

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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Because I'm adding a "collecting" column to Bookaholic, this would be a good time to acknowledge the expertise and help of Otto Penzler of The Mysterious Bookshop. Otto has always been generous with his knowledge, and I was fortunate to have many opportunities over the course of six years to pick his brain about collecting (and he still allows me to do that). I know most of what I know about collecting because of Otto and I'm saying this up front so that I don't have to keep mentioning his name. All mistakes, as they say, are mine.

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***APHRODITE*, Russell Andrews, Mysterious Press, \$23.95**

I enjoy the novels of Russell Andrews because I'm never quite sure where they are going, and his latest continues the tradition. The story begins in a Washington DC parking lot where a young woman is murdered, continues on to London where a noted physiologist is killed after delivering a lecture and lands on Long Island, New York, where Susanna Morgan works for the East End Journal. She also volunteers at the local retirement home, and when one of the residents dies she writes his obituary. Her facts are incorrect however and before the end of page 30 Susanna too has been murdered. Local cop, Justin Westwood, who has some secrets of his own, wonders why Susanna's incorrect obituary not only gets her murdered but brings a couple of hit men and the FBI to town. You'll have a lot of fun finding out.

***PARANOIA*, Joseph Finder, St. Martin's, \$24.95**

Adam Cassidy, a low-level employee at a high-tech corporation, does something that incurs the wrath of his employer. He's given a choice. He can be charged with a crime or he can go and work at the company's chief competitor, Trion Systems. Adam becomes a corporate spy. Soon he's rich, driving a Porsche, and dating the girl of his dreams. But now he wants out and that's when his nightmare begins. I wanted to know if Adam was going to get out of this and how. This is a terrific page turner with a neat little twist at the end.

***RETRIBUTION*, Jilliane Hoffman, Putnam, \$24.95**

This is being hyped as the next "big" book by the publisher, and maybe it will be, but I can't see how. My tolerance for horror is high but a prolonged and graphic rape scene made me put this book down more than once. Chloe Larson is a law student looking forward to her life with successful New York businessman Michael Decker. But her life

is shattered when a man in a clown mask rapes and tortures her. She survives physically but has an extended mental breakdown. Twelve years later, she has changed her name and her looks and is the assistant chief of the Miami Dade State Attorney's office. When serial killer suspect William Bantling is captured Chloe (now C.J. Townsend) takes over the case, but when Bantling stands up in court and speaks C.J. realizes he's the man who raped her years ago. Great premise and keep the title of this book in mind, but how many readers are going to get past that rape scene?

***MR. PARADISE*, Elmore Leonard, Wm. Morrow, \$25.95**

What a pleasure it is to read a master at the top of his game. Leonard returns once more to Detroit where octogenarian millionaire Anthony Paradiso spends much of his time watching the University of Michigan football games. He already pays escort Chloe Robinson very well to join him during those games. But on this particular night Chloe persuades her roommate Kelly, a Victoria's Secret model, to join her and, together, in their cheerleader's outfits, they add an extra zing to the Wolverine's efforts. And what a zing it is. Before the end of the game, two people are lying dead and we are off and running with what is surely going to be one of the best crime thrillers of the year.

***THE ZERO GAME*, Brad Meltzer, Warner Books, \$25.95**

Matthew Mercer and Harris Sandler have great jobs. They are senior staffers to well-respected congressmen. But after ten years in Washington, they are bored, so when one of them finds out about the clandestine Zero Game, they climb aboard. It is all good fun. Wagers are made on everything from whether a sentence can be inserted into a speech to the outcome of a house vote. Those playing the game only know one other person in the game in order to keep identities secret, so when the game takes a deadly turn and a murder takes place, there is no trail. Meltzer knows the inner workings of government and he spins a great tale here.

***BED OF NAILS*, Michael Slade, Onyx, \$7.50**

I thought I had discovered this author, so imagine my surprise when I found out I am the last person on the planet to read him! This story is about time travel, the voyages of Captain Cook, cannibalism, the World Horror Conventions, Jack the Ripper, the Tarot Card Deck, conspiracy theories, and Ted Bundy's House. All this, and a wealth of fascinating facts, are woven together into an unputdownable horror story. Apparently, Slade's readers inform me, he writes these books (there are nine others) with different people – his law partners, his wife and, in this case, his daughter. I admit I am now addicted. If you collect Slade then you know that first editions are Canadian.

ON MY READING LIST

***A VERY PRIVATE GENTLEMAN*, Martin Booth, St. Martin's, \$23.95**

He is known as Signor Farfalla – Mr. Butterfly – in the Italian town where he lives. He spends his mornings painting rare butterflies, his afternoons idling in cafes, and his

evenings talking with his friend the town priest over a glass of brandy. But Signore Farfalla lives in fear and right now he senses a deadly circle closing in on him. This part thriller, part character study is getting a lot of positive attention.

***THE KILLING OF THE TINKERS*, Ken Bruen, St. Martin's, \$22.95**

This is the follow-up to *The Guards*, at the end of which Jack Taylor left Galway dreaming of a sober new life in London. Now Jack's back in Galway with a pint of Guinness on his mind and before long he's sunk into his old patterns. But when a gypsy arrives at the bar telling Jack that his clan are turning up dead and that the Guards, the Irish Police, are doing nothing about it, Jack agrees to look into the matter. I'm expecting Bruen to be the next great name in crime writing, and I'm expecting it now.

***TWISTED*, Jeffery Deaver, Simon & Schuster, \$24.95**

This title is already in the bookstores. I overlooked it, and you may have too, because it was a late addition by the publisher. This is a collection of short stories by Deaver, many of which have appeared before in magazines such as *Ellery Queen* and *Alfred Hitchcock*. However, there is one original story featuring quadriplegic Lincoln rhyme and his assistant, Amelia Sachs.

***THE KILLS*, Linda Fairstein, Scribner, \$25.00**

Manhattan Sex Crimes Prosecutor Alexandra Cooper is hard at work on a tough date rape case. Her colleague Mike Chapman is in Harlem where an eighty-two-year-old woman has been murdered. As the two cases unfold and converge, Alex finds that appearances can deceive, even as she heads for a life-and-death struggle in the watery inlet of the Kills in New Jersey.

***BLUFFING MR. CHURCHILL*, John Lawton, Atlantic Monthly Press, \$24.00**

This is a prequel to the series featuring Frederick Troy and is set in London in 1941. Wolfgang Stahl, an American spy operating undercover as an SS officer, has just fled Germany with Hitler's henchmen on his heels. He is carrying the blueprint of the Fuhrer's secret plan to invade Russia. If this sounds familiar to you it's because it was published in England in 2001 under the name *Riptide*. I was most disappointed that this was not a new Lawton, but for those of you who haven't read this yet, you're in for a treat.

***ABSOLUTE FRIENDS*, John Le Carre, Little Brown, \$26.95**

I still don't know a great deal about the story but I understand that Le Carre, who is best known for his depiction of espionage during the Cold War, has turned his attention to the war in Iraq. As I have mentioned before, this edition is being published simultaneously with the UK edition. Obsessive collectors will want to know which edition came out first, even if the difference is measured by minutes.

***THE FRUMIOUS BANDERSNATCH*, Ed McBain, Simon & Schuster, \$25.00**

Hip hop signer Tamar Valparaiso is about to be a household name. Her new album is going to be a sure thing, but when Steve Carella turns up for the graveyard shift at the

87th precinct on the night of Tamar's launch party, he is delivered the case of her kidnapping. Its clear that someone wants Tamar to disappear before she ever gets the chance to hit the big time. McBain has been writing this series since 1956 and he still manages to keep it remarkably fresh.

***GOD SAVE THE MARK*, Donald Westlake, Forge, \$24.95 hardcover; \$14.95 paper.**

Together with the Mystery Writers of America, Forge is launching a reprint series of Edgar Winners. First up is Westlake's tale of the patsy who becomes the target of every con man. New introduction by Otto Penzler.

***NIGHT AND FEAR: TWENTY STORIES BY CORNELL WOOLRICH*, Francis M. Nevins, Ed., Carroll & Graf, \$26.00**

This is the first collection of suspense fiction by Woolrich to be published in nearly two decades. These stories are previously unpublished and for those of us who adore the work of Woolrich this is about as exciting as it gets. Woolrich lived a life of despair and terror and about the only thing he was able to do really well was to put those fears onto the printed page. If you're not a Woolrich fan yet, you probably know his work through the movies, notably *The Bride Wore Black* and *Rear Window*. But once you read him, you'll be hooked. Start here.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***THE 37TH HOUR*, Jodi Compton, Delacorte Press, \$21.95**

Sarah Pribek is a detective specializing in missing persons cases. She knows all the right questions to ask and, if the missing person is a male, she also knows that he might not be a victim since grown men sometimes go missing intentionally. But when her own husband vanishes without a trace, she knows something is terribly wrong.

***DESERT PLACES*, Blake Crouch, St. Martin's, \$23.95**

When semi-famous novelist Andrew Thomas finds a note in his mailbox telling him there's a body buried on his property he thinks it's a joke. The writer of the note wants Andrew to call or he will be implicated in a murder. Its no joke and soon Andrew is very, very scared.

***GHOSTFIRES*, Keith Dixon, St. Martin's, \$23.95**

Warren Bascomb has lost his wife; his grown son, Ben, has lost his mother. One believes her death was murder while the other believes it was suicide. Warren, addicted to Dilaudid, lost his medical licence and now Ben supplies him with narcotics. Its an agreement that finally collapses and drives both men from the emotional and chemical shelters in which they hide. Set in New York City, this sounds like a slice of the American nightmare.

THE WINEMAKER'S DAUGHTER, Timothy Egan, Knopf, \$24.95

Brunella Cartolano is an accomplished architect battling to save Seattle's fishing fleet. Her childhood home is in the wine country east of the Cascade Mountains where she sometimes helps her aging father. A wildfire in a nearby forest threatens her father's vineyard, Brunella's brother Niccolo, a firefighter under investigation for negligence, is killed in the flames. Trying to discover the truth about Niccolo and save the Cartolano name, Brunella uncovers family secrets she was never meant to know.

THE CANTERBURY PAPERS, Judith Koll Healey, Wm. Morrow, \$24.95

A new historical series, this one featuring Eleanor of Aquitaine, former queen of France and England. Eleanor sends her former ward, Alais, the sister of the King of France, to retrieve letters hidden in Canterbury Cathedral. These letters, in the wrong hands, could bring down the King of England. Alais is abducted and it will take all her strength, with the help of the head of the Knights Templar, to unravel dark secrets and escape with her life.

DATING DEAD MEN, Harley Jane Kozak, Doubleday, \$22.95

Los Angeles greeting-card artist and card-and-gift-shop manager Wollie Shelly is dating forty men in sixty days as research for a best-selling author's upcoming book. When she stumbles over a dead body en route to the state-run mental hospital, where her brother, a paranoid schizophrenic, lives, she is momentarily taken hostage by a charismatic "doctor" who is on the run from the mob. Afraid that her brother might be involved in the murder, Wollie decides to solve the crime on her own. If this all sounds confusing, it is meant to be. Kozak, who is picking up some nice reviews, has written a "madcap" novel which is being compared to those written by Janet Evanovich.

THE WHITE CITY, Alec Michod, St. Martin's, \$21.95

It is 1893 and the last World's Fair of the century is commencing in Chicago. But there's a murderer on the loose and the city is paralyzed with fear as the killer the newspapers call The Husker claims his victims. The son of prominent architect William Rockland is abducted and the search is on to keep him from becoming another victim.

LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF MURDER, Karen Swee, Bridge Works, \$23.95

Introduces tavernmistress (tavernmistress?) Abigail Lawrence who, during the winter of 1777, discovers the body of an overnight guest pinned to the floor with an upright sword. She must find the killer before the British army occupying New Jersey uses the murder as an excuse to take over her Raritan Tavern in New Brunswick. First in a series which, to the author's and publisher's knowledge, is the only one set amid the American Revolution. Others have been set before, after, or in England.

NON-MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE MAN IN MY BASEMENT*, Walter Mosley, Little Brown, \$22.95**

Charles Blakey, a young black man, has only one thing in this life: the beautiful home that has belonged to his family for generations. But he's going to lose it if he can't pay the mortgage soon, so when a stranger offers him \$50,000 in cash to rent out his basement for the summer, Charles agrees. He knows the stranger wants something more than his basement and when he finds out what those requirements are, Charles tries to satisfy him without getting pulled into the strangeness. Charles sees an opportunity to understand secrets of the white world and his summer with the man in his basement turns into a journey of power and manipulation, and humanity.

***PRISONERS OF WAR*, Steve Yarbrough, Knopf, \$23.00**

Yarbrough's latest is set in a Mississippi farming town in 1943. The plantations are being worked by German soldiers whose fighting days are over, and Marty Stark, who has returned from the front, is reassigned to guard the men he was trained to kill. Dan Timms is waiting to be drafted and L.C., a young black man, is in more danger from the society he was born into than anything looming overseas. Yarbrough interweaves these stories as he examines the eternal conflict between the powerful and the powerless.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***PLAYING WITH FIRE*, Peter Robinson, Macmillan**

Inspector Banks investigates the lives of victims killed by fire to discover who would have wanted them out of the way.

***DEATH OF AN OLD MASTER*, David Dickinson, Constable**

A major exhibit of Venetian paintings in 1899 brings the most famous artists to London. Shortly after the exhibition opens a leading art critic is found murdered and Lord Frances Powerscourt investigates.

***THE PLAGUE MAIDEN*, Kate Ellis, Piatkus**

A letter arrives at Tradmouth Police Station addressed to DCI Norbert who no longer works there. The letter states that the man convicted of killing the Rev. Shipbourne, Vicar of Belsham, is innocent.

THIS AND THAT

The New York Times published its Notable Books section recently. Here is a list of mysteries and near-mysteries that made the cut:

The Babes in the Wood – Ruth Rendell
Bangkok 8 – John Burdett
The Coffee Trader – David Liss
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time – Mark Haddon
The Cutting Room – Louise Welsh
The Dogs of Babel – Carolyn Parkhurst
Domino – Ross King
Done For A Dime – David Corbett
The Fall – Simon Mawer
Fear Itself – Walter Mosley
Hex – Maggie Estep
Kill Two Birds and Get Stoned – Kinky Friedman
The King is Dead – Jim Lewis
Lost in a Good Book – Jasper Fforde
Maisie Dobbs – Jacqueline Winspear
Mr. Timothy – Louis Bayard
Mortals – Norman Rush
Oracle Night – Paul Auster
Pattern Recognition – William Gibson
Resurrection Men – Ian Rankin
Rumpole Rests His Case – John Mortimer
Samaritan – Richard Price
Soul Circus – George P. Pelecanos
Vernon God Little – DBC Pierre
We Pierce – Andrew Huebner
When the Women Come Out to Dance – Elmore Leonard
The Winter Queen – Boris Akunin.

Here are *my* favorites for 2003. I've created three lists so I can include as many titles as possible.

Favorite Mysteries

The Amateur – Robert Littell
Babes in the Wood – Ruth Rendell
Bangkok 8 – John Burdett
The DaVinci Code – Dan Brown
Dead I Well May Be – Adrian McKinty
The Delicate Storm – Giles Blunt
The Guards – Ken Bruen
Last Car To Elysian Fields – James Lee Burke
Something Might Happen – Julie Myerson
Wisdom of the Bones – Christopher Hyde

Favorite First Mysteries

Clean Cut – Theresa Monsour
Maisie Dobbs – Jacqueline Winspear
Monkeewrench – P.J. Tracy
Spinning Man – George Harrar

Favorite Non Mysteries

Atonement – Ian McEwan
Bel Canto – Ann Patchett
Postcards From Berlin – Margaret Leroy
Rape: A Love Story – Joyce Carol Oates

COLLECTING**Caveat Emptor**

The problem with talking about collecting is that one piece of information leads naturally to another and it is almost impossible to stop until you've written an encyclopedia. I'll try and keep the information here bite size. If that raises more questions than it answers, I apologize. Hopefully, questions raised will be dealt with in the future.

(First Edition, for our purposes, means **First Printing**. A publisher can go back to press any number of times and the book can still be a first edition, albeit a 23rd printing!)

I was looking through catalogs from UK booksellers recently and noticed that some of them describe their books as First Editions when, clearly, they are not. They are First UK Editions. Below are the terms I use when identifying editions. These are fairly standard, but terms may differ depending on your bookseller.

First Edition. There is only one first edition. It was published in the US, UK, Canada, France, or wherever. No other edition preceded it.

First UK Edition. This is the first edition published in that country. The “true first” was published elsewhere.

First US Edition. This is the first edition published here.

True First. Self-explanatory, but if you see this noted, or “**Preceded US**,” noted, your very careful bookseller is alerting you to something unusual. American authors are sometimes published first in the UK, and vice versa. Booksellers usually know this and they really should say so.

First English Translation. Although the book is a First Edition in Spain (Arturo Perez-Revert) or Sweden (Henning Mankell), it is the first translation into English. Not many

collectors are so adamant about First Editions that they will collect in another language, but there are some purists who will.

I would like to see all booksellers be scrupulous in the way they describe their books, either in their catalogs or on the front endpaper of the book. I am not suggesting that booksellers who do not are being unscrupulous, it just makes it easier for the inexperienced buyer.

If you plan to collect, rule number one is find a bookseller whose knowledge you trust and whose system of describing books you understand.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Fiction

Braun, Lilian Jackson, *The Cat Who Talked Turkey*, Putnam, \$23.95. James Qwilleran, Koko and Yum Yum are back in another mystery in this series which never ceases to amaze me that it never ceases.

Cannell, Stephen J., *Vertical Coffin*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. LAPD's Sergeant Shane Scully is caught up in a high profile case when law enforcement officers start being shot down.

Allen, Conrad, *Murder on the Marmora*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. A leisurely cruise to Egypt in 1908 is interrupted by a vicious murder in the latest in Allen's series set on board ship.

Farmer, Jerrilyn, *Perfect Sax*, Wm. Morrow, \$22.95. Third in the Madeline Bean culinary mystery series.

Fleming, Charles, *After Havana*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. A thriller set in Cuba in 1958 when rebels held the mountains and Havana partied. Cardoso is a haunted Security agent assigned to find and kill the rebel Communist leader Carlos Delgado.

Garrison, Paul, *The Ripple Effect*, Wm. Morrow, \$24.95. When it is assumed that Aiden Page is dead, he quietly walks away from his old life but he finds the only way he'll survive is to solve the mystery surrounding his "death."

Garwood, Julie, *Murder List*, Ballantine, \$25.95. Regan Madison attends a seminar during which each participant has to list those who have hurt or deceived them. When the people on Regan's list start to be murdered she tries to discover the deadly motive.

Gash, Jonathan, *The Ten Word Game*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Lovejoy is shanghaied aboard a cruise ship to help a group steal Russia's legendary "amber room."

Gleeson, Janet, *The Grenadillo Box*, Simon & Schuster, \$25.00. A romantic tale of murder and intrigue set in Georgian England.

Gordon, Alan, *An Antic Disposition*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. In 1157 the Fool's Guild intervenes in a complicated dispute over the crown of Denmark. The fool sent to keep an eye on things is Terence of York, dubbed Yorick.

Harrison, Janis, *Reap a Wicked Harvest*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. A greenhouse assistant is found dead and florist Bretta Solomon investigates.

Hellman, Libby Fischer, *The Image of Death*, Poisoned Pen Press, \$24.95. Ellie Foreman, who is producing a video about foster children, receives a package containing a surveillance video showing the murder of a young woman.

Hills, Kathleen, *Hunter's Dance*, Poisoned Pen Press, \$24.95. The son of summer residents at the exclusive Shawanok Club in Michigan's Upper Peninsula is found dead. St. Adele's reluctant constable, John McIntire, investigates.

Joens, Mike, *An Animated Death in Burbank*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. First in a new series featuring an independently wealthy female detective with the L.A. Sheriff's Department.

Lescroart, John, *The Second Chair*, Dutton, \$25.95. A Dismas Hardy and Amy Wu legal thriller.

Lewin, Patricia, *Out of Reach*, Ballantine, \$23.95. When a boy vanishes from a D.C. suburb, CIA agent Erin Bates notices the similarities to her sister's kidnapping.

McGrory, Brian, *Dead Line*, Atria Books, \$25.00. Newspaperman Jack Flynn receives a tip that the son of Boston's mayor has been named as a prime suspect in the unsolved heist of priceless treasures from the Gardner Museum.

Robb, J.D., *Divided in Death*, Putnam, \$23.95. Irish billionaire Roarke asks Lieutenant Eve Dallas for help when a trusted employee is a suspect in a double-homicide.

Roberts, John Maddox, *SPQR VIII: The River God's Vengeance*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Decius investigates the collapse of a tenement building and unearths more than shoddy construction materials.

Slater, Susan, *Five O'Clock Shadow*, Poisoned Pen Press, \$24.95. While on her honeymoon Pauly Caton watches her husband of four days fall from a hot air balloon as he takes the ride she is too nervous to take.

Thor, Brad, *State of the Union*, Atria Books, \$25.00. Ex-Navy SEAL turned Secret Service agent Scot Harvath investigates a string of brutal American slayings that are confounding the highest levels of government.

Vittachi, Nury, *The Feng Shui Detective*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Mr. C.F. Wong is a feng shui consultant in Singapore who specializes in crime scenes. His first case will take him to the Opera House in Sydney, a building well known for its appalling feng shui.

Non-Fiction

Mystery Women: An Encyclopedia of Leading Women Characters in Mystery Fiction, Volume III (1990-1999), Poisoned Pen, \$33.95. This must for the reference shelf contains over 500 individual entries attesting to the popularity of female sleuths in recent series.

Sally Owen is a book dealer and was the manager of The Mysterious Bookshop in New York City from 1996 to 2002. You can reach her via e-mail: sallyowen@rcn.com

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