

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

#### ***THE LIBRARIAN*, Larry Beinhart, Nation Books. \$15.95**

David Goldberg is an unassuming university librarian who moonlights for an eccentric, conservative billionaire who wants to leave behind a memorial library. The billionaire is also part of a plot to steal the presidential election that Augustus Winthrop Scott, the incumbent, seems likely to lose. Goldberg is an innocent surrounded by paranoia and it isn't long before he's on the run, hunted by Homeland Security and on Virginia's Ten Most Wanted list for bestiality. Beinhart, who wrote *American Hero* which was made into the movie *Wag the Dog*, knows how politicians work the system, and here he has fashioned a biting funny satire. Augustus Winthrop Scott is a very thinly disguised George Bush and his democratic opponent is a woman who served in Vietnam. The back room politics are far more interesting than the plight of Goldberg but, as well done as this is, I suspect that the interest in this book will only last for about one more month.

#### ***THE MURDER ARTIST*, John Case, Ballantine. \$24.95**

This excellent book has a modest beginning. Alex Callahan, a D.C. television news correspondent, takes his six-year-old twin sons to a Renaissance Faire in Maryland. There, in the instant that Alex looks away, they are abducted. Alex must inform the police, his estranged wife, and other members of his family. There is no ransom note, just a call on his cellphone from his home phone from one of his sons who says "Daddy." Okay, that's a pretty terrific beginning, but from there, this book takes off in a way that makes it absolutely impossible to put down. Because of Alex's job, he has unlimited resources to help him trace his boys. These resources take him to Florida, Las Vegas, Louisiana, and Los Angeles. And what a journey it is. I don't think I give anything away when I tell those of you who collect books about magicians and their magic tricks that this an absolute must for you. The ending was a trifle strange, but by that time I could have cared less.

#### ***REVENGE*, Mary Morris, St. Martin's Press. \$21.95**

Not a mystery exactly, but a darkly disturbing and complex story of two women. Andrea Geller is a painter who is obsessed with the death of her father and her belief that her stepmother caused his death. Her neighbor is the best-selling author Loretta Partlow who is blocked and needs a story. Andrea thinks that if she tells the story of her father's death to Loretta, subtly of course, the author might use this story and embarrass Andrea's

stepmother, or worse. So these two women spin a web that entangles both of them. And the outcome is quite stunning.

***THE STRAW MEN*, Michael Marshall, Jove. \$6.99**

The story opens with a massacre. Two men in long coats enter a fast-food restaurant in Pennsylvania and gun down sixty-eight people. Ten years later two seemingly unrelated events take place. In Santa Monica, California, a teenage girl is abducted by a tourist sitting next to her on a bench, and in Dyersburg, Montana, Ward Hopkins is attending the funeral of his parents, killed in a car accident. When he returns to his parents' home, he discovers a note stuffed in his father's favorite chair: "We're not dead." How these events connect make for a breathless and hair-raising tale and, by the end of the book, the story isn't quite over. It took me a while to get to this paperback original despite great word of mouth, but I finally made it and I'm delighted I did. Now I can't wait to read the sequel, *The Upright Man*. Marshall is a terrific writer and knows exactly how to pull the reader into his very scary and complicated story.

***CHASING THE DRAGON*, Domenic Stansberry, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

This story introduces Dante Mancuso an ex-cop who now works for The Company, a security concern that doesn't always operate legally. As the book opens, Dante has been given an assignment that sends him back to his old North Beach neighborhood in San Francisco to pick up the threads of the life he left behind. His first responsibility is to attend his estranged father's funeral, the perfect place to pick up as though he'd never left. Infiltrating a heroin-smuggling operation leads him much closer to his old life than he ever imagined. Those of you who read *The Last Days of Il Duce* and *The Spoiler* know that Stansberry writes on the dark side and this is an excellent example of his hardboiled style.

***THE REUNION*, Sue Walker, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Twenty years ago, a group of troubled teenagers were all incarcerated in The Unit, an experimental home for highly intelligent teens in the outskirts of Edinburgh. While they would all be released and go their separate ways, the year they spent together had catastrophic repercussions for them all. Now they are adults and a killer is stalking them, murdering them one by one, and they must once again come together to confront their past and the terrible secret they have kept. Sounds intriguing, yes? It is, but I had trouble reading this non-linear story because I don't think the author makes it clear enough where we are in the narrative. But if you stick with this, the payoff is an excellent twist.

## ON MY READING LIST

***DOUBLE HOMICIDE*, Jonathan & Faye Kellerman, Warner Books. \$23.95**

The two best selling authors have teamed up to write a new series of crime novels. Each book contains two novels jointly written by the duo and featuring different detectives solving crimes in different cities. In this first volume, Boston homicide detectives Michael MacCain and Doris Sylvester investigate the suspicious death of a college basketball star. Detectives Darryl Two Moons and Steve Katz solve the murder of a worker at a Santa Fe art gallery.

***STEVENSON UNDER THE PALM TREES*, Alberto Manguel, Canongate. \$18.00**

Robert Louis Stevenson is living in Samoa, although he sometimes longs for his native Edinburgh. When a young Samoan woman, for whom RLS privately pined, is raped and murdered, a newly arrived Scots missionary, Mr. Baker, is suddenly at the center of the investigation. This novel, published first in England, is a playful nod to Stevenson's life and fictions. Sounds fascinating to me, and I'm a fan of Canongate's extraordinary fiction line.

***THE FALLS*, Joyce Carol Oates, HarperCollins. \$26.95**

Oates sets her newest novel against mythic-historic backdrop of Niagara Falls in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. That's all I know of this title, but it is a must read since Oates appears to be getting better with every book.

***CALIFORNIA GIRL*, T. Jefferson Parker, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Edgar Award winner Parker sets his novel in California in the 1960s when Orange groves were being uprooted for tract houses, people flooded into Orange County, and strange new ideas were in the air about war, music, sex, and drugs. New influences included Richard Nixon and Timothy Leary. Against this background is the story of the Becker brothers and what happens when the body of the lovely and mysterious Janelle Vonn is discovered in an abandoned orange packinghouse. One Becker brother is a cop, the other is a minister and each, in his own special way, tries to find Janelle's killer.

***BEST AMERICAN MYSTERY STORIES 2004*, Otto Penzler, Ed., Nelson DeMille, Guest Ed., Houghton Mifflin. \$27.50 hardcover, \$14.00 paperback**

The latest offering in this best-selling series contains stories by Jonathon King, Stephen King, Dick Lochte, Joyce Carol Oates, and Jack O'Connell, among others. The stories in these anthologies are of a consistently high quality and Otto Penzler can be persuaded to sign copies.

***THE SYSTEM OF THE WORLD*, Neal Stephenson, Wm. Morrow. \$27.95**

The year is 1714 and Daniel Waterhouse has returned to England, where he joins forces with his friend Isaac Newton to hunt down a shadowy group attempting to blow up

Natural Philosophers with “Infernal Devices” – time bombs. This is the conclusion of *The Baroque Cycle*. Still on my reading list are the first two in the series: *Quicksilver* and *The Confusion*.

***IN THE NIGHT ROOM*, Peter Straub, Random House. \$21.95**

Children’s book author Willy Patrick thinks she is losing her mind. She is standing in the parking lot of a warehouse and knows that her daughter, Holly, is being held in that building. But she also knows that is impossible. Her daughter is dead. On the same day, author Timothy Underhill is confronted with the ghost of his nine-year-old sister April and, soon after, he starts to receive e-mails from dead people he knew in his youth. When Willy Patrick and Timothy Underhill meet, they instantly recognize each other and join forces to confront the evils surrounding them. Not for everybody, but nobody writes hair-raising chill and dread better than Straub.

## FIRST MYSTERIES

***BAHAMARAMA*, Bob Morris, St. Martin’s. \$21.95**

Zack Chasteen, former Miami Dolphins linebacker, has been in a Florida federal prison for two years on bogus charges. When he is finally released the first thing he wants to do is to meet up with his girlfriend, Barbara, on Harbor Island in the Bahamas. But getting out of Florida is not as easy as he thinks. Then he discovers that Barbara has been kidnapped and her ex-lover, a photographer, murdered. Once again, trouble is knocking on Zack’s door.

***THE SUCKER’S KISS*, Alan Parker, St. Martin’s Press. \$23.95**

This is the story of Thomas Moran. During the San Francisco earthquake of 1906 when he is seven years old, Thomas embarks, accidentally, on a career of pick-pocketing. As he grows into manhood, his journey takes him through Prohibition and the Depression and he becomes a master of his craft. This is the first novel by Sir Alan Parker, the director, writer, producer of films which include *Bugsy Malone*, *Midnight Express*, *Mississippi Burning*, *The Commitments*, and *Angela’s Ashes*.

## NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE DARLING*, Russell Banks, HarperCollins. \$25.95**

A political/historical thriller set in Liberia and the U.S. during the years 1975-91 which tells the story of Hannah Musgrave, a radical and member of the Weather Underground who fled to West Africa and married a minister in President Doe’s government.

**THE RED QUEEN, Margaret Drabble, Harcourt. \$24.00**

Barbara Halliwell receives an unexpected package – a memoir by a Korean crown princess, written more than two hundred years ago. It is a highly appropriate gift since Barbara is about to leave on a trip to Seoul, but she has no idea who sent it. The story she reads on the plane turns out to be one of great intrigue as well as tragedy. Drabble has been writing excellent novels for more than thirty years now, all of them beautifully constructed. This was first published in the UK.

**LUX, Maria Flook, Little Brown. \$23.95**

Alden Warren works for the National Park Service at the Cape Cod National Seashore. When her husband disappears without a trace, Alden continues with her work and holds out against the men who wish to take her husband's place. Until Lux Davis, a handsome landscape worker, enters her life. Lux is smitten with Alden but his immediate problem is how to dispose of the body of her husband. I suppose this could be considered a mystery since a murder does take place, but Flook's book seems to be about so much more than the killing of her husband. Flook is the author of the true crime story *Invisible Eden*.

## NEWS FROM THE UK

This is the big news...

**THE BLOOD-DIMMED TIDE, Rennie Airth**

There is an October 1<sup>st</sup> publication date for this sequel to *River of Darkness*. It is 1932 and John Madden, once a Scotland Yard inspector, is now a farmer in Surrey. The discover of the body of a small girl leads him to Germany where the Nazis are on the brink of power. Second novel in the proposed trilogy.

**NOCTURNES, John Connolly, Hodder & Stoughton.**

I'm hearing that these are short stories. Definitely not a Charlie Parker mystery.

**WHITEOUT, Ken Follett, Macmillan.**

No info here.

**FLESHMARKET CLOSE, Ian Rankin, Orion.**

An illegal immigrant is found murdered in Edinburgh. Was it a racist attack or something else? John Rebus investigates. This will be published here next year as *Fleshmarket Alley*.

**13 STEPS DOWN, Ruth Rendell, Hutchinson.**

Mix Cellini is superstitious about the number 13. He is also obsessed with 10 Rillington Place, where the notorious John Christie committed his murders. Sounds like classic Rendell.

## THIS AND THAT

I wasn't going to mention this, but the presidential election is almost upon us and Kinky Friedman has a lot of fans. Yes, the Kinkster has written a book about presidents, the White House, cigars, and hanging with Bob Dylan. **'SCUSE ME WHILE I WHIP THIS OUT** is festering in your local bookstore now.

Friedman also has a book about his favorite city, Austin. **THE GREAT PSYCHEDELIC ARMADILLO PICNIC** is the latest in the Crown Journeys series. This is the kind of stuff you won't find in your Frommer's Guide.

## BOOKS WITH A BUZZ

*The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown has been on the best-seller lists for more than a year now. During that time, publishers have been trying to force a number of square peg titles into that particular best-selling round hole. But Brown's publisher has found the answer to the question "who is the next Dan Brown?" It is of course Dan Brown. In your bookstores this month is **THE DA VINCI CODE by Dan Brown, the Special Illustrated Collector's Edition**. At \$32.50, this is exactly the same book as the original but it now contains one hundred and fifty full-color images featured throughout. I'd scoff, except I am going to be first in line to purchase this one. A note to Doubleday, Brown's publisher: How about a collector's edition of *Angels and Demons* using some of Brown's own visuals from his website? Or are you way ahead of me?

## COLLECTING

### DENNIS MCMILLAN PUBLICATIONS

Based in Arizona, Dennis McMillan has been publishing quality titles since 1983 when he reprinted *The House of Cain*, the rare first novel by **Arthur Upfield**. Originally published by Hutchinson in 1928 McMillan issued 1000 copies.

McMillan not only publishes reprints of titles which are unavailable in any other form, he also publishes first editions and limited editions of such authors as **Kent Anderson, Frederick Brown, Howard Browne, Michael Connelly, James Crumley, Tony Hillerman, George P. Pelecanos and Charles Willeford**.

The latest McMillan publication has just now hit the stores: **Monkology** by **Gary Phillips** can be purchased, while supplies last, with a jazz CD. Coming up towards the

end of the year is a new novel by **Kent Harrington, *Red Jungle***, and next year expect to see new titles from **George P. Pelecanos, Michael Connelly, and James Crumley**.

Known for their excellent production and artwork, Dennis McMillan titles have increased in value at a quite amazing rate. The print runs are small and the titles are unique. Many of you already collect Dennis McMillan publications, but if you don't, and you collect, its time to get in touch with the always available Dennis McMillan. You can reach him at: 520-529-6636

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

### Fiction

**Baldacci, David, *Hour Game***, Warner Books. \$26.95. Sean King and Michelle Maxwell return to solve a series of murders being committed by two killers, one of whom is copying the other and stealing the credit.

**Crombie, Derborah, *In a Dark House***, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Superintendent Duncan Kincaid investigates the death of a woman burned beyond recognition in a warehouse in South London, and Gemma James is asked to trace a friend's missing roommate. The cases have several disturbing links.

**Druett, Joan, *A Watery Grave***, St. Martin's. \$23.95. The U.S. Exploring Expedition sets out from Virginia in 1838 to explore the Pacific islands. On board is linguist Viki Coffin, half New Zealand Maori and half American. He is also deputized to identify a vicious murderer on board and bring him to justice.

**Francome, John, *Inside Track***, St. Martin's. \$24.95. Jamie Hutchison has just been released from prison for committing a crime he can't remember. With the help of his sister, a top horse trainer, he tries to pick up his old life as a champion jockey.

**Goldman, Judy, *Early Leaving***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Kathryn Smallwood has always wanted the best for her son, Early, but when he is arrested for murder, she questions her power as a parent.

**Hall, Parnell, *And a Puzzle to Die On***, Bantam. \$24.00. When Harvey Beerbaum throws a birthday bash for Puzzle Lady Cora Felton, the centerpiece is, of course, a cake decorated like a crossword puzzle. The party is a complete bust until a corpse is thrown from the second floor and hits the cake, filling in 14 down.

**Hamilton, Laurell K., *Incubus Dreams***, Berkley. \$23.95. A consultant to the Regional Preternatural Crime Investigation Unit, Anita Black, Vampire Hunter, is called in on what appears to be a case involving a vampire serial killer who may be preying on strippers.

**Handler, David, *The Burnt Orange Sunrise***, St. Martin's. \$23.95. New York film critic Mitch Berger and trooper Desiree Mitry attend a party in a local faux historic castle and find themselves trapped with the other guests due to an ice storm. Guests start dying off and Mitch and Des must find the killer.

**Hart, Erin, *Lake of Sorrows***, Scribner. \$24.00. Pathologist Nora Gavin arrives at an industrial site in the Irish midlands where workers have unearthed a long-buried body. Moments after her arrival a much more recent victim is discovered.

**Hill, Reginald, *Good Morning, Midnight***, HarperCollins. \$24.95. Dalziel and Pascoe investigate the suicide of a prominent businessman who, it appears, shot himself at his desk in a locked room. But things are not what they seem.

**Hill, Sam, *Buzz Riff***, Carroll & Graf. \$25.00. Top Kiernan is asked to recover the Confederate battle flag that's been stolen from Professor Jay Pope-Scott's office. The search for the lost artifact takes Top and his friends, Dee Lane and Benny the Blade Culpepper, on a raucous jaunt through the South.

**Hime, James, *Scared Money***, St. Martin's. \$22.95. Ex-Texas Ranger Jeremiah Spur and Deputy Sheriff Clyde Thomas return in the sequel to Edgar Award finalist *The Night of the Dance*.

**Kling, Christine, *Cross Current***, Ballantine. \$23.95. Seychelle Sullivan fishes a young girl out of the water and discovers she is accompanied by a dead woman, the fourth victim murdered by a machete blow to the head in recent months.

**Krich, Rochelle, *Grave Endings***, Ballantine. \$24.95. Molly Blume, crime journalist, is obsessed with the murder of her friend Aggie Lashner. A sequel to *Dream House*.

**McInerny, Ralph, *Green Thumb***, St. Martin's. \$23.95. Brothers Roger and Philip Knight investigate the death of prominent Notre Dame donor.

**Mayor, Archer, *The Surrogate Thief***, Mysterious Press. \$24.95. Joe Gunther investigates his most personal and dangerous case yet.

**Mitchell, James C., *Choke Point***, St. Martin's. \$23.95. When reporter April Lennox asks P.I. Brinker to accompany her to Mexico as she chases a story, he refuses. When she falls victim to rape and murder, he is determined to track down her killers.

**Murray, Michael, *Raven***, ibooks. \$19.95. Operation Raven is this: ambush Hitler's private train, kill Hitler, and have actor Archie Smythes impersonate the Nazi dictator long enough to issue a single order: Stand down from Operation Sealion, the invasion of Britain.

**Roberts, Nora, *Northern Lights***, Putnam. \$25.95. Nate Burke was a Baltimore cop, but after watching his partner die on the street, he takes the job of Chief of Police in the remote town of Lunacy, Alaska. Years ago a crime occurred in Lunacy which was never solved, and Nate suspects that the killer still walks the snowy streets.

**Talton, Jon, *Dry Heat***, St. Martin's. \$22.95. David Mapstone is assigned to find out why an FBI agent's badge turns up on the body of a homeless man. The agent was killed forty years ago and his murderer was never found.

**Wilson, John Morgan, *Moth and Flame***, St. Martin's. \$23.95. When the original writer of a booklet for the City of West Hollywood is killed, Benjamin Justice agrees to complete the piece celebrating the city's twentieth anniversary. His research uncovers jealousy, greed, and deceit.

#### **Non Fiction**

**Rule, Ann, *Green River, Running Red***, Free Press. \$26.00. Rule tells the long-awaited story of the terrifying Green River killings – more than forty-eight women were murdered by man who hid his horrific addiction for two decades.

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