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They Must Have Hated me at my Local Library

by Peter_Lerangis July

They must have hated me at the Freeport Memorial Library. Each week over the summer I'd return a stack of books encrusted with salt and laced with sand.

Some kids, I'm told, treasure and respect books like rare porcelain objects. I devoured them. My family lived near the south shore of Long Island, and every sunny summer day we'd drive to a beach called Point Lookout—parents, aunts, uncles, and a gaggle of siblings and cousins I adored.

For me, three Bs defined summer: beach, basketball, and books—and the last was my favorite. Especially at sunset. By then, my little brother and sister were watching the tide destroy our sandcastle decorated with globs of sea-saturated sand, and my cousins were de-sanding a blanket we'd used as a costume in a skit. As the oldest kid, I'd been responsible for their feeding, entertainment, and safety. It was a lot of work! By day's end, all the grateful, sleepy adults let me do what I loved most. I'd settle into a webbed chair, a breeze wafting over me, and happily disappear into worlds contained within the pages of, well, you name it.



At first Dr. Seuss was my favorite beachmate, but the titles changed as I got older—from the Freddy the Pig series to Homer Price to The Great Brain to Superman comics to The Call of the Wild to A Wrinkle in Time to anything by Ray Bradbury to 1984 to Fahrenheit 451. I knew I'd become an adult the summer I borrowed my dad's unopened copy of Catch-22. I had to drag along a dictionary to help with words I didn't know. He read it afterward on my recommendation. Sweet.

Swimming, frozen Milky Ways, and games. That's what I remember. But also flying to Mars, defying death in the Far North, spelunking in Utah, and saving Lois Lane. Nowadays I've been traveling again in the summer months, this time with Dan and Amy Cahill.



Last summer, after months of research and planning (and a long book tour), I wrote *The Viper's Nest*, the seventh book of *The 39 Clues* series. It was an exciting, intense experience, and I rarely left my office. One frightening day I needed to write a scene in which the Holts threaten to blow up Uncle Alastair. I wanted a very specific place—tree cover, a hill, a quiet neighborhood. I was using Google maps, going up and down the neighborhoods of Johannesburg and Pretoria, when I spotted ... Boom Street! What better place for an explosion than Boom Street? Zooming down to street level, I was able to find my perfect spot.

Recently when someone asked what I'd done over the summer, I drew a blank. All I could think about was the rocky coast of Durban, South Africa, a stronghold looming over a field deep in the bush, a nighttime encounter with an abandoned mineshaft, an explosion on Boom Street. The whole time I'd been sitting in a room overlooking the back alley of buildings on West 96th Street. But that's not what I remembered. Like the summers of my youth, it had been a time of travel and glorious adventure. When you love books, it always is.

Editor's Note: Peter Lerangis is the bestselling author of The Sword Thief (#3 of The 39 Clues series), The Viper's Nest (#7 of The 39 Clues series), WTF, and Smiler's Bones, among others.