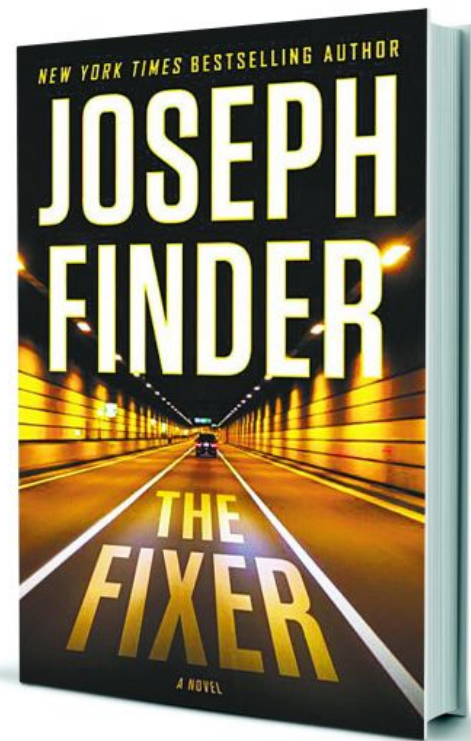
"Rick Hoffman, who'd left the family house on Clayton Street in Cambridge, Mass. Seventeen years ago, solemnly vowing never to return, was now camping out in what used to be his father's study, on the second floor ... ," Finder writes. "This was, he realized, the lowest point in his life."

Early in his professional career as an investigative journalist, Rick ditched his true passion to pursue a fatter paycheck. Along the way, he snagged a leggy blond model (because he liked arm candy at society functions) and became an over-the-top spendthrift.

"The money was like a suit of armor," Finder writes. "It protected him against insults and indignities."

But when he finds himself a casualty of the great digital tsunami that has overtaken print media, his lavish spending turns out to be his undoing. Rick loses his home, his fiancée and what little money he kept in his savings account.

With no other options, the defeated Rick



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returns to Cambridge, to his abandoned and decaying childhood home that has sat empty for nearly two decades. His father, Leonard Hoffman, with whom he was never close, lives in a nursing home and is unable to speak - a mute prisoner of the damage done by a massive stroke 18 years earlier. He communicates by blinking: "... for the last twenty years he'd parked this replacement Lenny in a nursing home, just waiting for him to die a quiet and anticlimactic death."

Rick plans to remodel the house, sell it and live off the proceeds until he can find another job. But with the first strike of a sledgehammer he discovers an army of vermin and, inexplicably, \$3.5 million in cash hidden in a walled-up crawl space - money "that obviously wasn't his father's, because Len had no money."

Now, Rick has a different sort of money problem: He needs to know how the money got there and whether his father knew about it. As he closes in on answers, a portrait of his father emerges, a father he never understood or appreciated.

Finder experienced the same revelation in his own life.

"We really don't know our parents as well as we think we do," the author said.

"There's always a side to our parents that we don't know. On my father's deathbed, I thanked him for things he had done that I took for granted. This was an emotionally important story for me. It's the first time I've done that. It's really a self-revelatory

Author appearance

Joseph Finder will discuss and sign "The Fixer," 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Murder By The Book, 2342 Bissonnet; 713-524-8597, or toll free 888-424-2842 or murderbooks.com.

'The Fixer'

By Joseph Finder.

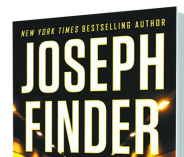
Penguin Publishing Group, 384 pp., \$28.

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Books to pick up this summer



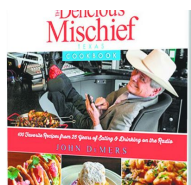
'The Fixer' turns personal for author

book."

Finder defied logic in 2012 when he bought out his seven-figure contract with St. Martins, cut ties with his agent and wrote "Suspicion," on spec, in order to break out of the corporate thriller genre. This was after a good run with eight standalone novels, two books in the Nick Heller series and two motion pictures - "High Crimes" starring Ashley Judd and Morgan Freeman, and "Paranoia" starring Liam Hemsworth, Gary Oldman and Harrison Ford.



'Loving Day' delves into the gray world of black and white



Book events: June 10-13



Best-sellers: June 7

"I love corporate thrillers," Finder said. "I don't think we have enough of them. But I write books about the ordinary guy in peril. These are people, like all of us, that have flaws, drawbacks and struggles."

Ultimately, "The Fixer" is a lively page-turner with smart, tight dialogue.

In an exchange with Holly, his ex-fiancée, Rick must swallow his shortcomings:

"Rick, I figured you out. You were always clocking who's up and who's down. I was that tall blonde who looks great in tennis whites. You loved the idea of making other people jealous."

"That's not true. I loved you."

"No, Rick. You loved that."

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