

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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Edgar fever! This award continues to be very exciting even though a) your favorite book was not included among the nominees, b) you've never heard of some of the authors, and c) what does it all mean anyway? More discussion of this and my unscientific handicapping under **This and That** and **Collecting**.

Sally Owen

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

DEAD HEAT, Caroline Carver, Mysterious Press, \$23.95

Georgia Parish left her home in northern Queensland, Australia, to pursue her career. But when she survives a plane crash she finds herself back in her small town trying to figure out if she was the target of sabotage. Or was the target the man whose place she took on the flight or her two strange fellow passengers? Carver, who won the Crime Writers Assoc. Debut Dagger for her first novel, *Blood Junction*, is an interesting writer but to me it was the description of the Australian landscape and way of life rather than the mystery that was compelling here.

BAD MEN, John Connolly, Atria Books, \$25.00

I have already reviewed this title, so just a reminder that the US Edition is now available. I was less disappointed than some of you in this stand-alone. Connolly is touring, so signed editions are on sale at your favorite bookstore.

THE BOOKMAN'S PROMISE, John Dunning, Scribner, \$25.00

The third Cliff Janeway mystery is here, and the excitement is palpable. For those of you who have been absent from Earth for the past ten years, Cliff Janeway is the cop-turned-rare-book-dealer who first appeared in *Booked To Die*, which was responsible for many of us becoming book collectors. Here, he buys a signed first edition by nineteenth century explorer Richard Burton. When an elderly woman, Josephine Gallant, arrives at Janeway's store claiming to be the rightful owner of the book as well as of a lost library of Burton material, Janeway is once again involved in murder and mayhem in the world of rare books. I didn't remember that Dunning was so scornful of those of us who collect mere modern first editions when we should be seeking out the rarest of rare books. But he got most of us started so let's allow him that foible. For those of you who have not read the Cliff Janeway series, start now and join the rest of us as we collect for fun and profit.

WORD MADE FLESH, Jack O'Connell, HarperCollins, \$24.95

When I started reading this I became a little confused. I was certain I was reading some of the best prose in crime fiction but could not pick up the thread of the story. It is much easier if you go to O'Connell's first book in this series, *Box 9*, and start there, I'm told. I am going to do that, as should you. O'Connell has invented the city of Quinsigamond in which Gilrein, once a cop, now a cabdriver, roams. Gilrein is always at the center of the action, whether it is rogue cops flaying a gangster or the world of August Kroger, crook and bibliophile. He drives the streets always looking for answers. The work of O'Connell is best described by the magazine *Crime Time* "Hyper-real noir. A grotesque romance about genocide, language, bibliomania, doubt, obsession, worms, epidermis and sanctuary!" Well, if that doesn't send you rushing to your book store, what will? The first edition of this title was published in the UK by No Exit Press and is limited to 950 copies – in trade paperback.

THE PROMISE OF A LIE, Howard Roughan, Warner Books, \$23.95

Dr. David Remler is a Manhattan psychologist and bestselling author. When he takes on a new patient, Samantha Kent who is trapped in an abusive relationship with her husband, his ordered life starts to spin out of control. Remler has more than professional feelings for Samantha and when she calls to tell him that she has killed her husband and may kill herself he rushes to her home only to find that he is alone with a dead man, his prints everywhere. Since Samantha Kent is alive and well and was out-of-town when her husband was killed, Remler is arrested and a sensational trial ensues. This was a terrific read with a number of twists and turns which kept me riveted.

ON MY READING LIST

CALL THE DEVIL BY HIS OLDEST NAME, Sallie Bissell, Dell, \$6.99

I nearly missed this latest entry in the Mary Crow series because it is a paperback original, and I don't always get to see those. *In The Forest of Harm* and *Darker Justice* were the first two titles in this series and they feature Assistant D.A. Mary Crow, originally from Little Jump Off, North Carolina and now the toughest young prosecutor in Georgia. I have no other information but I know there are a lot of devoted fans out there. Look for this in the paperback section of your bookstore.

THE BURGLAR ON THE PROWL, Lawrence Block, Wm. Morrow, \$24.95

This is the latest installment in the life of Block's antiquarian book dealer, gentleman, and thief, Bernie Rhodenbarr. I have no information about the plot, but I don't think that will stop anyone from picking this one up.

JURY OF ONE, David Ellis, Putnam, \$24.95

This is Ellis's third legal thriller. Shelly Trotter is the daughter of the state's governor and a children's rights advocate. When one of her former clients, a seventeen-year-old, is accused of killing a cop, Shelly takes more than a passing interest. She wonders what the

prosecution really have against him, but then comes the shocker. He says he's the son she gave up when her father insisted on a private adoption. Ellis won the Edgar Award for this first book, *Line of Vision*.

***DON'T LOOK BACK*, Karin Fossum, Harcourt, \$23.00**

At the foot of the Kollen Mountain lies a small village where the inhabitants know each other and children play safely and happily in the streets. But when the body of a teenage girl is found by the lake at the mountaintop, the town's tranquility is shattered. Translated from the Norwegian, this introduces Inspector Sejer, the smart, tough investigator in this critically acclaimed series.

***SOUTHWESTERLY WIND*, Luiz Alfredo Garcia-Roza, Henry Holt, \$22.00**

A terrified young man arrives at the police station with a bizarre story. It seems that a psychic has predicted that the man would commit a murder and, in the young man's mind anyway, that prediction has become a fact. Chief Espinosa of the Copacabana precinct is intrigued and when two violent murders occur he discovers that their only link is the man who sought his help. This is the third in the Brazilian crime series and I hear nothing but good things from those who have read the first two entries.

***THE GIRL WITH THE LONG BACK*, Bill James, W.W. Norton, \$23.95**

This is the latest in the Harpur and Iles series and for some of us, especially me, that is the best news of the year. But I have come to the sad conclusion that this series is not for everybody. Many have read one book and become addicted while others don't see the charm. James has done something unique with this series and with his cast of characters, none of whom are all good or all bad. But for those who would like to see just one crime solved or just one bad guy brought to justice over a period of more than twenty years, this series must be frustrating. For those of us who love the wickedness of it all, this witty addition to the series is cause for rejoicing.

***THE GAME*, Laurie R. King, Bantam, \$23.95**

Mary Russell and her famous husband Sherlock Holmes travel to India in search of a spy who is none other than the famed orphan who inspired Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. I constantly complain about the age difference between Mary and Sherlock – at this point in time she must be in her early twenties while he must be pushing eighty – but *The Beekeeper's Apprentice* was so charming that I just keep being drawn back into this series.

***A SPECTACLE OF CORRUPTION*, David Liss, Random House, \$24.95**

Moments after his conviction for a murder he did not commit, Benjamin Weaver is accosted by a stranger who slips a lock pick and a file into his hands. Weaver at once understands two things: someone has gone to a great deal of trouble to see him condemned and hang – and another, equally mysterious, is determined to set him free. So begins the sequel to Edgar winner *A Conspiracy of Paper*, the first in the historical series featuring pugilist Benjamin Weaver.

***A HOLE IN THE UNIVERSE*, Mary McGarry Morris, Viking, \$24.95**

Gordon Loomis has spent twenty-five years in jail for a senseless high school murder. Now he's out but still cannot come to terms with the enormity of his crime and its violation of what is good and right. This story follows him and the three women who care for him as they force him to confront life. The combination of this very interesting author and the subject matter makes this a must-read for me.

***BAD BUSINESS*, Robert B. Parker, Putnam, \$24.95**

Marlene Cowley hires Spenser to find out if her husband, Trent, is cheating on her. What Spenser finds is another investigator hired by Trent to see if Marlene is two-timing him. Spenser is Parker's most popular creation and his devoted fans will devour this in an evening.

***HARD REVOLUTION*, George P. Pelecanos, Little Brown, \$24.95**

Set in D.C. in 1968 when riots followed the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., this tells the story of rookie police officer Derek Strange and his troubled older brother, Dennis, a Vietnam veteran who is involved with a local drug dealer. I am always lamenting that Pelecanos does not get the attention he deserves but I do have a theory. Despite the conflicts and contradictions of his main characters, they remain thoroughly decent people, much like George himself, and I'm not sure that is entirely believable when those characters are city cops. I'd like to see this series take a walk on the wild side.

***THE CONFESSION*, Olen Steinhauer, St. Martin's, \$24.95**

Comrade Inspector Ferenc Kolyesar, proletariat writer and state militia homicide detective, is asked to look into the disappearance of a party member's wife. When he discovers that she may have run away from an abusive husband, he is reluctant to return her to him. At the same time Ferenc refuses to police a demonstration that he would rather be participating in. This series explores postwar Eastern Europe and, as you know by now, the first in the series, *The Bridge of Sighs*, is nominated for an Edgar Award.

***AN UNPARDONABLE CRIME*, Andrew Taylor, Theia, \$24.95**

In 1819, two Americans arrive in London. Soon afterward a bank collapses, a man is found horribly mutilated and an heiress flirts with her inferiors. The truth has its origins in the New World as well as the Old – in a bitter episode of corruption during the War of 1812. A young Edgar Allan Poe is featured. This was published in the UK as *An American Boy* and it won the Ellis Peters Historical Dagger from the Crime Writers Association.

***TELLING LIES TO ALICE*, Laura Wilson, Delacorte, \$22.95**

Alice Conway is the sexiest girls working at the Playmate Bar. Lenny Maxted, a member of Britain's best-loved comedy team, thinks so too, but he's murdered before they can make it to the altar. Six years later Alice receives a newspaper article about human remains. This clipping coincides with the arrival of a new man in her life – her fiancé's

former stage partner. Wilson is terrific at penning these psychological dramas that play out over time and I'm looking forward to another gruesome twistfest.

FIRST MYSTERIES

CODEX, Lev Grossman, Harcourt, \$24.00

Edward Wozny, a young investment banker, is sent to help one of his firm's most important and mysterious clients. When asked to uncrate and organize a personal library of rare books, Edward realizes that there may be a unique medieval codex hidden among the volumes. Edward is also playing an addictive computer game with his friends and he discovers surprising parallels between the game's virtual reality and the mystery of the codex.

THE BLUE BOWL, George Minot, Knopf, \$24.00

Simon Curtis, a painter, seeks refuge for the summer in his family's New England home despite his father's warning that he is not welcome there. Simon hides out in his old room, secretly observing his father, a man who never really noticed him and whom Simon blames for driving his mother to her death. When the father is found dead, Simon is arrested and this very quiet loner finds himself at the center of a media storm.

THE GREATER GOOD, William Casey Moreton, Atria Books, \$24.00

Just hours before an assassin's bullet kills him, Vice President James Ettinger makes an explosive confession on videotape. Now the tape has vanished and the race is on. Only one thing is clear: those responsible for the Vice President's death will stop at nothing to make sure his final words are never heard.

NON-MYSTERIES OF NOTE

THE DEW BREAKER, Edwidge Danticat, Knopf, \$22.00

The "dewbreaker" is a quiet man, a husband, a father, and a barber in Brooklyn. He explains the scar on his face with a lie, but as this story unfolds in Haiti in the 1960s and Manhattan in the 1970s, it becomes clear who he is. A "dew breaker" is a Haitian torturer and this is the story of his family, his clients, his victims, and finally his redemption. Danticat, the author of *Breath, Eyes, Memory* and *Krik? Krak!* is a major talent who seems to hover around the edge of a wider audience.

DUBLIN, Edward Rutherfurd, Doubleday, \$27.95

Rutherford's books are epic stories which weave together fiction and fact as he writes about the history of place. Here he takes on Dublin and follows the fortunes of several fictional families down through the ages while recounting the history of Ireland over

seventeen centuries. It's a wonderful way to absorb that history if you have the room on your bookshelf.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***SECRET SMILE*, Nicci French, Michael Joseph**

Miranda Cotton breaks off her relationship with her boyfriend when she discovers him reading her diary. But when he starts seeing her sister, what began as an embarrassment turns into a nightmare.

***A METROPOLITAN MURDER*, Lee Jackson, Heinmann**

Inspector Decimus Webb's investigation of the murder of a young woman leads him through the slums of Victorian London to a home for "fallen women."

***DOCTORED EVIDENCE*, Donna Leon, Heinemann**

A new Commissario Brunetti mystery.

***WHISPERS OF THE DEAD*, Peter Tremayne, Headline**

A collection of short stories featuring Sister Fidelma.

THIS AND THAT

Here are the nominees for the three most asked about Edgar Award Categories:

BEST NOVEL

***The Guards* – Ken Bruen**

***Out* – Natsuo Kirino**

***Resurrection Men* – Ian Rankin**

***Maisie Dobbs* – Jacqueline Winspear**

I love this list. Not only were two of the nominees on my "favorites of the year" list, but I was fortunate to receive a note from Robert Price (late of The Mysterious Bookshop) about *Out* by **Natsuo Kirino**. Thank you, Rob. Even then it was difficult to find a first edition, and the book is now in its fourth printing.

Resurrection Men by **Ian Rankin** is my pick to win. Rankin maintains his high standard in this Inspector John Rebus mystery, and he doesn't get nearly enough awards from this side of the pond.

My druthers? **Ken Bruen** of course. I think Bruen is one of the most original voices around and his stories are dark, dark, dark. He's been writing for years and I'm delighted to have discovered him – late though I am.

BEST FIRST NOVEL BY AN AMERICAN AUTHOR*12 Bliss Street* – Martha Conway*Offer of Proof* – Robert Heilbrun*Night of the Dance* – James Hime*Death of a Nationalist* – Rebecca Pawel*The Bridge of Sighs* – Olen Steinhauer

Tough choices here. I am delighted to see two titles (by Pawel and Steinhauer) which stretch the reader with some interesting political content.

However! The safe bet is that **Robert Heilbrun** will win for *Offer of Proof*. Here's an interesting bit of trivia: His mother (**Amanda Cross**) was also nominated for her first novel. She didn't win.

My choice would be between Pawel and Steinhauer. I'll go with *Death of a Nationalist* by **Rebecca Pawel**.

BEST PAPERBACK ORIGINAL*Cut and Run* – Jeff Abbott*The Last Witness* – Joel Goldman*Wisdom of the Bones* – Christopher Hyde*Southland* – Nina Rovoyr*Find Me Again* – Sylvia Maultash Warsh

Christopher Hyde is one of my favorite authors and *Wisdom of the Bones* ended up on my "favorites of the year" list. So that's the winner for me.

I think you all know by now that **Michael Connelly** withdrew his name from the Best Novel category because he is currently serving as President of the Mystery Writers of America.

All other categories can be found on the Mystery Writers of America site.

COLLECTING

I had intended to write from time to time about what books collectors collect. This would be a good time to start with the obvious.

Those of you who already collect Edgar Winners have a pretty spectacular collection. The Mystery Writers of America Edgar Allan Poe Awards were first given out in 1946 and among the books in your collection are: *The Fabulous Clipjoint* – **Frederic Brown**; *A Kiss Before Dying* – **Ira Levin**; *The Long Good-Bye* – **Raymond Chandler**; *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* – **John Le Carre**; *The Day of the Jackal* – **Frederick Forsyth**; *Post Mortem* – **Patricia Cornwell**; and *The Sculptress* – **Minette Walters**. You also have a few books by authors who never wrote again!

If you're thinking about collecting Edgar Award winners you should know that the titles I've just listed are now out of the financial range of most of us. Maybe you'll never be able to afford some of those winners, but the fun here is in the chase. It is never too late to start collecting award winners and you may, in the future, be able to add those high-priced items to your collection from time to time.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Fiction

Andrews, Sarah, *Earth Colors*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Forensic geologist Em Hansen tracks down the history of a forged painting – and a poisoned artist.

Atkins, Ace, *Dirty South*, Wm. Morrow, \$24.95. Nick Travers has 24 hours to save the life of a former New Orleans Saints teammate.

Barnes, Linda, *Deep Pockets*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. Boston P.I. Carlotta Carlyle steps in when the blackmailing of a Harvard professor leads to murder.

Berlin, Adam, *Belmondo Style*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Jared Chizer is a single father, professional pick-pocket, devotee of Jean Paul Belmondo, and a ladies' man. His son is quiet and gay. But when Jared meets the Jean Seberg to his Belmondo and commits the big crime, all three of them find themselves on the run.

Bloch, Jon P., *Murder By Design*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Gossip columnist Rick Domino has his house remodeled on a popular reality show and finds himself with a dead designer on his hands.

Coleman, Reed Farrel, *Redemption Street*, Viking, \$22.95. Set in 1981 New York City, PI Moe Prager is lured back to the mystery of a 1966 hotel fire that killed seventeen people including his first love.

Craft, Michael, *Desert Spring*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Claire Gray has established the theatre department at the new and very well funded Desert Arts College in Palm Springs. When a playwright is killed, there is no end of suspects.

Deere, Dicey, *The Irish Village Murder*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Historian John Gwathney is stabbed in his home and the immediate suspect is his housekeeper Megan O'Faolain. Torrey Tunet investigates.

Dreyer, Eileen, *Head Games*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. Molly Burke is a death investigator and trauma nurse for the city of St. Louis. Now a child she once tried to save is all grown up. His life was unspeakable and his deeds now are unfathomable. And he wants Molly's attention.

Eccles, Marjorie, *Untimely Graves*, St. Martin's, \$22.95. Gil Mayo and his assistant, Abigail Moon, investigate two seemingly unrelated murders.

Freemantle, Brian, *Triple Cross*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Moscow's Organized Crime Bureau chief Dimitri Danilov and William Cowley, head of the FBI's Russian desk, once again team up to stop the U.S., Russian, and Italian mafias from forming a global organized crime conglomerate.

Friedman, Kinky, *The Prisoner of Vandam Street*, Simon & Schuster, \$24.00. When the Kinkster contracts a case of malaria and is forced to sit in a chair by his window he sees what appears to be a woman being beaten in the apartment across the street.

Familiar story? You bet! With the help of the Village Irregulars, Kinky unravels the mystery.

Garcia, Eric, *Hot and Sweaty Rex*, Villard, \$24.95. Vincent Rubio, hard-boiled detective and dinosaur is back. Never read one of these. Probably never will. But there are fans out there and many of them are human.

Gooden, Philip, *Mask of Night*, Carroll & Graf, \$24.00. The fifth in this Shakespearean series takes actor-sleuth Nick Revill to Oxford.

Gorman, Ed, *Breaking Up is Hard to Do*, Carroll & Graf, \$24.00. Sam McCain investigates murder while the country deals with the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

Graves, Sarah, *Mallets Aforethought*, Bantam, \$21.95. A Home Repair is Homicide mystery.

Hart, Carolyn, *Murder Walks the Plank*, Wm. Morrow, \$23.95. The 15th Death On Demand mystery.

Hart, Ellen, *An Intimate Ghost*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. Jane Lawless discovers that someone has spiked the food at the wedding she is catering with hallucinogenic mushrooms. When the groom takes an unfortunate dive into an empty swimming pool, Jane is blamed.

Meyers, Annette, *Repentances*, Five Star, \$25.95. In the winter of 1936 in New York Jewish immigrants are desperate to get their loved ones out of the old country. Nathan Ebanholz is about to make his final payment on his wife and baby daughter's passage to America but he discovers that the ship is already at sea and his family is not on board.

Minichino, Camille, *The Carbon Murder*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Gloria Lamerino investigates a murder in the park and tries to discover who is stalking her neice. Latest in the series based on the elements of the Periodic Table.

Murphy, Shirley Rousseau, *Cat Fear No Evil*, HarperCollins, \$24.95. This is the ninth Joe Grey mystery and I keep looking at that title and wondering what it could possibly mean.

Patterson, James, *3rd Degree*, Little Brown, \$27.95. This is the third outing for The Women's Murder Club who investigate when a town house in San Francisco is blown up and a note from the "August Spies" takes responsibility. Patterson is killing off one of his characters I hear.

Randisi, Robert J., *Arch Angels*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. Young boys are being kidnapped and strangled to death in Chicago. The same is happening to young girls in St. Louis. One killer, driving up and down I-55, or two? Detective Joe Keough investigates.

Redfern, Elizabeth, *Auriel Rising*, Putnam, \$24.95. Historical mystery featuring Ned Warriner who possesses a letter addressed to "Auriel" which may contain the secret of the Philosopher's Stone.

Reilly, Matthew, *Scarecrow*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. The targets have two things in common: they are the finest warriors in the world – spies, terrorists, commandos – and they all have a \$20 million price on their head. It is going to be the greatest bounty hunt in history.

Robb, J.D., *Naked In Death*, Putnam, \$19.95. This is a reissue in hardcover of the first book by J.D. Robb featuring New York City homicide detective Eve Dallas.

Vanneman, Alan, *Sherlock Holmes and the Hapsburg Tiara*, Carroll & Graf, \$24.00. Holmes and Watson unmask one of his most cunning, ruthless, and elusive foes.

Non-Fiction

George, Elizabeth, *Write Away*, HarperCollins, \$24.95. Best selling author George shares her approach to fiction and the writing life.

Morrison, Helen, *My Life Among the Serial Killers*, Wm. Morrow, \$24.95. Forensic psychiatrist Morrison draws from her experience working with the FBI and discusses why serial killers kill.

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