

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***LIFE SENTENCES*, Alice Blanchard, Warner Books. \$24.95**

Daisy Hubbard is a scientist trying to find a cure for the rare genetic disease that claimed the life of her brother. Her work is interrupted when her mother tells her that her unstable sister, Anna, is missing from her California home. Daisy heads west where she is informed by the LAPD that a serial killer has confessed to Anna's murder but will only show Daisy where he buried the body. Daisy teams up with detective Jack Makowski and together they follow the killer's twisted logic while trying to unravel the last ten months of Anna's life. Alice Blanchard is a terrific writer and her first novel, *Darkness Peering*, remains one of my favorites. No two books are alike, and I suspect that is why she has not found a wider audience.

***VIXEN*, Ken Bruen, St Martin's Minotaur. \$12.95**

After being disappointed by *The Magdalen Martyrs* earlier this year, I felt it was important that I read this talented author again soon. And this one does not disappoint. We cannot seem to get away from this theme (see below) but Inspector Brant of the Southeast London police squad is investigating a series of lethal explosions across London. What the reader knows, but Brant does not, is that these explosions are being masterminded by a crazed female serial killer who is much closer to Brant than he realizes. This is Bruen in top form. Originally published in hardcover in the UK.

***INCENDIARY*, Chris Cleave, Knopf. \$22.95**

This remarkable novel from first-time author Cleave is in the form of a letter from a distraught woman to Osama Bin Laden. Her husband and son were attending a soccer match in London when a suicide bomber blew up part of the stadium, killing them and a thousand others. She wants to convince Bin Laden to abandon his terror campaign by telling him how it affects one woman whose life is also blown apart. She takes a job to aid in the anti-terrorist effort, becomes involved with an upper-class couple, and, as a new bombing attack threatens, is pushed to acts of desperation. I read this before the 7/7 bombings in London (also, coincidentally, this book's publication date in the UK) and was deeply moved by the protagonist's voice. She is extraordinarily flawed and her ability to cope with the events falters even as she does her part to try and put her city and her life back together again. Some of her asides to Bin Laden made me laugh out loud. Some made me sob. This is gut-wrenching stuff and the story will stay with me for a very long time. I can't imagine how hard it might be to read this now, but read it you should. Bring on the awards!

THE TRUDEAU VECTOR, Juris Jurjevics, Viking. \$24.95

A team of scientists at the Trudeau Research Center are preparing for the long Arctic winter. One, a Russian is picked up by submarine, her tour of duty over. Two are found dead by their colleagues, their pupils gone and their bodies contorted in unnatural positions. Yet another has taken off his protective clothing outdoors and frozen to death. What is going on here? Dr. Jessica Hanley, an American epidemiologist, is summoned to investigate, and a Russian admiral in Moscow is assigned a top-secret mission to locate and retrieve a Russian submarine that has dropped off the radar. Geopolitics, environmental disaster and bioterrorism set in the Arctic! Absolutely not my kind of book. Or so I thought. Once I picked up this first novel, I was unable to put it down until the very last page.

BLOOD OF ANGELS, Michael Marshall, Jove Mass Market Original. \$7.99

This is the third outing for Ward Hopkins, whose life started to spiral out of control when his parents died and he learned of the existence of The Straw Men. It is essential that you start this series from the beginning. What begins in the first book, *The Straw Men*, as an excellent story about the hunt for a serial killer has become, in the second book, *The Upright Man* and here, an epic story of what goes on beneath the surface of ordinary lives. Each book is self contained. Ward Hopkins and his associates hunt for serial killers, and we follow the stories of individuals as they carry on with their lives until those lives are cut short. And those lives, in the hands of this excellent writer, become very important to the reader. But below the surface of these stories is another story – one that Marshall adds a little to with each book. I am shocked that these books have only appeared in soft cover here. *The Upright Man*, second in the series, appeared as *The Lonely Dead* in hardcover in the UK. I hate to be circumspect here with the storyline, but you don't want this series ruined by spoilers.

ON MY READING LIST

STRAIGHT INTO DARKNESS, Faye Kellerman, Warner Books. \$25.95

In 1920s Munich, the body of Anna Gross, a young society wife, is found in the English Gardens. When a second, then a third body is found, homicide detective Axel Berg realizes he's dealing with evil. Is the murderer politically motivated, or is he a lone madman? Or both? As Munich slips into turmoil, overrun by political factions and the rise of Hitler, Detective Berg does not know who to trust, and one simple mistake could be deadly.

MERCY FALLS, William Kent Krueger, Atria Books. \$24.00

Corcoran "Cork" O'Connor, Sheriff of Tamarack County, is called to the Ojibwa reservation for what he thinks is a routine domestic disturbance, only to find himself the intended target of a sniper. Meanwhile Chicago businessman Eddie Jacoby is found dead along the water of Mercy Falls. This is the fifth installment in one of my favorite series.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***TRACE EVIDENCE*, Elizabeth Becka, Hyperion. \$22.95**

On a cold November day in Cleveland Evelyn James, forensic trace evidence expert, is called to the scene of a bizarre crime. The young woman has been drowned, her feet chained and sunk in cement. When a second young victim is found to be a member of a prominent family, the pressure is on to find the murderer. Evelyn suspects that her own teenage daughter has become a pawn in the killer's plans, but she must stay calm and use her skills to reveal the murderer. Becka is a veteran forensic scientist, and this series will join those of Patricia Cornwell and Kathy Reichs.

***THE YOUNG WIDOW*, Cassandra Chan, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

This is the first in a series and introduces Scotland Yard Detective Sergeant Jack Gibbons whose best friend, Philip Bethancourt, likes to tag along on the more interesting cases. Geoffrey Berowne has been poisoned and the prime suspect is his much younger wife, Annette, especially since her two previous husbands also died under suspicious circumstances. But a closer look provides more suspects – Geoffrey's sister-in-law, his son, and his unhappy daughter-in-law. When the widow turns her charms on Jack, Philip is alarmed. Can they solve the case before Jack becomes the next victim?

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE KILLINGS OF STANLEY KETCHEL*, James Carlos Blake, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95**

Blake tells the story of Stanley Ketchel, the ragtime-era middleweight boxing champion whose brief and meteoric life blazed with violence and tragedy in and out of the ring. Blake's novels about American anti-heroes in which he blends fact and fiction are addictive.

***NO COUNTRY FOR OLD MEN*, Cormac McCarthy, Knopf. \$26.00**

Llewellyn Moss, hunting near the Rio Grande, find men shot dead, heroin, and more than \$2 million in cash. He takes the money, but it is only after two more men are murdered that Sheriff Bell realizes that Moss and his young wife are in need of protection. Actually, this does appear to be a mystery of sorts. But in any case, a new novel from McCarthy is a thrilling event.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***THE DEATH OF ACHILLES*, Boris Akunin, Weidenfeld & Nicolson**

Erast Fandorin returns to Moscow after an absence of six years. When his old friend General Sobolev is found dead in his hotel room, Fandorin suspects foul play.

BACK TO BOLOGNA, Michael Dibdin, Faber & Faber

When the corpse of the owner of a local football team is found shot and stabbed, Police Inspector Aurelio Zen is called to Bologna to oversee the investigation.

QUIET VENDETTA, Roger Jon Ellory, Orion

When the daughter of the Governor of Louisiana disappears in the heart of New Orleans, the cops react quickly. But when the kidnapper calls, the case becomes bizarre: he doesn't want money, he wants time alone with a minor functionary from the Washington-based Organized Crime Task Force.

KILLING FOR ENGLAND, Iain McDowall, Piatkus

Chief Inspector Jacobsen and D.S. Kerr are on leave when the body of a young black man is fished out of the river. The victim's cousin, an investigative journalist, thinks it was a racially-motivated murder and when he turns up dead too Jacobsen and Kerr are faced with a baffling double murder.

COLLECTING

I've been looking through some of the books I bought this year to add to my collection and I'm feeling pretty smug. Here are highlights:

First Novels from the UK (one of my favorite collecting categories)

1. **Christopher Cleave** – *Incendiary*, Chatto & Windus. A funny and heartbreaking letter to Osama Bin Laden from a woman who has lost her family in a terrorist bombing. The hardcover edition was limited to 500 copies. (See page 1 for my review.)
2. **Charlie Higson** – *SilverFin*, Puffin. First in a series featuring the young James Bond. If you bought this early, you have a copy with the printing error. This has become very collectible.
3. **Stuart MacBride** – *Cold Granite*, HarperCollins. Set in Glasgow. This author is being compared to Ian Rankin.
4. **Sophia McDougall** – *Romanitas*, Orion. A slave waits to be crucified; a gang of fugitives hides out in the Pyrenees; the world watches the funeral of the Imperial family's most glamorous couple on giant screens in every city. This is the Roman Empire. Now.
5. **Martin O'Brien** - *Jacquot and the Waterman*, Headline. Introduces Chief Inspector Daniel Jacquot of the Marseilles Judiciaire. Print run of 800 copies. Prices for this are already through the roof.

6. **Blood Eagle** – *Craig Russell*, Hutchinson. Introduces Jan Fabel – half-Scottish, half-German – a detective working in Hamburg where a diabolical killer is on the loose.
7. **Frank Tallis** – *Mortal Mischief*, Century. Introduces detective Max Lieberman.
8. **James Twining** - *Double Eagle*, HarperCollins. A numismatic mystery introducing art thief Tom Kirk.

Overlooked Books (I like to think that the reading/collecting public will catch on soon)

1. **Christopher Coake** – *We're In Trouble*, Harcourt. Seven stories from Coake, and every one a gem!
2. **Don Winslow** – *Power of the Dog*, Knopf. A sprawling novel about the war on drugs from the 1970s to the 1990s. If you've read this, you are already a convert.
3. **Scott Wolven** – *Controlled Burn*, Scribner. Short stories from this first-time author. A terrific collection.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Adair, Cherry, *Hot Ice*, Ballantine. \$19.95. Taylor Kincaid, jewel thief, is hunted down by counter-terror agent Huntington St. John. Serious sparks start to fly.

Aird, Catherine, *Hole in One*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95. Detective Chief Inspector C.D. Sloan investigates murder on the links.

Anderson, Sheryl J., *Killer Cocktail*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Big Apple fashion writer Molly Forrester heads out to the Hamptons for a wedding. When the bride-to-be is drowned, Molly is once again up to her neck in murder.

Bannister, Jo, *Breaking Faith*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Brodie Farrell is involved in murder when the house she finds for a famous rock musician reveals the body of a young woman.

Beaton, M.C., *The Perfect Dragon*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95. Agatha Raisin investigates a cheating wife, but soon she's investigating murder.

Bernays, Anne, *Trophy House*, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00. The struggle over prime real estate propels one woman into chaos and threatens the tranquility of what appears to be her perfect life.

Bowen, Rhys, *Evan Blessed*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.94. Constable Evans' search for a missing hiker places his fiancée in the path of a killer.

Brown, Rita Mae, *The Hunt Ball*, Ballantine. \$24.95. A new tale of murder and social graces in Brown's foxhunting series.

Brown, Sandra, *Chill Factor*, Simon & Schuster. \$25.95. A successful magazine publisher is trapped in her remote cabin with a man who may be a serial killer.

- Craft, Michael, *Desert Summer***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Claire Gray is directing *Rebecca* at Desert Arts College in Palm Springs when murder interferes.
- Daheim, Mary, *Dead Man Docking***, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. A Bed-and-Breakfast mystery.
- Delinsky, Barbara, *Looking for Peyton Place***, Scribner. \$24.95. Small-town secrets and deadly corruption – all inspired by Grace Metalious and her book, *Peyton Place*.
- Ellis, Bret Easton, *Lunar Park***, Knopf. \$25.00. A once-best-selling author, now a family man, struggles to defend his family as all around him insist that his concerns are rooted in substance abuse and egomania.
- Ford, Jeffrey, *The Girl in the Glass***, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Thomas Schell, a con man posing as a spiritual medium during the Great Depression, volunteers to help find the kidnapped child of a wealthy couple who are true believers in the spirit world.
- Frommer, Sara Hoskinson, *Death Climbs A Tree***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Joan Spencer, manager of the local Civic Symphony, must defend her son against suspicion of murder.
- Garwood, Julie, *Slow Burn***, Ballantine. \$25.95. Kate McKenna has several brushes with death. Are they accidents or does someone want Kate dead?
- Gerritson, Tess, *Vanish***, Ballantine. \$24.95. Working against a madman's murderous timetable, an FBI agent battles to protect his pregnant wife: Boston homicide detective Jane Rizzoli.
- Hart, Ellen, *The Iron Girl***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Sleuth Jane Lawless has been mourning the death of her lover for years. Now she must tackle questions surrounding Christine's death.
- Higgins, Jack, *Without Mercy***, Putnam. \$25.95. Sean Dillon and his colleagues swear vengeance on whoever killed one of their number.
- Jance, J.A., *Long Time Gone***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. When a middle-aged nun unexpectedly recalls the grisly details of an unsolved murder she witnessed as a child, J.P. Beaumont gets the case.
- Keizer, Gregg, *Midnight Plague***, Putnam. \$24.95. As the secret countdown to the Normandy invasion gets under way, a fishing boat runs aground on British shores with a hold full of passengers, all dead from a mysterious illness.
- Kellogg, Marne Davis, *Perfect***, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Kick Keswick, international jewel thief, is drawn back into the glamorous world of jewels.
- Logue, Mary, *Poison Heart***, Ballantine. \$23.95. Deputy Sheriff Claire Watkins investigates several suspicious deaths in Fort St. Antoine, Wisconsin.
- Long, Jeff, *The Fall***, Atria Books. \$24.00. A chilling story of obsession and revenge set on treacherous El Capitan in Yosemite National Park.
- Maron, Margaret, *Rituals of the Season***, Mysterious Press. \$23.95. Judge Deborah Knott, about to be married, is confronted with a murder.
- Meyer, Deon, *Dead At Daybreak***, Little Brown. \$23.95. An ex-cop has just seven days to solve a seemingly unsolvable crime. Set in South Africa.
- Perry, Anne, *Angels in the Gloom***, Ballantine. \$25.95. Third in the World War I series.
- Posadas, Carmen, *The Last Resort***, Random House. \$23.95. A hilarious whodunit set at a luxurious Moroccan resort.

Rand, Naomi, *It's Raining Men*, HarperCollins. \$23.95. Emma Price's boss and close friend, Dawn Prescott, is dead. The police are certain it's a crime of passion, but Emma knows better.

Reuben, Shelly, *Tabula Rasa*, Harcourt. \$24.00. Arson investigator Billy Nightingale and his brother-in-law, Officer Sebastian Bly, are called in to investigate a house fire that killed two young children.

Robb, J.D., *Origin In Death*, Putnam. \$23.95. Detective Eve Dallas tracks a cold-blooded killer of a father and son. Set in New York City in 2059.

Rowland, Laura Joh, *The Assassin's Touch*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. In Japan in 1695 there is a series of sudden deaths among high-ranking officials. Sano Ichiro is asked to investigate.

Sampson, Catherine, *Out of Mind*, Mysterious Press. \$23.95. Robin Ballantyne tracks a kidnapper and ends up on the trail of a killer.

Saul, John, *Perfect Nightmare*, Ballantine. \$25.95. A search for a group of missing people, each of them entangled in the web of an obsessed madman.

Stewart, Mariah, *Dead End*, Ballantine. \$19.95. FBI profiler Annie McCall takes on a vicious foe bent on hiding his murderous secrets.

Wait, Lea, *Shadows at The Spring Show*, Scribner. \$24.00. Maggie Summer, antique print dealer and American History Professor, is once again involved in murder.

Williamson, Penelope, *The Accident*, Warner Books. \$24.95. Micaela Mahoney, blinded in a car accident years ago is raped. When her boyfriend, imprisoned fifteen years ago, is released, the horror is only just beginning.

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