

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***FLESH AND BLOOD*, John Harvey, Wm. Heinemann, \$ varies**

Detective Inspector Elder has retired to Cornwall but one case haunts him. Sixteen-year-old Susan Blacklock disappeared in 1988 around the same time that Shane Donald and Alan McKeirnan raped and murdered a young girl. For Elder, they still remain the prime suspects in Susan's disappearance, and when Shane Donald is released from prison, Elder feels compelled to revisit the scene of the crime. I have missed the Charlie Resnick series and was delighted to receive a copy of this new mystery, in which Resnick does make a brief appearance. This is vintage Harvey marred only by the solution to the mystery which, to me, was implausible. UK edition only available at this time. This title will be published here later in the year.

***A SEASON FOR THE DEAD*, David Hewson, Delacorte, \$21.95**

Researcher Sara Farnese is poring over ancient texts in the Vatican Reading Room when a man rushes in and presents her with flayed skin just before the Vatican police kill him. The alarms alert the Rome police, in particular Detectives Costa and Rossi, who have no jurisdiction within the walls of the Vatican. However, when Sara Farnese emerges, the detectives become involved. The flayed skin, it turns out, belonged to one of Sara's ex-lovers. In addition, the man killed by the Vatican police is also an ex-lover. As Sara's other exes begin to die the detectives become more and more baffled. First in a series featuring Detective Nic Costa who is, among other things, an expert on Caravaggio's paintings. Terrific debut, but like many mysteries with extremely baffling plots, the chase is better than the denouement. Nevertheless, I couldn't put it down.

***CAUGHT STEALING*, Charlie Huston, Ballantine, \$21.94**

Hank Thompson was going to be a baseball player until he broke his leg. Now he's a bartender on the Lower East Side with a drinking problem and sore feet. When a neighbor asks him to cat sit, Hank says yes but is almost immediately beaten up by two thugs. It isn't long before Hank realizes that there is a key in the cat's cage and the key opens a locker, and that the two thugs are only the first in a long line looking for that key. Soon Hank is on the run, but he also has to take care of the cat. This is a first novel and a very good one. Crisp and entertaining.

***SHADOW MEN*, Jonathon King, Dutton, \$23.95**

Max Freeman, ex-Philadelphia cop, is still living in his isolated shack in the Glades although he's now a private investigator working with his friend Billy Manchester. His latest investigation concerns an 80-year-old mystery. Three men – a father and his two

sons – disappeared while working on the first road through the Florida Everglades. A descendant of these men comes across a series of letters and wants to know what really happened. Max meets with resistance immediately and the search for the truth quickly turns violent. There are powerful interests that want to make sure that the past stays buried, and there are some who will kill to make sure it does. After a little dip in quality in his second book which had Max working in Miami rather than the Everglades, King is right back in top form.

***EARTHQUAKE WEATHER*, Terrill Lee Lankford, Ballantine, \$24.95**

Mark Hayes has a dead-end job as a “creative executive” for producer Dexter Morton at the hottest production company in town. The story opens with a major earthquake that sends Los Angeles and especially Hollywood into a spin. When a body is found in Dexter Morton’s pool, Mark becomes the major suspect. Be warned that the murder doesn’t take place until nearly half way through the book, but if you love the movies the first half of the book will be a page-turner for you. For some reason I thought Terrill Lankford wrote hard-boiled stories. Maybe he does, but this isn’t one of them. What it is, is a great read and a must for anybody fascinated by the cut-throat side of Hollywood.

***THE FACE OF THE ASSASSIN*, David Lindsey, Warner Books, \$25.95**

A mysterious woman visits Paul Bern, a forensic artist who lives in Texas, and shows him a human skull she has smuggled out of Mexico. When Bern reconstructs the face he is shocked at what he sees, and finds himself embroiled in a U.S. intelligence operation in Mexico City. It would be unfair to give away the plot here, but I will tell you this: After a very exciting opening act, the story slows down and you will have to wade through an enormous amount of minutiae about Bern’s life to get to the good part. If you take the time to do that, the second half of this story is vintage Lindsey.

ON MY READING LIST

***THERAPY*, Jonathan Kellerman, Ballantine, \$26.95**

On a lonely lover’s lane in the hills of Los Angeles, a young couple lies murdered in a car, the female victim impaled by a metal spoke. The dead woman remains unidentified but her companion has a name and his troubled past landed him on the therapist’s couch. Alex Delaware hopes to find vital clues to the murder but that means going head to head with a popular celebrity psychologist who fiercely guards the privacy of her clients – even when they’re dead.

***DOCTORED EVIDENCE*, Donna Leon, Atlantic Monthly, \$22.00**

When a woman is found brutally murdered in her Venice apartment, the police immediately suspect her Romanian housekeeper. They are certain their job is done after the woman dies while fleeing arrest. But a neighbor comes forward with an alibi for the

housekeeper and Commissario Guido Brunetti will have to go behind the backs of his superiors to vindicate the Romanian and find her employer's actual killer.

***THE SHIFTING TIDE*, Anne Perry, Ballantine, \$25.95**

Dire need persuades William Monk to accept an assignment from shipping magnate Clement Louvain to investigate the theft of a cargo of African ivory from Louvain's recently docked schooner, the Maude Idris. Monk is desperate for work, not only to feed himself and his wife Hester, but to keep open the doors of Hester's clinic, a last resort for sick and starving street women. I favor the William Monk series which is darker than Perry's other Victorian series featuring the Pitts.

***SOUTH TOWN*, Rick Riordan, Bantam, \$24.00**

Will "the Ghost" Stirman stages a bloody escape from prison with a gang of violent cons who are as afraid of Stirman as those on the outside who helped put him behind bars. But no one seems more worried than Tres Navarre's boss and mentor, Erainya Manos. It was her husband, along with rival PI Sam Barrera, who built the case that sent Stirman away.

***CROSSING THE LINE*, Clinton McKinzie, Delacorte, \$23.00**

Special Agent Antonio Burns wants nothing more than to see his brother Roberto out of trouble with the law. So when Roberto strikes a deal with the FBI to help bring down a Mexican drug dealer in exchange for leniency, Antonio is delighted. But when Roberto's deal leaves him with no choice but to go undercover in the drug lord's compound without protection, Antonio gets the impression that the arrangement may not be what it seems.

***THE BODY OF DAVID HAYES*, Ridley Pearson, Hyperion, \$23.95**

Years ago, Lou Boldt's wife Liz had an affair with David Hayes who worked in the bank where she is an executive. Now, Hayes is trying to retrieve the money he hid from the Russian mob in a daring embezzlement scheme and he wants to gain access to the bank's mainframe. He contacts Liz who is torn between wanting to protect the bank and needing to protect her family. Boldt must skate the delicate line between his roles as determined detective and jealous husband.

***THE FULL CUPBOARD OF LIFE*, Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon, \$19.95**

The latest entry in the popular series about the No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency in Botswana finds Mma Precious Ramotswe investigating the suitors of a wealthy woman to determine whether they are interested in her or her money. Meanwhile, Precious would like to know when the wedding date will be set with Mr. J. L. B. Matekoni to whom she became engaged several books ago.

***OUT OF THE DEEP I CRY*, Julia Spencer-Fleming, St. Martin's Press, \$23.95**

When the doctor from the local free clinic disappears, Clair Fergusson, Episcopal priest, and Police Chief Russ van Alstyne pursue an investigation that takes them deep into the past. There they find evidence of sordid behavior on the part of the wealthy family that

endowed the clinic. They are still battling their growing more-than-professional bond and the gossip it incurs in this, their third outing.

THE ROAD TO RUIN, Donald E. Westlake, Mysterious Press, \$25.00

Monroe Hall is a corrupt CEO who has embezzled quite a bit of his company's money. He has a fleet of vintage automobiles and hapless crook John Dortmunder and his equally hapless cronies want to get their hands on it, but first they'll have to contend with angry union men who have been taken for a ride and suckers who have been taken for their family fortunes. Our money is on Dortmunder.

THE SHADOW OF THE WIND, Carlos Ruiz Zafon, Penguin Press, \$24.95

In Barcelona in 1945 a boy named Daniel awakes on his eleventh birthday to find that he no longer remembers his mother's face. To console his child, Daniel's widowed father, an antiquarian book dealer, initiates him into the secret of the Cemetery of Forgotten Books, a library tended by book dealers in which reside the books forgotten by the world, waiting for someone to care for them again. It is said that the book one chooses from the shelves will have special meaning for the reader and Daniel chooses *The Shadow of the Wind* by one Julian Carax. He loves it so much that he sets out to find other books by this author only to discover that someone has been systematically destroying every copy of every book this author has written. This astounding story of murder, magic, madness, and doomed love has spent more than a year on the Spanish bestseller list. One to watch!

FIRST MYSTERIES

THE GRAVE OF GOD'S DAUGHTER, Brett Ellen Block, Wm. Morrow, \$23.95

In the Allegheny Mountains lies the town of Hyde Bend, a steel mill town with a large community of Polish immigrants with deep roots in their Catholic faith. It is 1941 and in the town's soul lies a dangerous secret surrounding the death of a revered priest. When a young girl accidentally unearths traces of the truth, a woman winds up dead and Hyde Bend erupts in fear and fingerprinting.

THE RULE OF FOUR, Ian Caldwell and Dustin Thomason, Dial Press, \$24.00

Since its publication in 1499, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* has puzzled scholars. Coded in seven languages, the text is a love story, a mathematical labyrinth and a tale of arcane brutality. Tom Sullivan and Paul Harris discover a long-lost diary which seems to be the key to the labyrinth, but when a fellow researcher is murdered they realize they are caught in a web of danger. And what they discover buried in the text stuns them. This is already being called the next *The DaVinci Code*.

***THE LAWS OF INVISIBLE THINGS*, Frank Huyler, Henry Holt, \$24.00**

Michal Grant, a young doctor, discovers that one of his patients has an unusual pattern, a white serpentine spiral, on the back of the throat and in his eye. Before a diagnosis can be made, the man is killed in a mysterious fire and Michael begins to experience symptoms of a strange illness. Believing that he has stumbled across a new disease, Michael sets out to gather evidence. His quest takes him into a wilderness of disease, religion and mystery.

***THE PEREGRINE SPY*, Edmund P. Murray, St. Martin's Press, \$24.95**

Frank Sullivan's assignment is to work for the CIA while officially serving as an adviser to the Iranian military. Once in Iran, his past relationship with the Shah places him at odds with the agency and the members of the revolution. He also becomes involved in efforts to recruit a KGB agent and learn the identity of a mole back at Langley. A good old fashioned espionage thriller!

***DRAGON'S EYE*, Andy Oakes, The Overlook Press, \$24.95**

Eight bodies, mutilated beyond recognition and shackled together are found in the mudflats of the Huangpu River in Shanghai. No morgue will touch them because the evidence is clear: the brutality of the killings, the precision of the lacerations – there is little doubt that the Party is behind this. Chief Investigator Sun Piao must negotiate bureaucratic obstacles, intimidation, and surveillance as he tries to find those responsible for the murders. When Pao discovers that one of the victims was a young American archaeologist, he is soon joined in his investigation by the victim's mother, Barbara Hayes, a politician compelled to find her son's killer.

***SOUTHERN FRIED*, Cathy Pickens, St. Martin's Press, \$23.95**

Avery Andrews, a young attorney, has been "downsized" from her position with a big city law firm. She returns to the small Southern town where she grew up and sets up her practice. This is the first in a series and won this year's Malice Domestic First Novel award from St. Martin's Press.

***THE ARCANUM*, Thomas Wheeler, Bantam, \$22.00**

A series of grisly murders strikes the city of New York in 1919 and the police are helpless. But one group of scientists and people of learning have sworn to find the murderer be it human or inhuman. They call themselves the Arcanum and they include Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Harry Houdini, H.P. Lovecraft, and the notorious voodoo priestess Marie Laveau. Together they probe the underbelly of the occult and discover a power darker and stronger than any they have ever faced.

NON-MYSTERIES OF NOTE

HEAVEN LAKE, John Dalton, Scribner, \$26.00

This first novel tells the story of Vincent Saunders, an English teacher in Taiwan disgraced when he has an affair with one of his young students. With few options left to him Vincent accepts the offer of Mr. Gwa. In exchange for a sum of money, Vincent will travel to mainland China's Heaven Lake and marry a beautiful woman whom Mr. Gwa loves, escort her back to Taiwan and divorce her so that Gwa may have her hand. This book about love, passion, friendship, and the nature of faith is getting an amazing amount of good buzz

KINGS OF INFINITE SPACE, James Hynes, St. Martin's Press, \$24.95

Paul Trilby's life is definitely in the toilet. His wife left him. Three subsequent girlfriends left him. He used to have a prestigious university teaching job, then he worked at a textbook publisher and now he's a temp writer for the General Services department of the Texas Department of General Services. But he doesn't really notice how truly wrong things are until those sounds coming from the air conditioning vents, bulges in the ceiling, and a disappearing body. Hynes writes wonderful, satirical novels including *Publish and Perish* and *The Lecturer's Tale*. This is a spoof of our everyday work lives.

I AM NO ONE YOU KNOW, Joyce Carol Oates, Ecco, \$24.95

Hardly a month seems to go by without something new from this prolific writer. These nineteen stories bear witness to the remarkably varied lives of Americans. A troubled wife discovers radiant happiness in an adulterous relationship, a girl manages to survive her abduction by a serial killer, and two NYU graduates track and protect Marilyn Monroe who is in disguise at the Strand Bookstore one snowy evening in 1957.

THE CONFUSION, Neal Stephenson, Wm. Morrow, \$27.95

I haven't managed to start, let alone finish, *Quicksilver* and here comes the second volume in *The Baroque Cycle*. In the late 1600s, a group of galley slaves ply the oars of a pirate ship. They have heard whispers of an enormous cache of Spanish gold and they hatch a daring scheme to escape and find the treasure. Amazingly, they succeed but they left behind some very unhappy men who vow to hunt them down. Meanwhile, back in France..... Well, you get the idea. For more than 800 pages Stephenson brings to life a time of genius and discovery. Read quickly, the third and last volume will be published in October of this year.

NEWS FROM THE UK

I can't find descriptions for these titles yet. Sorry.

BLACK JACK POINT, Jeff Abbott, Orion
LEVIATHAN, Boris Akunin, Weidenfeld & Nicolson

The second mystery featuring Erast Fandorin.

THE ENEMY, Lee Child, Bantam Press

A Jack Reacher mystery, and, once again, the UK is the true first edition.

THE MAGICIAN'S DEATH, Paul Doherty,

VILLA OF MYSTERIES, David Hewson

The second Nic Costa mystery.

THE MIDSUMMER ROSE, Kate Sedley, Severn House

COLLECTING

A couple of issues ago I talked about **Henning Mankell** and was unsure at that time whether the UK or the US edition of *Faceless Killers* was the true first. Sad to say, I have no definitive answer for you. Why, you might ask, is that? Let me tell you a story.

In order to test the veracity of on-line descriptions of books, I took another title, *The Crimson Petal and The White* by **Michel Faber**. I happen to have both the UK and the US editions. I had heard that, despite **Faber** being a Brit, the US was the true first edition. I went on line and, sure enough, many dealers say that is the case. There were a few who thought the UK was the true first edition and there were those who did not commit themselves.

Here's the information from the copyright page of the UK Edition:

"First published in Great Britain" etc etc "by Canongate Books" Followed by a line of numbers, 1-10.

Here's the information from the copyright page of the US Edition published by Harcourt:

"First published in England by Canongate Books" Followed by a line of letters, A-K.

Bingo! The true first is the UK Edition. Publisher's usually note when a book is first published elsewhere.

So, there is a great deal of incorrect information on the net. Why do so many think the US edition is the true first? One person says so and, before you know it, rumor becomes fact.

I will get back to you about which edition of *Faceless Killers* by **Henning Mankell** is the true first when I find out.

By the way, a plug here for **Michel Faber**. He wrote one of my all-time favorite books *Under The Skin*. This book, which I read a couple of years ago, still haunts me. A young woman drives the roads of Scotland looking for young male hitchhikers. Think you know where this story is going? You don't. Before you ask: The true first edition was published in the UK by Canongate Books. It was issued in wraps (paperback original). The first US Edition is also the first hardcover edition, published by Harcourt.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Fiction

Bowen, Peter, *The Tumbler*, St. Martin's Press, \$22.95. Gabriel Du Pre finds himself at the center of the hunt for a national treasure.

Bowen, Rhys, *Evan's Gate*, St. Martin's Press, \$23.95. Evan Evans his getting married and wants to find his dream house. He finds more than that.

Brockman, Suzanne, *Flashpoint*, Ballantine, \$21.95. Jimmy Nash, ex-CIA agent, now works for a shadowy company called SOS Inc that helps those in desperate need. It is a perfect cover for what they really do.

Brown, Rita Mae, *Whisker of Evil*, Bantam, \$24.95. Mrs. Murphy, feline detective, is on her twelfth case. Purrfect!

Browning, Abigail, Ed., *Murder is No Mitzvah*, St. Martin's Press, \$23.95. From Bar Mitzvahs to Yom Kippur, these short stories are taken from Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine.

Churchill, Jill, *It Had to Be You*, Wm. Morrow, \$23.95. The latest Grace & Favor mystery set in Depression-era New York on the Hudson River.

Clark, Mary Higgins, *Nighttime is My Time*, Simon & Schuster, \$25.95. A nationwide spate of abductions is targeting young women. Torn from today's headlines!

Daheim, Mary, *The Alpine Pursuit*, Ballantine, \$22.95. Sixteenth novel featuring newspaper publisher Emma Lord.

Davis, Lindsey, *The Accusers*, Mysterious Press, \$25.00. The 15th novel in the Marcus Didius Falco series.

Fitzhugh, Bill, *Radio Activity*, Wm. Morrow, \$23.95. Radio program director Rick Shannon looks into the mysterious disappearance of a once-famous rock DJ.

Grace, C.L., *A Feast of Poisons*, St. Martin's Press, \$23.95. A Kathryn Swinbrooke mystery from Paul Doherty.

Hamilton, Denise, *Last Lullaby*, Scribner, \$24.00. Reporter/sleuth Eve Diamond is at LAX when shooting breaks out, killing three people disembarking from the Beijing/Seoul/Tokyo flight.

Johansen, Iris, *Firestorm*, Bantam, \$24.95. Kerry Murphy, firefighter, has a secret weapon that terrifies her more than any fire could. And somebody is about to put it to the test.

Lynds, Gayle, *The Coil*, St. Martin's Press, \$24.95. Liz Sansborough is living a quiet life until her father's legacy returns to haunt her. Liz's dead father was the Carnivore, perhaps the most notorious Cold War assassin.

Miscione, Lisa, *Twice*, St. Martin's Press, \$23.95. Lydia Strong and her partner, PI Jeff Mark, must confront not only a brutal murderer but demons from their own past.

Mooney, Chris, *Remembering Sarah*, Atria Books, \$25.00. Mike Sullivan is trying to raise his daughter, Sarah, to be tough and independent. Then she is abducted.

Pattison, Eliot, *Beautiful Ghosts*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. Disgraced former Beijing inspector Shan Tao Yun investigates a murder in a ruined monastery.

Peters, Elizabeth, *Guardian of the Horizon*, Wm. Morrow, \$24.95. The Emerson's journals from 1907-1908 have been discovered, revealing hitherto unknown events in Amelia Peabody's career.

Poulson, Christine, *Murder is Academic*, St. Martin's Press, \$23.95. In the hallowed halls of Cambridge University, a deadly secret is about to be uncovered.

Rowland, Laura Joh, *The Perfumed Sleeve*, St. Martin's Press, \$24.95. Sano Ichiro is being courted by both sides struggling for control in 1694 Edo.

Vachss, Andrew, *Down Here*, Knopf, \$19.95. Burke investigates when he hears that Wolfe has been arrested for attempted murder.

Woods, Stuart, *Reckless Abandon*, Putnam, \$25.95. Stone Barrington tracks a mobster hiding deep inside the witness protection program.

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