



# Book of the Week

## *House of Correction* by Nicci French

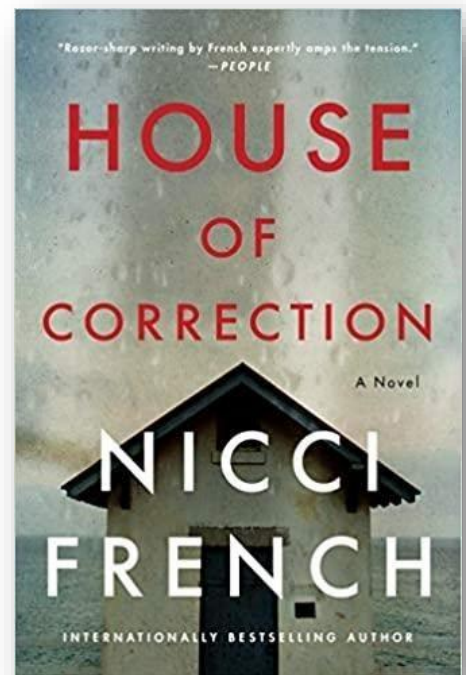
### Book Review by Maureen Lang, Friends of the Starkville Library Board Member

Can you imagine anything more horrible than being accused of a murder you are not quite sure you are innocent of? Then add to the mix that your court appointed lawyers assume you are guilty and therefore, encourage you to agree to a plea bargain of only 20 years in prison. Finally, then suppose that the entire village you live in knows you must be guilty and demands your conviction. If this seems like a lot to deal with, this is the very situation that the main character, Tabitha Hardy, must contend with in the book *House of Correction* by Nicci French.

Tabitha is not a likeable person. She has a difficult, abrasive way of dealing with everyone she meets. She is offensive with her actions and her language, has little social awareness, and has been this way since her youth. To make things worse, she has moments when she blacks out and cannot remember everything that happens to her. She has no family and only one friend, Andy, and even he does not know if he can believe in her innocence. Tabitha vacillates about whether or not she thinks she could have killed her former math teacher, Stuart Rees, a man everyone in town stands up for. She reasons that surely she would have an inner awareness, if she had actually killed him, wouldn't she?

Finally, while in prison, Tabitha decides that she must try and defend herself, in spite of the fact that she is untrained, alone, and has no idea how to prove her own innocence. Her prison bunkmate ends up being the only friend she has and encourages her not to give up. She uses the prison library and her own common sense as her way of planning her defense.

This was a riveting story. At times you will find yourself yelling out loud at Tabitha when she is so unaware of how her unfiltered reactions affect her situation. This was a book I stayed up late to finish. With its complexity and its many twists and turns, it was a book I will not forget right away.



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