

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***DOPE*, Sara Gran, Putnam. \$21.95**

This second novel from Gran is a little gem. Set in 1950s New York, it tells the story of Josephine (Joe) Flannigan who, after a lifetime on drugs, is finally clean and feeling positive about the direction in which her life is headed. She is approached by a suburban couple whose daughter, a student at Barnard, has disappeared into the world of drugs. Who better than Joe to find her? And the couple offers her \$1000 to do so. As Joe descends into the world she left behind, where addicts are referred to as "dope fiends," she discovers that the temptations are still there and that the case she's working on is not as simple as it seems. This is a noir pastiche designed to be read in one sitting, and Joe is an engaging if naïve guide.

***DEAD SIMPLE*, Peter James, Carroll & Graf. \$24.00**

Here's the set-up in this heart-pounding novel: Michael Harrison, a good looking fellow, known to be a prankster, is about to get married. And that's just the excuse his friends need to take him out for a night of drinking. At least, Michael thinks that's what his friends have in mind. But payback for all the jokes is also on the agenda, so when Michael is locked in a coffin with a dirty magazine, a walkie-talkie, and a tiny breathing tube, his friends feel this is only fitting for all the hazing they have suffered at his hands. They drive on to the next pub, fully intending to return after a couple of beers, only they never make it. They are killed in a drunk driving accident right after leaving Michael buried alive. This could have been just a novel about getting to Michael before he dies of dehydration, but it turns out to be so much more. Hang on to your pacemaker. This is intense.

***A LITTLE WHITE DEATH*, John Lawton, Atlantic Monthly. \$23.00**

This is one of my favorite series and I'm delighted that it is being published in the US. Each book features Frederic Troy of Scotland Yard and takes place at a pivotal time in the history of England. In this outing, the year is 1963 and Troy is a Commander, the Yard's senior detective. He is also recovering from a bout of tuberculosis. London at this time is beginning to swing. A new band called the Beatles has emerged, Carnaby Street is the center of fashion, and the Labor government of Harold Wilson will soon be swept into power. But there's also scandal. In Moscow, a British agent is trapped, and at the country home of a Harley Street doctor, the famous and the infamous mingle unaware of the public repercussions of their private actions. Those who know England's history at this time will recognize the Profumo Affair, as it was known, and Lawton has managed to brilliantly capture in a fictional way the scandal that rocked the government; he

powerfully evokes that time for those of us who remember it. Each of Lawton's books can be read alone, and you'll want to read them all.

***THE DEAD YARD*, Adrian McKinty, Scribner. \$24.00**

In his third novel, McKinty brings back Michael Forsythe from *Dead I Well May Be*. Michael has been in the witness protection program ever since the events of that novel, but he cannot resist attending a soccer match in Spain, and when a riot breaks out he is herded up with the rest of the hooligans. That's when British Intelligence steps in and makes him an offer he can't refuse. Michael can be extradited to Mexico to serve time for a prison break, or he can infiltrate an IRA sleeper cell in the United States. He reluctantly agrees and soon he's crossing and double-crossing some of the most dangerous criminals not yet behind bars. McKinty is a terrific writer, but I found this excellent novel diluted by Michael's love interest in the daughter of his enemy. While this is essential to some of the plot elements, Michael's real emotion for the woman slows down the action in an otherwise crackling story.

***KILL ME*, Stephen White, Dutton. \$25.95**

The narrator of this story has everything. He's a billionaire with a happy marriage and a dare-devil lifestyle. And it is that lifestyle that he begins to question when a friend of his goes into a coma after a deep-sea diving accident. Which of us has not asked, at what point do I no longer want to live? When should the plug be pulled? Our hero has the money and the contacts to ensure that he can set boundaries on the quality of his life. He is put in touch with a group which he calls The Death Angels and, after setting those parameters, signing the contract, and handing over a million dollars, he continues with his life. Of course, nothing goes as it should. He exceeds those parameters at the most inconvenient time but there's no going back, so he must outwit and outrun the Death Angels. This feels like a familiar set up, but what blew me away is the extraordinary writing of White (whom I have not read before) and the way he constructs this story so that it is almost impossible to put down. White usually writes with Dr. Alan Gregory, a psychiatrist, at the center of his stories, and Gregory does make an appearance here. Do not let any assumption that you know what is going to happen stop you from reading this excellent thriller.

ON MY READING LIST

***THE LAST CATO*, Matilde Asensi, Ecco. \$24.95**

In the vaults of Vatican City, Dr. Ottavia Salina finds clues hidden in an ancient manuscript found in the crypt of an Egyptian monastery. This leads to her discovery of the existence of an ancient brotherhood that for hundreds of years has kept the secret of the true location of the Holy Cross. With the help of Dante's masterpiece *The Divine Comedy*, Dr. Salina embarks on an journey that takes her to the capitals of the ancient world. Let's get used to it: Biblio mysteries, especially those harking back to long ago

times, are the livres du jour! I will always try them. The author is Spanish and this is her first book to be translated into English.

***THE OLD WINE SHADES*, Martha Grimes, Viking. \$25.95**

Richard Jury is drinking in a London pub (of course) when a stranger sits next to him and begins to spin a complicated story about a good friend of his whose wife and son and dog all disappeared one day as they were viewing property in Surrey. As he tells his story over three successive nights, Jury becomes fascinated with the nine-month disappearance of this family. Then a body is found.

***THE ETHICAL ASSASSIN*, David Liss, Ballantine. \$24.95**

While working as a door-to-door salesman in a South Florida trailer park, seventeen-year-old Lem Altick witnesses a double assassination. Face-to-face with the killer, Lem realizes he will be an accessory to murder unless he cooperates with the assassin, an intelligent extremist who is either a reckless animal rights activist or visionary vigilante for social justice. Liss is always interesting.

***THE REMEDY*, Michelle Lovric, Regan Books. \$25.95**

Set against the backdrops of Venice and London in the 18th Century, this novel weaves together the stories of Venetian actress Mimosina Dolcezza and the dark prince of London's medical underworld, Valentine Greatrakes. Their love affair begins on the eve of a murder and moves forward based on dangerous secrets and elaborate lies. This novel has already been long listed for the UK's prestigious Orange Prize for Fiction.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***CARVED IN BONE*, Jefferson Bass, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Dr. Bill Brockton, forensic anthropologist, is founder of the Body Farm, the laboratory devoted to the study of human decomposition. When an almost perfectly preserved corpse is discovered in East Tennessee's mountains, Brockton is called in but what that corpse reveals only deepens the mystery, and he's not getting any help from the locals who don't appreciate meddling outsiders. This first in a series was penned by Dr. Bill Bass, who founded the University of Tennessee's Body Farm, and Jon Jefferson, a journalist, science writer, and documentary filmmaker.

***HOLMES ON THE RANGE*, Steve Hockensmith, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95**

Big Red and Old Red Amlingmeyer sign on as ranch hands at the Bar-VR cattle spread in Montana in 1893. Their life is hard and the pay is poor, but they spend their evenings around a comfortable campfire scouring *Harper's Weekly* for stories about the famous Sherlock Holmes. When another ranch hand is murdered, Old Red sees the perfect opportunity to employ his Holmes-inspired "deducifyin" skills and sets out to solve the

case. This original story inspired by the world's greatest detective is getting all sorts of advance praise.

***THE DEADLY EMBRACE*, Robert J. Mrazek, Viking. \$24.95**

Second Lieutenant Elizabeth "Lisa" Marantz arrives in a London on fire from a massive Luftwaffe bombing attack. She is there to join the staff of SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) as they prepare for D-Day. She teams with former New York homicide detective Major Sam Taggart when two of her co-workers, both mistresses of high-ranking generals, suspiciously turn up dead. This novel by the former Congressman is a must for us WWII buffs.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CRIME*, Oliver Cyriax, Overlook Press. \$40.00**

This volume surveys the facts, history, and science of crime rather than the media coverage surrounding major criminal cases. The author offers new assessments of major cases such as the Peterson case, the "Dingo" baby, and O.J. Simpson, together with new evidence from unsolved crimes – the deaths of Monroe, Kennedy, and Jimmy Hoffa. This is the Encyclopedia's first update in ten years.

***STRIVERS ROW*, Kevin Baker, HarperCollins. \$26.95**

The story of two young men in World War II-era Harlem. The Rev. Jonah Dove is the son of a legendary Harlem minister (and the grandson of *Paradise Alley*'s Billy Dove) and Malcolm Little, who will rename himself Malcolm X, a teenage hustler from Michigan by way of Boston. Their paths cross more than once in the wartime city of New York.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***GARDENS OF THE DEAD*, William Brodrick, Little Brown**

At last! Brodrick's second book, a follow-up to *The Sixth Lamentation*. Can't wait.

***A CHILD'S GAME*, John Connor, Orion**

In a Leeds penthouse, intruders douse a terrified victim with petrol, set him alight, and throw him from the ninth floor. DS Pete Bains investigates.

***GRAVE TATTOO*, Val McDermid, HarperCollins**

There is a rumor in the Lake District that Fletcher Christian was not murdered on Pitcairn Island in 1793, but returned to his native Cumbria. He wrote down his story and gave it to his friend, William Wordsworth. That manuscript remained hidden until now, when graduate student Matthew Kendal stirs up long-forgotten memories. Before long, murder stalks the manuscript.

RATCATCHER, James McGee, HarperCollins

Set in Regency London, this is the first in a series of historical thrillers featuring Bow Street Runner Matthew Hawkswood.

ALL SHE EVER WANTED, Patrick Redmond, Simon & Schuster

Christina Ryan had a tormented childhood and vowed that she would always be strong and in control. Love is for the weak and needy. So when love does enter her life, it threatens her – and nothing can ever be allowed to do that!

THOUSAND LIES, Laura Wilson, Orion

Investigative reporter Amy Vaughan looks into the 1987 Shand Case. Back then, Sheila Shand was given a suspended sentence for killing her father when it emerged that she and her mother and sister were subjected to an abusive reign of terror. What Amy finds is that there was more to the murder than the police ever unearthed.

THIS AND THAT

The title of Dan Brown's new book is *The Solomon Key* featuring our Founding Fathers, the history of the Masons, and the secret architecture of the nation's capital. No publication date yet!

EDGAR NOMINATIONS 2006**Best Novel**

The Lincoln Lawyer – Michael Connelly

Red Leaves – Thomas H. Cook

Vanish – Tess Gerritsen

Drama City – George Pelecanos

Citizen Vince – Jess Walter

Best First Novel by an American Author

Die A Little – Megan Abbott

Immoral – Brian Freeman

Run the Risk – Scott Frost

Hide Your Eyes – Alison Gaylin

Officer Down – Theresa Schwegel

Best Paperback Original

Homicide My Own – Anne Argula

The James Deans – Reed Farrel Coleman

Girl in the Glass – Jeffrey Ford

Kiss Her Good Bye – Allan Guthrie

Six Bad Things – Charlie Huston

You'll find other categories listed on the Mystery Writers of America's website (<http://www.mysterywriters.org/>).

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Adam, Paul, *The Rainaldi Quartet*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. An elderly violin-maker is mysteriously murdered in the quiet Italian countryside. The investigations takes his friends into the dark corners of Venice and Milan and across Europe to discover the truth of a centuries-old legend.

Allen, Conrad, *Murder on the Oceanic*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Featuring George Porter Dillman and Genevieve Masfield, shipboard detectives.

Atherton, Nancy, *Aunt Dimity and the Deep Blue Sea*, Viking. \$22.95. Lori brings in her Aunt Dimity when she suspects that locals on a remote Scottish island are making a fortune running an illegal smuggling operation.

Beaton, M.C., *Death of a Dreamer*, Mysterious Press. \$23.95. Hamish Macbeth is on the trail of a killer with a penchant for poison.

Born, James O., *Escape Clause*, Putnam. \$25.95. Agent Bill Tasker looks into an inmate homicide at Manatee Correctional Prison.

Bowen, Peter, *Nails*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Gabriel Du Pre hunts for a mysterious kidnapped girl – who may or may not be in real danger.

Brown, Rita Mae, *Sour Puss*, Bantam. \$25.00. Mary Minor "Harry" Haristeen remarries her ex-husband and becomes embroiled in the murder of a visiting professor.

Dickinson, David, *Death Called to the Bar*, Carroll & Graf. \$25.00. Lord Francis Powerscourt investigates the deaths of barristers at London's Inns of Court.

Eriksson, Kjell, *The Princess of Burundi*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A morning jog turns deadly when a runner finds a mutilated body in the snow. Winner of the Swedish Academy Crime Writer's Award for Best Novel.

Eversz, Robert, *Zero the Bone*, Simon & Schuster. \$23.00. Ex-con tabloid photographer Nina Zero receives a snuff film. The victim is one of Nina's young models.

Ferrigno, Robert, *Prayers for the Assassin*, Scribner. \$24.95. Thriller set in a futuristic Islamic America where fear of terrorist violence is everywhere.

Gardner, John, *Troubled Midnight*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. In 1943 the British are getting ready to invade Europe. Two badly battered bodies are discovered in a small Berkshire town, one that of a commanding officer in a nearby airport, the other the wife of a local military hero.

Geagley, Brad, *Day of the False King*, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00. Set in 1150 B.C., this is the second outing for Egypt's hard-bitten detective Semerket, Clerk of Investigations and Secrets.

Gorman, Ed & Greenberg, Martin H., *The Adventure of the Missing Detective and 25 of the Year's Finest Crime and Mystery Stories*, Carroll & Graf. \$16.95. Well, the title seems to say it all

- Greeley, Andrew M., *Irish Crystal***, Forge. \$24.95. Psychic Nuala Anne McGrail gets involved when a car bombing strikes the Curran family.
- Haig, Brian, *Man in the Middle***, Warner Books. \$25.95. Army lawyer Sean Drummond is caught between duty to Washington's elite and the soldiers in Iraq.
- Kadare, Ismail, *The Successor***, Little Brown. \$24.00. The designated successor to Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha is shot. Was it suicide or murder?
- Kaminsky, Stuart M., *Terror Town: An Abe Lieberman Mystery***, Forge. \$23.95. Lieberman investigates the murder of a young mother in a South Side Chicago neighborhood.
- Kava, Alex, *A Necessary Evil***, Mira. \$21.95. Maggie O'Dell is sent to investigate a series of ritualistic murders.
- Kristeva, Julia, *Murder in Byzantium***, Columbia University Press. \$29.50. Stephanie Delacour, a Paris journalist, covers the hunt for a serial killer in the city of Santa Varvara. The author is a noted French critic.
- Kurland, Michael, *Empress of India***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Professor Moriarty is suspected of taking a shipment of gold from a cargo ship but he's innocent. And he sets out to prove it.
- Koryta, Michael, *Sorrow's Anthem***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95. Ed Gradduk is on the run from the police who want him for arson and murder. He seeks help from his best friend, PI Lincoln Perry.
- Lescroart, John, *The Hunt Club***, Dutton. \$26.95. A federal judge is found shot to death, together with the body of his mistress. Homicide inspector Devin Juhle discovers that the judge had powerful enemies.
- Lewis, Roy, *Grave Error***, Carroll & Graf. \$25.00. Featuring Northumberland archeologist Arnold Landon.
- Lynds, Gayle, *The Last Spymaster***, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. A master spy escapes from his cell and Agent Elaine Cunningham discovers this is more than just an impossible escape by an old spook.
- Nelscott, Kris, *Days of Rage***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. As racial tensions mount during the 1969 trial of the Chicago Eight, PI Smokey Dalton is keeping a low profile with his son Jimmy, who knows a dark secret about the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.
- Patterson, James, *The Fifth Horseman***, Little Brown. \$27.95. The members of the Women's Murder club face an unspeakable menace.
- Pawel, Rebecca, *The Summer Snow***, Soho Press. \$23.00. Set in fascist Spain shortly after WW II, this is Edgar-winner Pawel's fourth mystery featuring Gardia Lieutenant Carlos Tejada.
- Roberts, Gillian, *A Hole in Juan***, Ballantine. \$23.95. Featuring Philadelphia school teacher Amanda Pepper.
- Robotham, Michael, *Lost***, Doubleday. \$24.95. In the follow-up to *Suspect*, homicide detective Vincent Ruiz fights amnesia and the suspicions of his own department to get to the bottom of a twisted mystery.
- Satterthwait, Walter, *Perfection***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Sarasota Police Detectives Sophia Tregaskis and Jim Fallon must track a killer who kills obese women in a highly ritualistic fashion.

Strick, Wesley, *Out There in the Dark*, St. Martin's. \$23.95. Mike Roarke, a Hollywood detective, is hired by a studio head to make sure a young star is a suitable suitor for his daughter. Set during WWII.

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.

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