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Literary

**An Age of Madness**
David Maine
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To a casual observer, it would seem that Boston psychiatrist Regina Moss is surrounded by chaos and instability all day long but has her own life under complete control. Yet appearances can be deceiving, as David Maine makes clear in his thoughtful and engaging new novel, *An Age of Madness*.

As it turns out, not unlike many of the disturbed mental patients she counsels daily, Regina struggles under the weight of incredible trauma—resulting from a family tragedy the author slowly reveals over the course of the book's carefully crafted pages. In her early forties, Regina maintains a crusty and cynical demeanor that makes her seem far older. This uptight persona extends from her professional career into her family life: Her intense estrangement from her college-age daughter, Anna, is traceable to the deaths of both Regina's husband, Walter, and teenaged son, Toby, one night under mysterious circumstances.

While Anna struggles to cope, her mother throws herself into her work. Regina is at her physical and intellectual peak from a long-distance-running regimen and a heavy caseload of jittery psych patients. But she maintains the blockade on her feelings she first erected that fateful evening—until reluctantly entering into a relationship with Russell, a much younger man. The romance demands an emotional honesty that forces Regina to both confront her past and reconsider her future.

Maine, the author of five previous novels including *The Preservationist*, brings personal experience working in the Massachusetts mental-health system to bear on *An Age of Madness*, lending an authenticity to Regina's travails. But the technical details of therapy and prescriptions aside, the book's greatest strengths lie in solid character development, the skillful creation of a distinctive voice, and a deliberate approach to plot revelation that rivals the best books of the mystery genre.

Toby left a note, but when his long-grieving mother finally brings herself to read it, she's

left with more questions than answers. What exactly happened to Walter and his troubled son up in the backyard treehouse that night? Regina will never know for certain, and the reader's sympathies and perceptions of the event shift multiple times over the course of the novel. *An Age of Madness* offers no tidy resolution but, instead, a confidently rendered portrait of one woman's journey to recover from loss and find both the strength and the vulnerability to open herself up again to love.

*Shawn Syms*