

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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WELCOME TO BOOKAHOLIC'S FOURTH YEAR!!!!!! And I'm still having fun!

*Sally Owen*

## WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

### ***GENTLEMEN AND PLAYERS*, Joanne Harris, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Set at St. Oswald's School for Boys in England, this extraordinary novel tells of one year in that venerable institution. Roy Straitley, the Classics teacher, is, after 30 years, considering retirement. However, as the new term gets under way, a number of perplexing incidents begin to plague the staff and students. These small annoyances soon escalate to murder, and Straitley begins to see his beloved school unraveling at the hands of a formidable opponent – a master player whose strategy has been planned to the final move. This is the first novel I have read by this author. It is beautifully written and quite harrowing. Couldn't put it down.

### ***SPEAK OF THE DEVIL*, Richard Hawke, Random House. \$21.95**

This first mystery introduces PI Fritz Malone, the bastard son of a late and much loved NYPD commissioner. Fritz lives on the Upper West Side of Manhattan and, out buying bagels on Thanksgiving morning, he finds himself in the middle of a gun battle when someone starts mowing down the parade participants and spectators. It isn't long before he's up to his neck in dirty city politics. This is a witty and snappily written debut with an engaging hero who is obviously going to be part of series, and a very good one, I think, although halfway through the book, this particular plot gets bogged down with too much detail. However, the characters are well fleshed out and I look forward to another entry here, especially if Hawke keeps placing scenes in great New York venues like the Raccoon Bar (just across the street from the new location of The Mysterious Bookshop!).

### ***SACRED CUT*, David Hewson, Delacorte Press. \$22.00**

This is fast becoming one of my favorite series. Set in Rome, present time, this third outing for Nic Costa and his colleagues opens with a murder at the Pantheon during a snowstorm, unusual for Rome even in winter. A woman's body lies under the great dome with a symbol carved on her back which, when the points are joined, looks remarkably as if the perpetrator was trying to copy da Vinci's sketch of the Vitruvian man, a mystical symbol which some believe to represent a union between the physical and spiritual world. But as the police, and soon the FBI, investigate further, they discover that this isn't the first time the murderer has struck. Nor are the murders

confined to Rome. This is a more complex series than those of Donna Leon or Michael Dibdin. It is also much darker and contains more historical intrigue.

***THE COLORADO KID*, Stephen King, Hard Case Crime. \$5.99**

On an island off the coast of Maine, a man is found dead. He's carrying no identification and only the work of a pair of local newspapermen and a graduate student in forensics turns up any clues. It is more than a year before the man is identified but the more they discover about him, the less they know. Let me spoil this for you right now. You will never find out why this man died. There is, as they say, no there there. If you want to read this latest story by, arguably, one of our greatest storytellers, it should be for the journey rather than the destination. King, in his afterword, has anticipated this reaction. He seems to be arguing not only that it is better to travel hopefully than to arrive, but also that he has discharged his responsibility as a storyteller. I'm not so sure.

***THIRTEEN STEPS DOWN*, Ruth Rendell, Crown. \$25.00**

Mix Cellini is an obsessive fellow. He's superstitious about the number 13, the number of steps from the landing to his room in the house in Notting Hill where he lives. He's also fascinated by 10 Rillington Place, the address close by where the notorious John Christie committed a series of murders fifty years before, and he spends a lot of time hunting down books about the subject. And then there's supermodel Nerissa Nash. Mix keeps a poster of her in his bedroom and, when he discovers where she lives, he begins to stalk her. Mix's landlady, Gwendolen Chawcer, has lived in this house for more than fifty years and knew John Christie. When Mix learns of this, Gwendolen too becomes part of his obsessive behavior. But Gwendolen has some obsessions of her own. This is Rendell at her best.

## ON MY READING LIST

***THE CAT DANCERS*, P.T. Deutermann, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95**

Two men rob a North Carolina gas station, murder the attendants, and incinerate bystanders. They are quickly caught but a judge dismisses the case because the suspects were not read their rights. Soon after, an internet video shows one of the murderers being executed in a homemade electric chair. Lieutenant Cam Richter, already under fire from the victims' families, is now under pressure to find a vigilante. His search leads him to a group who photograph wild mountain lions in their dens. Deutermann is a fine writer and I can't wait to read this tale of revenge.

***S IS FOR SILENCE*, Sue Grafton, Putnam. \$26.95**

Thirty-four years ago, Violet Sullivan disappeared from the annual Fourth of July fireworks party. Some said she had run off with a lover, some said she had been murdered by her husband. But her daughter, Daisy, who was seven at the time, wants closure. This is a Kinsey Millhone mystery but I understand that Grafton has taken a new approach to telling the tale. This is probably a good thing.

**ASH AND BONE, John Harvey, Harcourt. \$25.00**

Retired Detective Inspector Frank Elder now lives in Cornwall with his waking nightmare: the rape and abduction of his seventeen-year-old daughter which he feels he should have prevented. Meanwhile, in London, the takedown of a violent criminal goes badly, and Detective Sergeant Maddy Birch is uneasy about the reasons why. Maddy and Frank had a brief and clumsy encounter a year before and now their lives will connect again when Elder is persuaded out of retirement to find that a cold case has a present-day impact. This is the second in the Frank Elder series.

**TURNING ANGEL, Greg Iles, Scribner. \$25.95**

Penn Cage, lawyer, and Drew Elliott, the doctor who saved Penn's life in a hiking accident when they were boys, are two of the most respected citizens of Natchez, Mississippi. Both sit on the school board of their alma mater, St. Stephen's Prep, and they along with the entire community are shocked when a young female student's body is found near the Mississippi River. Penn is even more shocked when he discovers that Drew had been having a sexual relationship with the student and may be accused of her murder. Penn Cage was introduced in Iles's book, *The Quiet Game*, which I believe is his best work, so I'm looking forward to this.

**THE MOON TUNNEL, Jim Kelly, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

Journalist Philip Dryden is observing an archaeological dig at a former POW camp when the excavators discover the skeleton of a man trapped in an underground tunnel. What nobody can explain is the bullet hole in the forehead and the fact that he was obviously crawling in, not out. This is the third in the excellent series featuring Philip Dryden.

**GRANDMASTER, Warren Murphy & Molly Cochran, Forge. \$14.95**

Two men, born on the same day, are driven to oppose each other. Justin Gilead and Alexander Zharkov first meet as ten-year-old chess prodigies and understand that only one of them may be the Grandmaster. Gilead grows up to be a superb athlete, an American, a genius, and a spy. Zharkov is a master strategist, head of the feared secret service agency Nichevo, and a determined, ambitious man. Otto Penzler and the Mystery Writers of America reprint this winner of the Edgar Allan Poe Award for Best Paperback Original in 1985.

**HAVE MERCY ON US ALL, Fred Vargas, Simon & Schuster. \$14.00**

This paperback original introduces us to a best-selling mystery writer hailed as the next Henning Mankell. When Joss Le Guern begins to receive anonymous messages that warn of the imminent onset of the Black Death, he brings them to the attention of bumbling but brilliant Commissar Adamsberg. Strange marks historically believed to ward off the plague begin to appear on the doors of several buildings and when a flea-bitten corpse with plague-like symptoms is found, Paris begins to panic.

## NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE REASONS I WON'T BE COMING*, Elliot Perlman, Riverhead Books.  
\$24.95**

This is Perlman's second book (his first was *Seven Types of Ambiguity*) - a collection of nine stories exploring the complex worlds of lovers, poets, lawyers, immigrants, students, and murderers. Perlman is a writer to watch.

## NEWS FROM THE UK

***REDEMPTION*, Richard Burke, Orion.**

Matthew's wife, Charlotte, is kidnapped and Matthew is convinced the kidnapping is connected to his job as a prison governor. He turns to Mark, an ex-prisoner, who has underworld contacts.

***THE ART OF DYING*, Vena Cork, Headline.**

Rose Thorn is enjoying the opening of her late husband's memorial art exhibition, but what is about to happen is more traumatic than she could have ever anticipated.

***CUP OF GHOSTS*, Paul Doherty, Headline.**

The first in a new series featuring a female physician, based on a true historical character, Mathilda of Westminster, who, by 1322, was considered the finest doctor in London.

## THIS AND THAT

Some awards you may have missed:

### **2005 Hammett Prize**

***Prince of Thieves* – Chuck Hogan**

### **2005 Anthony Awards**

**Best Novel: *Blood Hollow* – William Kent Krueger**

**Best First Novel: *Dating Dead Men* – Harley Jane Kozak**

**Best Paperback Original: *Twisted City* – Jason Starr**

### **2005 Macavity Awards**

**Best Novel: *The Killing of the Tinkers* – Ken Bruen**

**Best First Novel: *Dating Dead Men* – Harley Jane Kozak**

### **2005 Barry Awards**

**Best Novel: *The Enemy* – Lee Child**

**Best First Novel:** *The Shadow of the Wind* – Carlos Ruiz Zafon

**Best British Crime Novel:** *Flesh & Blood* – John Harvey

**Best Thriller:** *Rain Storm* – Barry Eisler

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

**Bland, Eleanor Taylor, *A Dark and Deadly Deception*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95.** Marti MacAlister investigates the death of a Hollywood actress.

**Collins, Max Allan, *Road to Paradise*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95.** Third in the Trilogy featuring Michael Satariano.

**Curzon, Clare, *Last to Leave*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95.** A Superintendent Mike Yeadings mystery.

**Dymmo, Michael Allen, *White Tiger*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95.** In 1972, John Thinnes was an MP in Vietnam and the White Tiger was a vicious criminal. Now the White Tiger has killed on the streets of Chicago and Detective Thinnes investigates.

**Harrison, Janis, *Bindweed*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95.** Florist Bretta Solomon searches for the brutal killer of a harmless young man.

**Harrod-Eagles, Cynthia, *Dear Departed*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95.** Detective Bill Slider hunts down a serial killer and discovers there may be more than one killer at work.

**Holland, David, *The Devil's Game*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95.** Murder and intrigue in a small nineteenth-century English town.

**Kisor, Henry, *A Venture Into Murder*, Forge. \$23.95.** Porcupine County in Michigan's Upper Peninsula has a secret, and those who try to uncover it usually wind up dead.

**Miscione, Lisa, *Smoke*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95.** Crime writer Lydia Strong and P.I. Jeff Mark look for a young reporter who disappears while investigating her brother's death.

**Murphy, Shirley Rousseau, *Cat Breaking Free*, HarperCollins. \$24.95.** Featuring Joe Grey, Feline P.I., and his friends.

**Neel, Janet, *Ticket to Ride*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95.** Against her better judgment, Jules Carlisle, solicitor, takes on a case she is unqualified to handle.

**Pineiro, R.J., *Havoc*, Forge. \$27.95.** CIA Officer Tom Grant is pulled out of retirement to investigate a high-tech robbery at United States Nanotechnologies.

**Waiwai, Lono, *Wiley's Refrain*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95.** Wiley chases a killer through the mean streets of Hawaii.

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