

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

July 2005

Vol. 3, No. 7

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***PEREGRINE*, William Bayer, Forge. Available in Hardcover and Paperback**

In New York in 1980, a peregrine falcon circles the city and suddenly drops at nearly two hundred miles an hour, hitting a young woman skating at Rockefeller Center and killing her instantly. It is only the beginning. As the city panics, the media vies with the police department in an effort to get the story of the year and Pamela Barrett, reporter, who witnessed the first attack, becomes the go-to media personality of the moment. But somewhere in the city is the falconer. And he's noticed Pamela Barrett too. This is an extraordinarily atmospheric mystery, not only for the descriptions of falconry and the black market for rare birds, but also for the depiction of New York City at that time. Those of us who knew the city back then will recognize just how much it has changed. I have been eager to read this novel for years now, but I would not break down and read my signed first edition! Now, thanks to Otto Penzler and the folks at Forge Books who are bringing back out-of-print Edgar winners, we all have a chance to read or re-read terrific mysteries such as this.

***THE BIG OVER EASY*, Jasper Fforde, Viking. \$24.95**

Fforde has taken a rest from his literary silliness featuring Tuesday Next to introduce a new series of Nursery Crimes. When Humpty Stuyvesant Van Dumpty III, ex-convict, former millionaire and philanthropist, is found shattered to death beneath a wall, Detective Inspector Jack Spratt and his assistant Mary Mary investigate. This has all the imagination of his first series but I found it less satisfying. I guess that's because I prefer Heathcliff, Hamlet, Mr. Toad, and Miss Havisham to the Three Pigs, Mr. Wolff, Jack, and the Jellyman.

***PUPPETS*, Daniel Hecht, Bloomsbury. \$14.95**

They called him Howdy Doody. He was a serial killer terrorizing the New York/New Jersey area and over a thirteen month period he hung up his victims with strings attached to their limbs. But he was caught and now he's in jail. There was never any doubt about his identity. That is, until State Police Detective Mo Ford finds another victim - killed and arranged in exactly the same way. Is it a copycat killer or did they get the wrong man? The answer makes for a riveting read. It also brings back Mo Ford from Hecht's first novel, *Skull Session* in a prequel to that story. Dense and complex, *Puppets* had me hooked from the very first page. I'm only surprised that (a) it was published in the UK first, and (b) it is available in paperback only.

DEARLY DEVOTED DEXTER, Jeff Lindsay, Doubleday. \$22.95

Dexter Morgan, blood splatter expert for the Miami Medical Examiner's Office, is back, and he's dealing with the suspicions of Sergeant Doakes who believes that Dexter is a homicidal maniac. Which he is! My favorite serial killer (he kills only the baddies) is also having to deal with his girlfriend, Rita, and her two children and a nasty psychopath who is cutting a path through Miami. All very difficult for Dexter. It's not that he cannot express his feelings, it's that he doesn't have them. The only genuine feeling Dexter seems to have is sincere admiration for the psychopath's methods and he'd love to nail the man. When Sergeant Doakes is abducted, Dex can finally throw himself into the search for a new plaything. The second in the series is as good and as funny as the first.

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

Well, I've finally read the book of the year! Last year, that is. Many of you have told me that this was the most remarkable book you read in 2004. Short listed for the Booker Prize, *Cloud Atlas* lost to *Line of Beauty* by **Allan Hollinghurst**, and some of you think Mitchell was robbed. It is an almost impossible book to describe without taking away much of the pleasure of reading it. It is written in several parts, each with seemingly no connection to another. And yet there are clues in each section which alert the reader to links that are surely going to be made. And when the book is over, those connections are finally in place, and I defy anyone to understand the overall scope of the story until the author wants it understood. Oh, just read it. This is not available in hardcover in this country and signed first editions from the UK are now almost prohibitive.

ON MY READING LIST

THE ARCHITECT, Keith Ablow, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95

West Crosse is a brilliant, handsome architect whose commitment to achieving ideal beauty knows no bounds. But the rich, powerful families who engage him to design their homes do not know his dark side. Crosse doesn't stop at designing their homes, he needs to make their lives perfect too, even if the final design takes years to achieve. The FBI puts Frank Clevenger on the case and the ultimate cat and mouse game begins. Ablow is surely the king of the psychological thriller and he never disappoints.

THE BLOOD-DIMMED TIDE, Rennie Airth, Viking. \$24.95

It is 1932, and former Inspector John Madden lives quietly with his wife and children in rural England. But when a young village girl is murdered, Madden becomes involved and, along with his former colleagues at Scotland Yard, finds himself enlisting the help of the British secret service and the German police. After five years, fans of the sensational *River of Darkness* despaired of ever seeing a second John Madden book. But here, finally, it is.

***THE BURNING GIRL*, Mark Billingham, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

A vicious contract killer carves an X on the backs of his victims. DI Tom Thorne is already investigating an old murder case involving the immolation of a schoolgirl when the two separate investigations begin to fuse into one very nasty riddle involving multiple killings. First published in the UK.

***CRUSADER'S CROSS*, James Lee Burke, Simon & Schuster. \$25.95**

Back in the 1950s, Dave Robicheaux's brother Jimmie fell for a girl whose name may or may not have been Ida Durbin. Neither Jimmie nor Dave knew that she was a prostitute with ties to the mob and luckily, she disappeared from their lives without a trace. Now, a deathbed confession from an old schoolmate reminds Robicheaux of this girl, sending him on a hunt for her whereabouts.

***GROUCHO MARX, KING OF THE JUNGLE*, Ron Goulart, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95**

In Hollywood, the tree vines are fake, but the murders are real and although Groucho and Frank Denby have promised Frank's wife not to play detectives, they are soon up to their necks in homicide. Full of one-liners, puns, and chance meetings with celebrities, this series is a must for Groucho and Hollywood fans.

***EASY STREETS*, Bill James, W.W. Norton. \$23.95**

For years, Assistant Chief Constable Desmond Iles has had an arrangement with Mansel Shale and Panicking Ralph Ember, owner of the Monty Club. Iles protects their businesses and they ensure peace on the streets. But after a small-time criminal's house is firebombed, leaving the owner and his daughter dead, uncertainty prevails, drug dealers emerge, and competition grows. With the failure of the once mutually beneficial relationship between cops and criminals, a battle for survival ensues. I have recommended this series to many, but few have fallen for the wicked humor and ambiguous resolutions that are the hallmark of this police procedural/comedy of manners. For those of us who love the Harpur and Iles series, the publication of a new book in the series is an event of enormous magnitude.

***THE DEATH COLLECTORS*, Jack Kerley, Dutton. \$23.95**

In 1972, on the day of his sentencing, renowned artist and serial killer Marden Hexcamp is shot dead in the courtroom. More than thirty years later, a prostitute is found murdered in a motel room, the first in a series of horrors suggesting that Hexcamp's art remains alive. Homicide detectives Carson Ryder and Harry Nautilus investigate and descend into the shocking world of the Death Collectors, people who spend vast sums to collect serial-killer memorabilia. The first book in this series, *The Hundredth Man*, was a terrific debut, and I'm hearing that this follow-up surpasses it.

***TO THE POWER OF THREE*, Laura Lippman, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

The Baltimore County police are called to a shooting at a high school. What they find is extraordinary: three former best friends locked in the girls' restroom. One is dead, one is critically injured from an apparently self-inflicted gunshot wound, and the third is clearly

lying. If you've been following Lippman's career, you'll have noticed she is getting better with every book. I think she should have won the Edgar this past April, and I'm not saying that just because she picked up my dinner bill the last time we met!

***FIELD OF BLOOD*, Denise Mina, Little Brown. \$24.95**

Mina begins a new series featuring journalist Paddy Meehan. When a small boy is murdered, it is the hottest story in Scotland, and if only Paddy can get the scoop it will launch her career out of the small time paper and into the nationals. But the connection she is hoping for threatens her career and family. Callum, the young cousin of her fiance, is implicated in the boy's murder, and when Paddy confides in a coworker, she is betrayed and soon her entire family has turned on her. This is getting terrific reviews. It was published in the UK earlier this year.

***WHITE*, Christopher Whitcomb, Little Brown. \$24.95**

Former FBI Agent Whitcomb follows his thriller, *Black*, with another set in the secret world of nameless agencies which do the nation's most covert bidding. Special Agent Jeremy Waller has one of the world's most-wanted terrorist masterminds in his sights when his task force is joined by two Americans. Are they from an even more top-secret agency or are they traitors? I enjoy this series immensely because Whitcomb's stories have the authenticity of someone who has been there, done that.

***GUARDIAN OF THE DAWN*, Richard Zimler, Delta Trade. \$14.00**

In Goa in 1591, Tiago Zarco, whose family fled the forced conversions in Portugal, comes of age. He struggles to keep the powers of the Inquisition from destroying his family, but when an act of betrayal imprisons his father, Tiago's harrowing journey begins. I almost missed this latest book from one of my favorite authors, because it is being published as a paperback original. Bad news for those of us who collect hard cover first editions.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***THE ROGUE'S GAME*, Milton T. Burton, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

In 1947, a man, driving a fine Lincoln convertible and accompanied by a beautiful blonde, arrives in a small West Texas town. His purpose, it appears, is to get into a poker game going on at the infamous Weilback Hotel. But it becomes apparent that his motive is a darker one involving a local banker. This is getting rave reviews from the likes of Kinky Friedman, who loves those dark tales set in the state of which he hopes to be governor!

***COLD GRANITE*, Stuart Macbride, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

After recuperating from a stab wound, Detective Sergeant Logan McRae is back on the job. But on his first day, the body of a three-year-old boy is found on a riverbank, three months after he was reported missing. To the horror of even the most experienced cops,

the details point to a serial killer and their suspicions are confirmed when, less than twenty-four hours later, another child goes missing. This is the first in a series set in Aberdeen, Scotland, and Macbride is already being compared to Ian Rankin. First published in the UK.

***DOUBLE CROSS BLIND*, Joel N. Ross, Doubleday. \$24.95**

American Tom Wall is in a British military asylum. All he can remember is that his brother Earl betrayed his unit in Crete, causing one of the bloodiest massacres of the war. The British also have Sondegger, a Nazi spy in London captured while on a mission to take down a network of German spies turned by the British. MI5 releases Tom on the condition that he will impersonate Earl and convince Sondegger to reveal how and where he has arranged to transmit to Germany. It is December 1, 1941 and Sondegger knows that the Japanese fleet has sailed for Pearl Harbor. Tom must attempt to save the network of spies and stop the attack.

***KILLER SWELL*, Jeff Shelby, Dutton. \$23.95**

Marilyn Crier calls surfer/private investigator Noah Braddock when her daughter Kate disappears. Noah dated Kate in high school and although her mother loathed him then, she doesn't know who else to turn to. Set in San Diego.

***PAIN KILLER*, Will Staeger, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

W. Cooper is a quasi-retired CIA operative relaxing in the British Virgin Islands. His life of leisure is interrupted when he's asked to help investigate a murder, the only clue a tattoo on the victim's bullet-ridden and mysteriously scarred body. Meanwhile at CIA headquarters, Julie Laramie discovers, almost by accident, evidence of a massive arms buildup in China. Cooper's and Laramie's cases soon converge and the pair find themselves caught in a terrorist conspiracy designed to cripple America.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***FREDDY AND FREDERICKA*, Mark Helprin, Penguin Press. \$27.95**

The British Royal family, exasperated with Freddy, Prince of Wales and his wife, Fredericka, send the bumbling couple to colonize a strange and barbarous land: America. As they make their way across the country, riding freight trains, washing dishes, stealing art, fighting fires, and getting enmeshed in a presidential campaign, the hapless couple gain the dignity and humility required of great monarchs. This is Mark Helprin and attention must be paid.

***OLYMPUS*, Dan Simmons, Wm. Eos. \$25.95**

The author of the *Hyperion Cantos* has written the epic-concluding companion to *Ilium*. This two-book series is a tale of high adventure featuring Homer, Shakespeare, Achilles, Hector, black holes, and little green men. It is also a meditation on humanity's past and

future. If you're not a science fiction fan, you won't care. If you are, you have been waiting with baited breath for this volume.

44 SCOTLAND STREET, Alexander McCall Smith, Anchor Books. \$13.95

This witty novel chronicling the lives of the residents of 44 Scotland Street in Edinburgh was originally serialized in *The Scotsman* and has now been released as a paperback original.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***THE STRANGER HOUSE*, Reginald Hill, HarperCollins.**

Things move slowly in the Cumbrian village of Illthwaite, but that's about to change. Sam Flood is a young Australian post-graduate student en route to Cambridge. Miguel Madero is a Spanish historian. They have nothing in common except that they both want to dig up bits of the past that some residents would rather keep buried.

***PUCCINI'S GHOSTS*, Morag Joss, Hodder & Stoughton.**

In 1960, fifteen-year-old Lila lives in the town of Burnhead in Scotland. She dreams of escape, and when her beloved Uncle George decides to stage an amateur production of Puccini's *Turandot*, Lila finds herself in love for the first time. A complex journey into the dark, claustrophobic heart of a family in crisis.

***AFTER THE ARMISTICE BALL*, Catriona McPherson, Constable.**

A classic murder mystery set among the upper classes of 1920s Perthshire as, in the wake of the First World War, their comfortable world begins to crumble.

***KILLING THE BEASTS*, Chris Sims, Orion.**

The Commonwealth Games are held in Manchester, and in their aftermath, a series of brutal killings shatters the city. D.I. Jon Spicer gets the case. Each victim has been murdered in the same grotesque manner, but the lack of motive leaves the police baffled.

THIS AND THAT

Is it my imagination, or have there been a remarkable number of good mysteries this year? We're half way into 2005 and here are my top six reads to date:

Giles Blunt – *Black Fly Season*

Chris Cleave – *Incendiary* (I'll be reviewing this in the August issue of Bookaholic)

Thomas H. Cook – *Red Leaves*

Michael Gruber – *Valley of Bones*

Mo Hayder – *The Devil of Nanking*

Robert Littell - *Legends*

BOOKS WITH A BUZZ

These two titles have suddenly become hotter than hot!

Zorro – **Isabelle Allende** – signed of course!

Map of Bones – **James Rollins** – with a doodle of a bone!

I can't get them at anywhere near a reasonable price. Be on the lookout!

FUTURE RELEASES

September – **Walter Mosley** – *Cinnamon Kiss* (Easy Rawlins mystery)

October – **Michael Connelly** – *The Lincoln Lawyer*

November – **P.D. James** – *The Lighthouse* (US Edition)

December – **Sue Grafton** – *S is For Silence*

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Albert, Susan Wittig, *The Tale of Holly How: The Cottage Tales of Beatrix Potter*, Berkley Prime Crime. \$23.95. Beatrix is in renovating Hill Top Farm when she happens upon the body of Ben Hornby, a local sheep owner.

Arvin, Reed, *Blood of Angels*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. A gripping thriller about a man trying to out run his own past.

Bell, Ted, *Pirate*, Atria Books. \$25.00. Alexander Hawke must defend the free world from the growing menace of Red China and her secret allies.

Beyer, Marcel, *Spies*, Harcourt. \$24.00. Two young cousins become detectives looking into their own mysterious past in this translation from the German.

Bonner, Hilary, *When the Dead Cry Out*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. When skeletal remains are discovered at the bottom of the ocean, a twenty-seven-year-old mystery comes to light.

Burke, Alafair, *Close Case: A Samantha Kincaid Mystery*, Holt. \$22.00. Kincaid looks into the murder of Percy Crenshaw, a popular investigative reporter who is found bludgeoned to death.

Carmon, Haggai, *Triple Identity*, Steerforth Press. \$24.95. Dan Gordon tracks down white collar criminals and brings them back to the US.

Clark, Mary Jane, *Dancing in the Dark*, St. Martin's Press. \$21.95. An idyllic beach community turns into a killer's hunting ground.

Cohen, Mark, *Bluetick Revenge*, Mysterious Press. \$24.95. Second novel featuring Colorado private eye and former Marine Corps JAG Pepper Keane.

Connors, Rose, *Suborning Perjury*, Scribner. \$24.00. Cape Cod defense attorney Marty Nickerson struggles with morally ambiguous legal issues as she defends two men who are surely guilty...or are they?

Crouch, Blake, *Locked Doors*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. This sequel to *Desert Places* continues the story of suspense writer Andrew Thomas.

Daly, Robert, *The Enemy of God*, Harcourt. \$23.00. Activist priest Frank Redmond falls from a roof in New York. Chief of Internal Affairs Gabe Driscoll and Pulitzer prize-winning journalist Andrew Troy – who were both on the championship swim relay team with Redmond at a Jesuit high school – want to know why.

Delinsky, Barbara, *Looking For Peyton Place*, Scribner. \$24.95. Anne Barnes, best selling author, returns home when her mother dies under questionable circumstances.

Depoy, Phillip, *A Minister's Ghost*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Fever Devlin, a folklorist, is in the Blue Mountain region of the Georgia Appalachians when he spots an apparition at a railroad crossing.

Diamond, Diana, *The Stepmother*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. The stepchildren of a widow are out to get her fortune.

Ford, G.M., *No Man's Land*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. A hostage situation sets off a chain of events that sends Frank Corso on a cross-country journey in the company of a pair of escaped convicts.

Fossum, Karin, *He Who Fears the Wolf*, Harcourt. \$23.00. Inspector Sejer investigates the brutal murder of a woman who lived alone in the middle of the woods.

Hitchcock, Jane Stanton, *One Dangerous Lady*, Miramax. \$23.95. Jo Slater suspects that the wife of Russell Cole, a wealthy art collector, knows more about his disappearance than she lets on.

Huston, Charlie, *Six Bad Things*, Ballantine. \$21.95. Hank Thompson is on the run after accidentally killing a backpacker who threatened him and his family.

King, Stephen, *The Dark Tower VII: The Dark Tower*, Scribner. \$18.95. This completes the Dark Tower series in paperback. Start from the beginning!

Konrath, J.A., *Bloody Mary*, Hyperion. \$22.95. Feisty female police officer Jack Daniels must track down one of the scariest serial killers in recent memory.

Lankford, Terrill Lee, *Blonde Lightning*, Ballantine. \$24.95. Somebody doesn't want the movie *Blonde Lightning* to go into production. Hollywood studio executive Mark Hayes investigates.

Logan, Chuck, *Homefront*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. Nina Pryce, reunited with her estranged husband, relocates to Minnesota where her daughter seems to have picked up her parents' violent proclivities.

MacDonald, Patricia, *Married to a Stranger*, Atria Books. \$24.00. A young newlywed survives a brutal attack and must confront the possibility that her husband tried to kill her.

McInerney, Ralph, *Blood Ties*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A young woman turns to Father Dowling for help in finding her birth parents.

Marston, Edward, *The Malevolent Comedy*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95.

Westfield's Men are plagued by a series of practical jokes, but when one of their actors is murdered, the humor turns sour.

Martini, Steve, *Double Tap*, Putnam. \$26.95. Paul Madriani defends a soldier on trial for murder.

Muller, Marcia, *Cape Perdido*, Mysterious Press. \$24.95. When the water harvesting plans of a North Carolina company threatens the livelihoods of the residents of Cape Perdido in Soledad County, they retaliate.

Reich, Christopher, *The Patriot's Club*, Delacorte Press. \$26.00. A successful Wall Street broker is on the run, framed for crimes he did not commit.

Scoppetone, Sandra, *This Dame for Hire*, Ballantine. \$21.95. Introducing Faye Quick, a private eye in 1943 New York City.

Smith, Julie, *P.I. On a Hot Tin Roof*, Forge. \$24.95. PI Talba Wallis goes undercover as a maid to investigate a shady New Orleans judge. Fourth in series.

Tallman, Shirley, *The Russian Hill Murders*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Nineteenth-century lawyer Sarah Woolson sets out to prove herself in her first criminal trial.

Taylor, Sarah Stewart, *Judgment of the Grave*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Harvard art historian Sweeney St. George investigates the murder of a man wearing Revolutionary War clothing.

Thor, Brad, *Blowback*, Atria Books. \$25.00. When plague breaks out in the United States and Europe, Navy SEAL turned Homeland Security operative Scot Harvath must find out who is responsible.

Trobaugh, Augusta, *The Tea-Olive Bird Watching Society*, Dutton. \$23.95. The women of a small town's bird watching society plan to "eliminate" the husband of one of their members.

Wan, Michelle, *Deadly Slipper*, Doubleday. \$23.95. A literary mystery about a woman's search for her long-missing sister set in the Dordogne region of France.

White, Kate, *Over Her Dead Body*, Warner Books. \$24.95. Mystery set in the cutthroat world of fashion and celebrity magazines, from the editor-in-chief of *Cosmopolitan*.

Sally Owen is a book dealer and was the manager of The Mysterious Bookshop in New York City from 1996 to 2002. You can reach her via e-mail: sallyowen@verizon.net.

Or via mail:

Sally Owen

1825 Foster Avenue, Apt. 2J

Brooklyn, NY 11230

Phone: 718-434-1705

Visit www.owenbookseller.com