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'The Perfect Dress' is the perfect book for summer

By Joyce Laabs of The Lakeland Times

I found "The Perfect Dress," by Mary Jane Cole (Author House, \$14.95), to be the best read of the summer to date. I loved it.

It's not the kind of read you have to stay up all night to finish. It's even relaxing – but it holds you spellbound – and the ending was a super surprise. But, don't cheat. Take it from start to finish.

The story line centers on Mary Leigh Worth, and is written in the first person.

Mary Leigh loses her parents to a drunk driver when she is just 6 years old. She goes to live just down the street with her Aunt Hazel and Uncle Joe, and it is while living with them she acquires her first obsession – clothing. Her uncle is a tailor, but it is her aunt, a whiz with the needle and also obsessed, that reinforces the condition.

Her second obsession is finding a husband, and this obsession kicks into high gear as her best friend, Carol, gets married and Mary Leigh reaches what she considers the old maid age of 30.

As a young adult, she moves to California to pursue her dream of becoming a designer, and finds a room in a lovely home. Her roommates are going through transgendered transformations. She finally meets the man of her dreams, Halib "Hal" Mohammed, an Egyptian-American airline pilot, and, of course, another obsession.

It seems that he is to be the groom in an arranged marriage.

Mary Leigh becomes a fashion designer and eventually opens her own bridal shop in Chicago, but not before she has gone down a path of self destruction that includes alcohol and drug abuse, sexual promiscuity and two failed marriages.

Mary Jane Cole was born and raised in Chicago. She attended universities in Illinois and California and did her graduate work in behavioral sciences. She then earned a degree in design, and one of her creations, The Barkery K-9 Cafe, was featured on national television. She has been published in the Florida media.

She now travels throughout the country by motor home with her psychiatrist husband and two dogs and plans a final career as a writer.

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