

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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I'm adding another feature to **Bookaholic**. I am addicted to reading book reviews in newspapers and magazines, as well as trade publications. What becomes apparent is there are books that should be in my collection. The reviews are so uniformly positive that the book is either going to get an award or it is a must read. I make a note of those books for myself. I am going to share those notes with you. Look for **Books With A Buzz** in this issue.

*Sally Owen*

## WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

### ***I LOVE MY SMITH & WESSON*, David Bowker, St. Martin's Griffin. \$13.95**

This first US edition of Bowker's second book is a wonderful read for fans of Jake Arnott, David Peace, or any other of those Brits who write on the dark side. In Manchester, England, author Billy Dye has finally found success after years of struggle and is about to get married. Into his life comes his childhood friend turned maniacal assassin, Rawhead. Rawhead wants to involve Billy in a plot to infiltrate the Priesthood, the Manchester gang led by Malcolm Priest, and take control of the Manchester underworld. This book is both very violent and very funny and I recommend it highly. However, as I was reading, I felt as though I was missing a piece of the puzzle. I was. Do start with the first book in this series, *The Death You Deserve*, which introduces Billy Dye and Rawhead, also available from St. Martin's Griffin.

### ***WITCH HUNT*, Ian Rankin, Little Brown. \$19.95.**

Witch is a deadly assassin wanted by the world's police agencies and hunted by three detectives who are obsessed with her capture. It is rumored that her next assignment will create political chaos around the globe. I did not, unfortunately, find this book as wonderful as that description, coupled with my admiration for Rankin, might imply. Rankin wrote this back in the early nineties under the pseudonym Jack Harvey and his writing wasn't then what it is now: crisp and dark. Rankin and Inspector John Rebus were obviously made for each other. But no matter, this is early Rankin, long out of print, and it will, I'm sure, find a place on your bookshelf.

**THE MERCY KILLERS, Lisa Reardon, Counterpoint. \$24.00**

I couldn't believe my good luck when this arrived in the mail. Reardon is among my favorite writers and I dropped everything to read it. Set during the mid-sixties, it tells the stories of a group of characters who inhabit a bar in Ypsilanti, Michigan. Old Jerry wants to die and when he does, his grandson, Charlie Simpkins, a petty thief, is accused of the murder. Rather than serve time, Charlie elects to serve in Vietnam. Left behind is Charlie's brother, P.T.; Gil, the bartender; Bobby and his dog; as well as Katie and Sheila. When Charlie finally returns he is a changed man, but then another murder occurs. This story is definitely character-driven and those characters remained with me long after I finished the book. Good news for those of us who thought so highly of Reardon's first novel, *Billy Dead*. This, her third, is up to the same high standard.

**A GENTLEMAN'S GAME, Greg Rucka, Bantam. \$24.00**

Tara Chance is an extraordinary woman. Once Britain's top secret agent, she is now Head of Special Operations for the British Secret Intelligence Service and no longer takes field assignments. Then a terrorist attack on the Tube devastates London and Tara puts herself in harm's way. Rucka is well known in the comic world and this is based on his award-winning graphic novel series. I'm a huge fan of Rucka and I was concerned about his move from the excellent series featuring bodyguard Atticus Kodiak to this, the first in a suspense series entitled "Queen and Country." I needn't have worried. This is a page turner of the highest order and I'm already devoted to the series.

**THE SUNDAY PHILOSOPHY CLUB, Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon. \$19.95**

I turned to this title thinking it was time for me to read something a little more gentle. However, the death in the first chapter is quite grisly and so well described that McCall Smith immediately went soaring in my estimation. Isabel Dalhousie is an editor of *The Review of Applied Ethics* and when she witnesses the death of a young man in a concert hall in Edinburgh, she is determined to find out the truth about his death. I have not read the *No.1 Ladies Detective Agency Series*, but I'm thinking I might have to. The writing here is engaging, the characters quirky, and it would seem that McCall Smith has another hit series on his hands.

## ON MY READING LIST

**WHEN THE NINES ROLL OVER, David Benioff, Viking. \$23.95**

Eight stories explore the state of the American urban male. Benioff is the author of *The 25<sup>th</sup> Hour* which was an extraordinary first novel made into an almost as extraordinary film by Spike Lee. It's true that Benioff went on to Hollywood to become a screenwriter – *Troy* is his best known movie to date – but I forgive him for that and cannot wait to read these stories from this very talented writer.

**THE MIDNIGHT BAND OF MERCY, Michael Blaine, Soho Press. \$25.00**

In New York in 1893, Max Greengrass works for the New York Herald, paid by the column inch rather than taking in a steady salary. When he discovers a group of dead cats laid out on the sidewalk in a tableau, he is intrigued and suspects there is a story here. His investigation leads to an organization of respectable women who have committed themselves to ridding the city of stray cats. But why? The story becomes more sinister when Max makes the connection with the Eugenics movement – improving the race through culling poor genetic stock. This seems an unlikely story but it is, in fact, based on actual events. Michael Blaine wrote the very excellent *The Desperate Season*, and his new book is getting some very positive word-of-mouth.

**PARADISE CITY, Lorenzo Carcaterra, Ballantine. \$24.95**

Giancarlo Lo Manto grew up in New York but he is now a Naples police inspector, working homicide and narcotics. Then his niece disappears in New York City and Lo Manto arranges for a temporary assignment to the NYPD. In Manhattan, Lo Manto is partnered with Jennifer Fabini and, as they work the missing-person case, they encounter relationships and long-buried crimes connected with Lo Manto's past. The author of *Apaches* and *Sleepers* doesn't give us novels fast enough, so this is quite an event.

**TRACE, Patricia Cornwell, Putnam. \$26.95**

Dr. Kay Scarpetta travels back to Richmond, Virginia, when she is asked by the recently appointed Chief Medical Examiner to help him solve a perplexing crime. But when she arrives, nothing is quite as she expected. For one thing, the ME isn't the one who requested her to return and Scarpetta finds herself investigating the death of a fourteen-year-old girl. I can't quite give up on this series even though Patsy Cornwell has disappointed me in the past.

**DESTINATION MORGUE! L.A. TALES, James Ellroy, Vintage, \$12.95**

This paperback original comprises fourteen pieces: some fiction, some nonfiction. Here are Mexican featherweights, victims of forty-year-old unsolved murders, twisted cops, an incredibly clean D.A., and Hollywood's latest perp-walker, Robert Blake. Here also are three new novellas featuring a demented detective with an obsession with a Hollywood actress. A must have! No US hardcover, but there will be a hardcover edition published in the UK.

**THE WARLORD'S SON, Dan Fesperman, Knopf. \$23.00**

Shortly after 9/11, Skelly, a war correspondent on his final tour of duty, arrives at the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan as American bombs begin to target the Taliban. Skelly and his guide, Najeeb, make the dangerous trek into Afghanistan and forge a friendship amid the chaos. Intrigue, betrayal, violence, spies, and American corporate interests, dog their journey which soon turns into a race for their lives. Fesperman, who was a journalist, is the author of *Lie in the Dark* and *The Small Boat of Great Sorrows*.

**THE STOWAWAY, Robert Hough, Arcade. \$24.00**

When two Romanian stowaways are discovered on the container ship *Maersk Dubai*, they are taken to the captain on the assumption that they will be fed and put to work. To the horror of most of the crew, they are, instead, put onto a flimsy raft which is instantly sucked under the frigid waters. Over the next few weeks, the crew is divided between those loyal to the officers, and those who cannot accept what they have seen. Based on a true incident. Sounds riveting.

**THE DARK TOWER VII: THE DARK TOWER, Stephen King, Scribner. \$35.00**

The final installment in this epic series is finally here. Can you wait? Me neither. King started this series with *The Gunslinger* in 1981 and has since followed Roland Deschain as he moves towards his ultimate goal, the tower itself, the center of all time, all place. *Stephen King's The Dark Tower: A Concordance, Volume II* by Robin Furth will also be published at the same time. This is the exhaustive guide to the many worlds, characters, cross-references to King's other work in Volumes V through VII. \$16 paperback.

**MELANCHOLY BABY, Robert B. Parker, Putnam. \$24.95**

Boston P.I. Sunny Randall is facing the unthinkable: the marriage of her ex-husband to someone else. Despite their divorce, Sunny had continued her relationship with Richie, but he wants marriage. To distract herself, Sunny takes on the case of college student Sarah Markham who wants to find her birth parents, but it's a case that has the potential not only to shatter Sarah Markham's family, but also to put Sunny's own beliefs to the test.

**SHOULDER THE SKY, Anne Perry, Ballantine. \$25.95**

In April 1915, chaplain Joseph Reavley is at the front. On one of his rescue forays into no-man's-land, he finds the drowned body of an arrogant war correspondent who has been killed, not by German fire, but by one of his own campatriots. Who hates him enough to kill him? Joseph is afraid he may know. Meanwhile, the sinister figure of the Peacemaker is wreaking havoc. This is the second in Perry's series. Each novel has a self-contained mystery, but the overall mystery of who killed Joseph's mother and father and why continues and will not, I understand, be revealed until the fifth and final volume of this series.

**THE EGYPTOLOGIST, Arthur Phillips, Random House. \$24.95**

In Egypt in 1922, Howard Carter unveils the tomb of Tutankhamen, making the most dazzling find in the history of Egyptology. Meanwhile, Oxford-educated Egyptologist Ralph Trilipush is staking his professional reputation and his fiancée's fortune on a scrap of hieroglyphic pornography, and an Australian detective is setting off on the case of his career, spanning the globe in search of a murderer. And another murderer. And possibly another murderer. Phillips is the author of *Prague*.

**ABSENT FRIENDS, S.J. Rozan, Delacorte Press. \$24.00**

Award winner Rozan takes a break from her Bill Smith/Lydia Chin series with this stand-alone novel. It tells the stories of Jimmy, Markie, Vickie, Marian, Sally, Tom, and Jack, childhood friends who live in the shadow of the past. Against the backdrop of the attack on the World Trade Center, the secrets of these friends begin to emerge. Described by the publisher as both a daring mystery and a tribute to the event that changed our lives, this novel will, it is hoped, bring Rozan to the attention of a large audience.

**CITIZEN VINCE, Jess Walter, Regan Books. \$24.95**

It is the fall of 1980 and, in Spokane, Washington, a small-time thief, Vince Camden, is headed to his witness-protection job at Donut Make You Hungry. But Vince is going to have a hard time leaving his old self behind, especially when that old self is being hunted by a killer. I have read every word that Jess Walter has written, including his non-fiction, and his two previous mysteries, *Over Tumbled Graves* and *Land of the Blind*, were both favorites of mine. I anticipate this with much pleasure.

## FIRST MYSTERIES

**TONIGHT I SAID GOODBYE, Michael Koryta, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$21.95**

Private Investigator Wayne Weston is found dead in his Cleveland home and his wife and daughter are missing. Weston's father knows something is very wrong with this scenario and hires P.I. Lincoln Perry and his partner, Joe Pritchard to investigate. He wants them to prove that his son did not commit suicide and to find his daughter-in-law and granddaughter.

**MODERN RANCH LIVING, Mark Jude Poirier, Miramax Books. \$23.95**

In the crumbling desert community of Rancho Sin Vacas, sixteen-year-old Kendra obsessively hones her body into a muscled machine. Her brother, Thomas, cultivates a bizarre little obsession of his own under the front porch, and a local, Merv, is at his wit's end over his insomniac mother. When a teenager disappears from the Rancho, among rumors of murder, these three find themselves in an unlikely alliance.

**SKIN RIVER, Steven Sidor, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

Buddy Bayes, a man with a past, is trying for a peaceful life as a tavern owner in the small town of Gunnar, Wisconsin. But when he finds the severed hand of a missing young woman, he is pulled into a harrowing situation which has him convinced that his past has come back to haunt him.

**GOOD NEWS, BAD NEWS, David Wolstencroft, Dutton. \$23.95**

The good news is that George and Charlie are on their last assignment for the Agency before retiring from the spy game. The bad news is that they have one more mission: they are asked to assassinate each other. The two friends are soon running the gauntlet of

international espionage spanning England, France, and North America, in a race to find out why their bosses want them dead.

## BOOKS WITH A BUZZ

### **HARBOR, Lorraine Adams, Knopf. \$23.95**

A first novel that tells the story of a North African man's journey into – and out of – violence. The story asks questions about the very questions it raises: Who are the terrorists? Can we recognize them? How do they live? The publisher is solidly behind this book and the critics love it.

### **WHEN THE NINES ROLL OVER, David Benioff, Viking. \$23.95**

See **On My Reading List**. This is Benioff's first book in four years. Hooray!

### **JONATHAN STRANGE & MR. NORELL, Susanna Clarke, Bloomsbury, \$27.95**

A first novel that tells the story of a magician and his young rival in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England. There has been buzz about this novel for months. Here is the latest information: Clarke is English, but it is this US edition which is the true first. Bloomsbury, a publisher not known for large print runs, has already printed advance copies, which have a white dustjacket. This is the "prior state" dustjacket since Bloomsbury has printed most of the first run with a black dustjacket. Clarke will be touring the US this month. Collectors – start your engines!

### **DARK VOYAGE, Alan Furst, Random House. \$24.95**

The reviews for this latest from Furst are not as uniformly good as I would expect, but I don't care. Here, I overrule the naysayers.

### **THE SECRET GOLDFISH, David Means, HarperCollins. \$22.95**

I'm not a great fan of short stories, but I always pick them up when they get as much advance praise as this collection. From the author of *Assorted Fire Events*.

### **CLOUD ATLAS, David Mitchell, Random House. \$14.95**

A difficult story to describe. Five narratives bisected and arranged around a sixth which forms the heart of the novel. When the stories fall into place, the novel's themes are pulled into focus: the ease with which one group enslaves another, and the constant rewriting of the past by those who control the present. Mitchell is the much-praised author of *Ghostwritten* and *Number9dream*. Originally published in the UK, this title has just been long-listed for the prestigious Man Booker Prize.

***THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA*, Philip Roth, Houghton Mifflin. \$26.00**

Roth creates an alternate world in which Charles A. Lindbergh defeats FDR in the 1940 presidential election. Roth is always an interesting writer and advance word is that this is his best novel in years.

***OUTSIDE VALENTINE*, Liza Ward, Holt. \$23.00**

After an argument with her stepfather, 14-year-old Caril Ann Fugate flees into the woods behind her house, where she spied red-haired Charles Starkweather, carrying a .22 rifle. From their first meeting, the girls senses that she and Starkweather are meant to be together. This first novel about the real-life crimes of Starkweather and Fugate is written by the granddaughter of two of their victims.

## NEWS FROM THE UK

***THE SONG OF THE GLADIATOR*, Paul Doherty, Headline.**

It is 313 AD and in Rome, the Emperor Constantine and his mother, Helena, are trying to make sense of the new Christian religion. Then delegates from both sides of the theological dispute are found murdered in a most macabre way.

***THE WATER ROOM*, Christopher Fowler, Doubleday.**

When an elderly lady is found inside her own house with her lungs full of river water, London's Peculiar Crimes Unit is called in to search for a logical solution. Second mystery featuring detectives Bryant and May.

***THE THIEF TAKER*, Janet Gleeson, Bantam Press.**

No info on this one.

***THE GOLDEN SILENCE*, Paul Johnston, Hodder & Stoughton.**

When PI Alex Mavros is asked to trace a missing teenager - an immigrant from the former Soviet Union - he doesn't see any connection with the recent plague of violent killings afflicting Athens. But he will.

***BEFORE THE FACT*, Henning Mankell, Harvill Press.**

Inspector Kurt Wallander is investigating attacks on animals which he fears are a prelude to attacks on humans. Meanwhile his daughter, Linda, has joined the police force and arrives at Ystad Police Station. She immediately becomes involved in the case and has to confront a group of extremists bent on punishing the world's sinners.

***NOT SAFE AFTER DARK*, Peter Robinson, Macmillan.**

No information here, but I'm hoping this is part of the series featuring Alan Banks.

**A CRUEL COURTSHIP, Candace Robb, Heinemann.**

Scotland 1297. In the weeks leading up to the Battle of Stirling Bridge, Margaret Kerr takes up residence in Stirling to discover why the informer who has been providing details of the English plans has become unreliable.

**THE LEPER'S BELL, Peter Tremayne, Headline.**

A servant has been murdered and the baby in her charge has been abducted. A crime made more horrifying to Sister Fidelma and Brother Eadulf by the fact that the baby is their son!!! And again I say !! This series does take place before the church mandated celibacy for its members, but still!!

**THE SILENT AND THE DAMNED, Robert Wilson. HarperCollins.**

Javier Falcon is called in to a crime scene in an affluent suburb of the city of Seville. Although it looks like suicide, Falcon cannot shake off the suspicion that the scene has been staged by a killer.

## COLLECTING

Over the past several years, Otto Penzler of The Mysterious Bookshop has published several excellent pamphlets for collectors. Although the pricing information is a little outdated, these pamphlets are a must if you collect:

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| 1. <i>Collecting Ian Fleming's James Bond</i>        | \$13 |
| 2. <i>Collecting Earl Derr Biggers' Charlie Chan</i> | 10   |
| 3. <i>Collecting S.S. Van Dine</i>                   | 13   |
| 4. <i>Collecting Mickey Spillane</i>                 | 13   |
| 5. <i>Collecting Cornell Woolrich, Part 1</i>        | 13   |
| 6. <i>Collecting Cornell Woolrich, Part 2</i>        | 10   |
| 7. <i>Collecting John P. Marquand's Mr. Moto</i>     | 10   |
| 8. <i>Collecting Clayton Rawson</i>                  | 13   |

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

**Andrews, Mary Kay, *Hissy Fit*, HarperCollins. \$24.95.** Kelley Murdock's wedding to A.J. Jernigan should have been the social event of the season, but when she catches her fiance with her maid of honor, all Kelley can think about is revenge.

**Benjamin, Carol Lea, *Fall Guy*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95.** When one of the detectives in her 9/11 survivor's group dies "accidentally" while cleaning his service revolver, Rachel Alexander and her faithful pit bull, Dashiell, begin a dangerous investigation.

**Berry, Steve, *The Romanov Prophecy*, Ballantine. \$24.95.** After the fall of Communism and a succession of weak governments, the Russian people have voted to bring back the Tsar (sure they have!). Atlanta lawyer Miles Lord is thrilled to be in

Moscow to perform a background check on each of the candidates – all distantly related to Nicholas II.

**Caple, Natalee, *Mackerel Sky***, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95. In a house in Canada a family running a counterfeiting operation, producing fake American currency for the black market, finds itself involved with the criminal underworld. No kidding!

**Davis, Lindsey, *Scandal Takes a Holiday***, Mysterious Press. \$24.95. When gossip columnist, Infamia, goes missing, First Century sleuth Marcus Didius Falco investigates.

**DeVoe Jr, Forrest, *Into the Volcano***, HarperCollins. \$22.95. Jack Mallory and Laura Morse and operatives for the Consultancy. When one of their colleagues is murdered, they are ordered to exact revenge.

**Dickey, Christopher, *The Sleeper***, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00. After September 11<sup>th</sup>, Kurt Kurtovic hunts down his former Al Qaeda comrades in Britain, Spain, and Africa and finds that the most dangerous terrorists are back home in the United States.

**Doss, James D., *The Witch's Tongue***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Ute tribal investigator Charlie Moon tries to make sense of a string of seemingly unconnected incidents.

**Dunn, Carola, *A Mourning Wedding***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Daisy Dalrymple Fletcher and her husband Detective Chief Inspector Alec Fletcher investigate the death of the Earl of Haverhill's sister.

**Francisco, Ruth, *Good Morning, Darkness***, Mysterious Press. \$23.95. Everyone is in love with Laura, so when she disappears, two of those men are determined to find out what happened to her.

**Fusilli, Jim, *Hard, Hard City***, Putnam. \$24.95. When private eye Terry Orr is asked by his daughter Bella and her friend Daniel to search for a gifted student who has disappeared, his search uncovers a hornet's nest of family secrets.

**Garber, Joseph R., *Whirlwind***, HarperCollins. \$24.95. Charlie McKenzie did all the CIA's dirty work for them, but when he became the scapegoat for a massive intelligence blunder, Charlie wants to get even.

**Grimes, Martha, *The Winds of Change***, Viking. \$25.95. Superintendent Richard Jury investigates the death of a young girl.

**Hathaway, Robin, *Satan's Pony***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95. Dr. Jo Banks is the "house physician" for a group of hotels. When a young biker ends up dead in "her" parking lot, Dr. Jo investigates. Second in the series.

**Havill, Steven F., *Convenient Disposal***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Undersheriff Estelle Reyes-Gusmanis is called in when the ongoing violent feud between two students at the local middle school escalates.

**Johansen, Iris, *Blind Alley***, Bantam. \$25.00. A killer is going to extraordinary lengths to obscure the identity of his victims, and forensic sculptor, Eve Duncan, must discover who they are.

**Kahn, Sharon, *Which Big Giver Stole the Chopped Liver?***, Scribner. \$24.00. Ruby, the Rabbi's wife, and the folks from Temple Rita in Eternal, Texas, return in the latest in this cozy kosher series.

**Kent, Bill, *Street Fighter***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Philadelphia Press obit writer Shep Ladderback and his protégé Andrea "Andy" Cosicki pair up to solve a rape and murder.

**Kent, Gordon, *Force Protection***, Delacorte. \$25.00. When two terrorist attacks target U.S. forces overseas, American top brass call in intelligence officer Alan Craik to investigate.

**Mewshaw, Michael, *Island Tempest***, Putnam. \$25.95. Frank Pitchard lives in Eden, an exclusive resort island community off the coast of Florida where the residents engage in petty crimes and schemes that threaten to escalate into something far more sinister.

**O'Connell, Carol, *Winter House***, Putnam. \$24.95. When a burglar is caught in the act and killed by an ice-pick-wielding home owner, Mallory finds herself investigating the strangest case of her career.

**Rehder, Ben, *Flat Crazy***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Some kind of unidentified wild creature is on the loose in Blanco County and the locals are convinced it is a mythical beast called a chupacabra. Game warden John Marlin investigates.

**Schickler, David, *Sweet and Vicious***, Dial Press. \$23.00. When Henry Dante pulls into a small town in Wisconsin, Grace McGlone knows he's the one for her. The stolen set of diamonds stashed in the backseat of his truck are going to complicate this romance.

**Sheldon, Sidney, *Are You Afraid of the Dark?***, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95. In New York, Denver, Paris and Berlin, four people have died separately in apparent accidents. But they have something in common: they all worked for KIG, the world's largest think tank.

**Stabenow, Dana, *A Taint in the Blood***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Aleutian P.I. Kate Shugak is asked to clear the name of a woman convicted of murder when she set her home on fire, killing one of her sons.

**Woods, Stuart, *The Prince of Beverly Hills***, Putnam. \$25.95. Rick Barron, a capable detective on the Beverly Hills forces, is demoted but lands a job on the security detail for Centurion Pictures, one the hottest studios.

**Wozencraft, Kim, *Wanted***, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Two women, two crimes, one cover-up, and one desperate jailbreak.

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