

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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As you read this I shall be getting ready for, or recovering from, the Edgar award ceremony. A busy week-end ahead. The Edgars, then Otto Penzler's wedding (oh, you didn't know?) and then I'll be leaving town for a week. But I'll get the names of the winners to you before I leave.

Sally Owen

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

DEATH MATCH, Lincoln Child, Doubleday, \$24.95

Eden Incorporated is one of the top matchmaking companies in the world, a phenomenon that uses artificial intelligence to bring couples together and guarantees its customers lifelong happiness. Their state-of-the-art technology can sometimes create "super couples" – people almost 100% perfectly matched, but now there seems to be a problem. One of those super couples has committed double-suicide in front of their young child. Anxious to keep this quiet, Eden calls in Christopher Lash, a former FBI forensic psychologist, to investigate. Whether writing alone or with his sometime partner Douglas Preston, Child seems to have the knack of writing gripping page turners.

TAKE ME, TAKE ME WITH YOU, Lauren Kelly, Ecco Press, \$22.95

Lara Quade, associated with a prominent Princeton research center, is sent a ticket to the opera by an anonymous donor. There she meets Zedrick Dewe who has also been sent a ticket. There seems to be a connection but they can't pin it down. Lara, who was scarred in a childhood accident, finds her predictable life spiralling out of control as her encounter with Zed leads to an experience that starts tenderly, becomes violent, and finally turns terrifying. It is hard to write about this book without giving too much away, but there's no doubt that this is one of the best written books of the year so far. There's also no doubt that it is written by Joyce Carol Oates! She's using another name here, but she can't disguise her talent.

THE DEAD SIT ROUND IN A RING, David Lawrence, St. Martin's, \$23.95

Early days yet, but this book is shaping up to be one of my favorites of the year. Published in the UK in 2002, it introduces DS Stella Mooney who, as the story opens, is called to a home in Notting Hill where four corpses are sitting together. There's a reason for three of them being there, but not the fourth. Stella Mooney has nightmares and a

vodka habit and she's a great addition to crime fiction. I keep my eye out for these British gems that St. Martin's Press picks up and publishes here with little or no fanfare. Last year it was **The Water Clock** by *Jim Kelly*. This year it's David Lawrence's stunning debut.

SLEEPING BEAUTY, Phillip Margolin, HarperCollins, \$25.95

Miles van Meter is on tour to promote his true-crime book, **Sleeping Beauty**, the story of a serial killer accused of putting Miles's twin sister, Casey, in a coma and of murdering the mother and father of high school soccer star Ashley Spencer. When the suspected killer escapes custody, Ashley must run for her life, little suspecting that the key to her survival is in the one book she's too terrified to read – **Sleeping Beauty**. Margolin weaves convoluted plots that keep his readers riveted, but I saw this one coming and that's a spoiler.

COLD BLOOD, Theresa Monsour, Putnam, \$24.95

Bunny Pedersen, a bridesmaid from a local wedding, is missing and citizens are out beating the bushes trying to find a clue to her disappearance. When homicide detective Paris Murphy sees one of those concerned citizens being interviewed on television she feels she knows him from somewhere, and when her assignment to the case leads her to meet him, Paris knows there is something disturbing about his involvement. Monsour's first book, **Clean Cut**, was a favorite of mine last year. This follow-up is equally absorbing except for the structure of the story. You'll know all the answers way ahead of Paris Murphy and that takes all the fun out of the chase, for me anyway.

LIVE BAIT, P.J. Tracy, Putnam, \$23.95

All is quiet in the Twin Cities during a murder-free dry spell and detectives Leo Magozzi and Gino Rolseth are getting bored. But then Morey Gilbert is found dead, and before long there's another murder, then another, the victims all elderly. Magozzi and Rolseth turn to Grace MacBride and her cold-case-solving software program in order to find what the connection is between the victims beside their age. This is a super follow-up to **Monkeewrench**, another of my favorite mysteries from last year.

ON MY READING LIST

Q, Luther Blissett, Harcourt, \$26.00

This cult bestseller in Europe is a literary thriller set in the Reformation. Martin Luther has nailed his ninety-five theses to the door of Wittenburg Cathedral and a young theology student who has adopted the cause of the heretics finds himself pursued by a relentless papal informer and heretic-hunter known only as Q. This was first published anonymously in Italy by four writers under the pseudonym Luther Blissett. The first English translation is, I believe, the UK edition.

BREACH OF TRUST, D.W. Buffa, Putnam, \$24.95

Attorney Joseph Antonelli takes a case that has dangerous implications not only for the upcoming United States presidential race but also for a group of friends who thought they had put the sudden death of a young woman behind them long ago. This is an excellent legal series and Antonelli is a complex and well rounded character.

PLAIN HEATHEN MISCHIEF, Martin Clark, Knopf, \$24.95

Joel King, a defrocked Baptist minister, has just served six months for a highly implausible crime. Now he's being sued for \$5 million, his wife wants a divorce, and Joel heads for Montana in search of a fresh start. A former parishioner soon involves Joel in a flock of con men, crooked lawyers, conniving youth, and authorities bent on prosecution and harassment. If you read **The Many Aspects of Mobile Home Living**, you know what to expect: A very quirky story.

JUST ONE LOOK, Harlan Coben, Dutton, \$25.95

When Grace Lawson picks up the family photographs she's just had developed, there's one in the batch that doesn't seem to belong. Grace does not know four people in the picture, but the fifth appears to be her husband. When she confronts him, he denies he's the man in the photo, but that night he disappears without an explanation taking the photograph with him. Grace Lawson's nightmare begins. Harlan Coben has certainly come into his own these days, penning novels which seem to get better and better.

THE NARROWS, Michael Connelly, Little Brown, \$25.95

FBI agent Rachel Walling finally gets the call she's dreaded for years. The Poet has returned. Former LAPD detective Harry Bosch also gets a call – from an old friend whose husband recently died. The death appears natural, but this man's ties to the hunt for the Poet make Harry dig deep and what he finds leads him into the most terrifying situation he has ever encountered. The Poet AND Bosch! Life is good. I'm reading rave reviews for this latest from Connelly.

THE HAMILTON CASE, Michelle de Kretser, Little Brown, \$24.95

Sam Obeyesekere is a lawyer in Ceylon whose life is guided by the British culture that dominates his homeland. Educated at Oxford, Sam is more English than the English, but when a scandalous murder shakes the upper echelons of island society, Sam, convinced he can solve the case, is destroyed as a lawyer and that is only the first in a series of blows that leave him completely bewildered. Sam must now grapple with a life that has been "a series of substitutions." This is obviously much more than a murder mystery.

NOTHING LOST, John Gregory Dunne, Knopf, \$24.95

The lurid murder of a black drifter brings into destructive play the media, power politics, legal infighting, reckless passion, and a star-crossed cast of characters in this, the last book from Dunne.

***PAST DUE*, William Lashner, Wm. Morrow, \$24.95**

Attorney Victor Carl has done some questionable things in his career, but he's always been loyal to his clients – even Joey Cheaps. So when Joey is brutally murdered, Victor sets out to catch the killer which means investigating another violent death from twenty years earlier. I'll tell you what's past due here: some wider recognition of this writer's talent. He's been flying under the radar for long enough now.

***VIRGINIA LOVERS*, Michael Parker, Delphinium, \$20.95**

In the autumn of 1975, the town of Trent, North Carolina, struggles with the mysterious and brutal murder of a gay teenager, a crime that exposes a community's layers of hypocrisy and fractures a prominent family. *Delphinium* appears to be an imprint of HarperCollins and Michael Parker is a PEN/Hemingway prize finalist, so this one goes on the list.

***DOUBLE PLAY*, Robert B. Parker, Putnam, \$24.95**

I was hoping to have read this before this issue was due, but it was not to be. I do know that this novel, which Parker has apparently long wanted to write, is being called his "baseball" novel. It is, but it is also a crime novel. It is 1947 and Joseph Burke, a World War II vet, is hired by Branch Rickey, the manager of the Brooklyn Dodgers, to act as bodyguard to Jackie Robinson. Burke must guard Robinson but he must also face some hard truths of his own, in a world where the wrong associations can prove fatal.

***HIDDEN PREY*, John Sandford, Putnam, \$26.95**

On the shore of Lake Superior, a man named Vladimir Orslov is found shot dead. Nobody knows why although the local cops, the FBI, and the Russians themselves all have theories. But when it turns out that he had high government connections a Russian cop flies in from Moscow, Lucas Davenport flies in from Minneapolis, and the press flies in from everywhere. Then there's another murder. I'm quite devoted to Lucas Davenport and always look forward to his latest outing.

***THE GARDEN OF MARTYRS*, Michael C. White, St. Martin's, \$24.95**

Two Irish immigrants were arrested, convicted, and executed for the murder of a traveler on the post road in 1806. Victims of anti-immigration and anti-Catholic prejudice, the men have since been exonerated by modern evidence. Edgar nominee White tells this true story while capturing the political, social, and cultural context of early Boston.

***WHILE I DISAPPEAR*, Edward Wright, Putnam, \$24.95**

Former actor John Ray Horn tracks down his former leading lady Rose Galen, fallen on hard times, to try and help her. He discovers that she's been strangled to death. Horn's investigation leads him back to the silent-film era and to a party at a Hollywood mansion where Rose's destiny changed forever. This is Wright's second John Ray Horn novel set in post-World War II Hollywood. The first, *Clea's Moon*, won the John Creasey Award in the UK.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***KILLER HEELS*, Sheryl Anderson, St. Martin's, \$24.95**

Molly Forrester writes an advice column for *Zeitgeist* magazine, but she's soon sleuthing when she trips over the body of a coworker and ruins her brand new Jimmy Choos. If that sentence makes no sense to you, join the club. But as a sometime viewer of *Sex and the City*, I'm going to hazard a guess that Jimmy Choos is something or someone you wear on your feet. Well, it's that kind of mystery.

***THE FRACTAL MURDERS*, Mark Cohen, Mysterious Press, \$25.00**

Jane Smythe, a math professor specializing in fractal geometry, is shocked to learn that three professors with the same specialty have died under mysterious circumstances. She calls in former Marine JAG and private eye Pepper Keane to investigate. First in a series featuring Keane, who has an encyclopedic knowledge of rock 'n' roll.

NON-MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***AMERICAN DESERT*, Percival Everett, Hyperion, \$24.95**

Theodore Street, a college professor, is on the verge of suicide when the decision is taken out of his hands. He's hit by a car and his head is severed from his body. But when he comes back to life at his own funeral, he becomes a source of embarrassment to his daughter and an object of derision and curiosity to everybody else. This is part parable, part fantasy, part satire from the author of **Erasure**. Not for everybody maybe, but high on my list.

***EVENTIDE*, Kent Haruf, Knopf, \$24.95**

The single mother whom the McPheron brothers took in moves away. A young boy living alone with his grandfather helps out a neighbor whose husband, off in Alaska, suddenly isn't coming home. The children of a disabled couple suffer indignities at school. This is Kent Haruf's terrain. The folks from around Holt, Colorado, and how they make it through a hard winter into Spring. Haruf is the author of **Plainsong** and attention should be paid.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***TOKYO*, Mo Hayder, Bantam Press**

I don't have much information on this title, except that it is written by the author of **Birdman**. We can expect something dark and possibly nasty here.

THE LONELY DEAD, Michael Marshall, Harpercollins

A guilty man on the verge of suicide makes a bizarre discovery in the forests of Washington State – a discovery that threatens to overturn American history. This is a sequel to **The Straw Men**, which introduced those shadowy figures who exert a mysterious and sinister influence on both individuals and historic events.

PLAY TO THE END, Robert Goddard, Bantam Press

Again no information on the storyline, but let me guess. It is set in England sometime in the last two hundred years and a mystery will unfold in a way that will come as a total surprise to the reader.

THE HAND OF JUSTICE, Susanna Gregory, Little Brown

Bartholomew the Physician is called to the local mill to examine two corpses, while two well-connected murderers return to town after receiving the King's pardon. Set in Cambridge in 1355.

THE TOLLS OF DEATH, Michael Jecks, Headline

Baldwin and Simon help solve two murders on an estate on Bodmin Moor. Historical.

SLAPTON SANDS, Francis Cottam, Simon & Schuster

American student Anne Bourne is studying history at Kent University in 1976. The subject of her thesis is the rehearsal by the Americans for the Normandy invasion. It took place on Slapton Sands and went disastrously wrong, costing 1500 marines their lives. The truth about what happened has never been discovered, but someone is trying to stop Anne from finding out what that was.

THE BLUE ROSE, Anthony Elgin, Constable

The first Lawrence Kingston mystery.

THE DARK WATER, David Pirie, Century

Latest in the Arthur Conan Doyle/Dr. Joseph Bell mystery series.

COLLECTING

We have a solution to our *Henning Mankell* mystery!!!

The US edition of **Faceless Killers** published by the New Press in 1997 preceded the UK edition published by Harvill Press in 2000. It took somebody with both books in front of him to finally put that to rest. Thank you DB.

You may have noticed last month that the UK edition of **The Enemy** by *Lee Child* is about to be published. Child is another author whose books sometimes cause confusion. Child is a Brit who, after his first book **Killing Floor** was published, moved to the US

and now lives in Connecticut. The publishing history of his books, however, might lead you to believe that Child is an American who moved to England.

The Killing Floor US First

Die Trying UK First

Tripwire UK First

The Visitor UK First (later published in the US as **Running Blind**)

Echo Burning UK First

Without Fail UK First

The Persuader UK First

The Enemy UK First

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Chang, Leonard, *Fade To Clear*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. The third in the Allen Choice series.

Cody, Paul, *Shooting the Heart*, Viking, \$23.95. A journey into the mind of Earl Madden, a former Boston schoolteacher who has been committed to a state mental hospital. Earl is haunted by the question: Did I kill my wife?

Estleman, Loren D., *Retro*, Forge, \$24.95. Detroit detective Amos Walker grants a final wish to Beryl Garnet, a successful madam.

Fawcett, Quinn, *Honor Among Spies*, Forge, \$24.95. Ian Fleming and a colleague from British Intelligence are receiving threatening letters containing their darkest secrets.

Flynn, Vince, *Memorial Day*, Atria Books, \$25.95. Mitch Rapp is called upon to fight against the world's most deadly terrorists.

Frederickson, Michael, *A Defense for the Dead*, Forge, \$24.95. A serial killer known as Van Gogh (for his gruesome signature, and I'm sure you can guess what that is) is leaving a trail of bodies up and down the east coast. When he's captured the nightmare begins for attorney Jimmy Morrissey.

Haddam, Jane, *The Headmaster's Wife*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. A student at an elite prep school is found hanging in his room after rumors of an illicit affair with the headmaster's wife.

Housewright, David, *A Hard Ticket Home*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Edgar winner Housewright introduces ex-cop Rushmore McKenzie, who has more money and time than he knows what to do with.

Koontz, Dean, *The Taking*, Bantam, \$27.00. Extreme weather phenomena threaten the globe and in one California town the residents must confront what is really happening to the world.

Linscott, Gillian, *Blood on the Wood*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. The latest adventure featuring Nell Bray, suffragette and amateur sleuth.

Luna, Louisa, *Serious as a Heart Attack*, Atria Books, \$23.00. A street-smart woman takes what looks like an easy job and ends up having to solve a murder case.

MacDonald, Patricia, *The Girl Next Door*, Atria Books, \$24.00. A young woman's life is threatened when she returns to the affluent town where her father murdered her mother fifteen years ago.

Metzl, Jamie, *The Depths of the Sea*, St. Martin's, \$22.95. A marine returns to Cambodia in search of his surrogate son, a CIA operative who has disappeared.

Moore, Harker, *A Mourning in Autumn*, Mysterious Press, \$25.00. NYPD homicide detective Jimmy Sakura faces a series of gruesome murders in the back alleys of New York City.

Page, Katherine Hall, *The Body in the Attic*, Wm. Morrow, \$23.95. Amateur sleuth and caterer Faith Fairchild and her family are living in Cambridge, Mass. When Faith discovers a shocking diary in the old house's attic, she is headed into danger.

Seranella, Barbara, *Unwilling Accomplice*, Scribner, \$24.00. Mirand "Munch" Mancini is up against an organized crime ring involving exploited children, burglary, and murder.

Shaber, Sarah R., *The Bug Funeral*, St. Martin's, \$22.95. North Carolina history professor Simon Shaw investigates a killing at a Raleigh orphanage at the turn of the twentieth century.

Shannon, John, *Terminal Island*, Carroll & Graf, \$25.00. While Jack Liffey is convalescing from a collapsed lung, he is called to his hometown where an inexplicable string of mysterious accidents has befallen local residents.

Slaughter, Karin, Ed., *Like A Charm*, Wm. Morrow, \$21.95. Sixteen interconnected stories by some of today's hottest crime fiction authors. This was first published in the UK.

Talley, Marcia, *I'd Kill For That*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Thirteen female novelists team up in this serial novel.

Torres, Steven, *Burning Precinct Puerto Rico: Book Three*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Luis Gonzalo is called to the scene of a fire that was no accident.

Tremayne, Peter, *The Haunted Abbot*, St. Martin's, \$24.95. Sister Fidelma travels to an Abbey in East Anglia where she finds murder and hauntings.

Wall, Kathryn R., *Judas Island*, St. Martin's, \$23.95. Bay Tanner, the Judge, and Erik look into the death of Erik's old friend.

White, Kate, *'Til Death Do Us Part*, Warner Books, \$24.00. Bailey Weggins tracks down a killer who is murdering members of a bridal party.

White, Randy Wayne, *Tampa Burn*, Putnam, \$24.95. "Doc" Ford has a son! So he discovers when the love of his life Pilar tells him that her husband has kidnapped the boy.

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