

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***NIGHT OF THE JAGUAR*, Michael Gruber, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Jimmy Paz is Miami's expert on the deeply weird and in this, his third outing, he will be tested to his limits. In the jungles of Colombia, a priest is murdered, but before he dies, or maybe it is after he dies, he tells an Indian shaman a story. That shaman travels to Miami where Cuban-American businessmen begin to die in a particularly gruesome way: it would seem they have been mauled and half eaten by a very large cat. Jimmy Paz, who has been retired from the Miami police for years and who is now married with a seven-year-old daughter, is haunted by dreams of a jaguar, as is his daughter. Paz has witnessed the impossible and lived to tell the tale, and now he is going to have to come out of his self-imposed retirement to stop the murders and save himself and his daughter. There are many of you whose eyes glaze over when I talk about Jimmy Paz, but it is my opinion that this is one of the best, well-written, and scariest series around. I simply cannot wait each year for the next one. Suspend disbelief, open your mind to the rituals and beliefs of other cultures and Gruber will reward you with a great reading experience.

***DEATH WITHOUT COMPANY*, Craig Johnson, Viking. \$23.95**

Johnson's first book, *The Cold Dish*, was one of my favorite first novels of last year. Not that it was an easy read. Johnson's sheriff, Walt Longmire of Absaroka County, Wyoming, is a complex man with a very active inner life which we, as readers, are privy to. At the Durant Home for Assisted Living, Mari Baroja has been poisoned. When Longmire investigates, he uncovers her connection to the Basque community, the coal-bed methane industry, and the life of the previous sheriff Lucian Connally. Longmire, with the help of his friend Henry Standing Bear, must connect the past to the present in order to find the killer. Johnson's writing is haunting, but he often left me dazed and confused here. I stuck with it; many of you may not want to. Hate to say that about a writer who I think is extremely talented.

***DEATH IN BELMONT*, Sebastian Junger, W.W. Norton. \$23.95**

Junger writes non-fiction, but the premise here is so fascinating that I had to pick it up. Junger grew up in the quiet suburb of Belmont, Massachusetts, at the beginning of the 60s. In the spring of 1963 a shocking sex murder in Belmont echoed the pattern of the Boston Strangler who was terrifying Boston. The police arrested Roy Smith, a black man who was working at the murdered woman's house, and he was convicted although the Strangler murders continued. Junger's mother, shocked and frightened, sought out the company of the carpenter who was working in the Junger household at the time and

discussed the murders with him. The name of that carpenter was Albert DeSalvo, and Junger chronicles the lives of his family, Roy Smith, and Albert DeSalvo, the man who would eventually confess to the Strangler's crimes. Downright scary stuff.

***NIGHTLIFE*, Thomas Perry, Random House. \$24.95**

The cousin of a Los Angeles underworld figure is found shot to death. Police find no clues at the scene of the crime except long strands of hair and suspicion points to the dead man's girlfriend, Tanya Starling. When they cannot find Starling, the police wonder if she is the murderer or another victim. Enter Portland homicide detective Catherine Hobbes who is determined to solve the murder. She follows a trail of murders as the killer changes identity and appearance, seems to kill on impulse, and becomes more efficient and elusive with each crime. For me, Perry is best at creating female characters – his Jane Whitefield series is outstanding – and Catherine Hobbes and Tanya Starling stayed with me long after I finished the story.

***SMOKED*, Patrick Quinlan, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95**

This first novel is wonderful! It introduces Smoke Dugan, an ageing bomb-maker who worked for organized crime until one of his bombs was used to blow up a plane with innocent women and children aboard. Smoke kills his mafia boss and takes \$2.5 million and now he's the most wanted man in America. Smoke is hiding out in Portland, Maine, where he lives a quiet life and has a devoted girlfriend, martial arts expert Lola Bell. But that life will not be quiet for long as a series of killers, hit men, and lowlifes descend on Portland. What makes this fast-paced thriller so wonderful is an author who can write great prose, great set-ups, great dialogue, and create characters that jump off the page. Can't recommend this enough for those of you who like your thrillers on the very dark side.

## ON MY READING LIST

***THE DRAMATIST*, Ken Bruen, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95**

Jack Taylor is sober: no booze, no pills, no powder. This remarkable feat is helped by the fact that his dealer's in jail. When the dealer calls him and asks a favor, Jack wants to say no, but the man's sister is dead and the death is labeled "death by misadventure." Jack is asked to look around and see what he can find. Bruen is totally addictive. This title, the fourth in the Jack Taylor series, was published a couple of years ago in the UK as a paperback original.

***BABY BROTHER'S BLUES*, Pearl Cleage, One World. \$23.95**

Blue Hamilton was a charismatic R&B singer who gave up his career to assume responsibility for the safety of Atlanta's West End community. Now frightened women are showing up seeking Blue's protection from lovers who have suddenly turned violent. When the offenders start to disappear without a trace, Blue comes under suspicion. Cleage does not usually write mysteries. She is a super writer whose fiction and non-

fiction has always focused on the lives of black women. Here she has put her political writing into mystery form. For those of you who like your political writing undiluted, try Cleage's excellent *Deals with the Devil and Other Reasons to Riot*, a collection of her essays.

***THE TWO MINUTE RULE*, Robert Crais, Simon & Schuster. \$24.95**

Max Holman has just served ten years in prison for bank robbery. On the day of his release he is told that his son and three other cops have been shot dead in Los Angeles' Warehouse District. Shut out from police information, Holman launches his own investigation and learns that the police are looking in the wrong direction for the guilty party. Holman wants to know why. A must. An absolute must.

***THE LAST SUPPER*, Charles McCarry, Overlook Press. \$24.95**

Overlook Press continues to do us all a favor by reprinting some of the best thrillers written. Paul Christopher boards a jet bound for Vietnam just minutes before his lover, Molly Benson, becomes victim of a vehicular homicide. To understand this seemingly senseless murder, the story takes us back to the Christopher's early life and to the origins of the CIA in the clandestine operations of the OSS during WWII.

***THE SKIN GODS*, Richard Montinari, Ballantine. \$24.95**

Jessica Balzano and Kevin Byrne are pitted against a depraved killer who uses movies such as *Psycho* and *Fatal Attraction* for inspiration. Byrne remains unaware that this monster has focused on his teenage daughter, Colleen. Balzano and Byrne were introduced in *The Rosary Girls*, and if this is only half as good....

***LABYRINTH*, Kate Mosse, Putnam. \$25.95**

In 2005 in the Pyrenees mountains, Alice, a volunteer at an archaeological dig stumbles into a cave and makes a startling discovery – two skeletons, strange writings on the walls, and the pattern of a labyrinth. Between the skeletons is a stone ring and a small leather bag. Eight hundred years earlier, on the eve of a brutal crusade to stamp out heresy, Alais is given a ring and a mysterious book for safekeeping by her father as he leaves to fight the crusaders. The book, he says, contains the secret of the true Grail, and the ring, inscribed with a labyrinth, will identify a guardian of the Grail. This story moves back and forth in time between Alice and Alais and the story that links them.

***THE FALLEN*, T. Jefferson Parker, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Robbie Brownlaw is the youngest homicide detective on the San Diego PD. He was an ordinary cop before surviving a push from a sixth-floor hotel room. Now he sees little colored shapes when people speak – a condition called synesthesia – and Robbie uses them as a primitive lie detector. When another cop is found dead in his car late at night, it is assumed to be a suicide, but Robbie doesn't think so. Discovering the cop killer will mean uncovering some of San Diego's nastiest secrets. Parker, whose history of Edgar nominations and wins is quite remarkable, is always a must read.

***SEA CHANGE*, Robert B. Parker, Putnam. \$24.95**

When a woman's partially decomposed body washes ashore in Paradise, Massachusetts, police chief Jesse Stone finds himself with a case that is far more difficult than it initially appears. Identifying the woman is just the first step in what proves to be an emotionally charged investigation.

***BLOOD HUNT*, Ian Rankin, Little Brown. \$24.95**

Gordon Reeve, a former soldier, sets out to investigate the death of his brother Jim, a journalist. Gordon has never been good at keeping his anger in check, but he must do so now if he's going to get any answers. When he gets those answers he's going to let the rage he cultivated during his years as a professional killer help him exact revenge on whoever harmed his family. Originally written under Rankin's pseudonym, Jack Harvey, this is the first time this novel has been available in many years.

***THE SECRET SUPPER*, Javier Sierra, Atria. \$25.95**

In January of 1497, Pope Alejandro VI sends Fray Agustin Leyre, a Dominican Inquisitor, to Milan where Leonardo DaVinci is finishing his painting "The Last Supper." The Pope has heard that the painting is filled with questionable elements. When he arrives, Leyre realizes that the painting contains a baffling message, which he is determined to decode. This Spanish author has been writing about religious mysteries for years and this book is a bestseller in Europe.

***A DEATH IN VIENNA*, Frank Tallis, Grove Press. \$22.00**

This introduces Max Liebermann who is practicing psychoanalysis, the controversial new science, in Vienna at the turn of the century. When a medium dies under mysterious circumstances, Max's friend, Detective Oskar Rheinhardt, calls for his assistance. The medium's body has been found in a room that can only be locked from the inside. She's been shot, but there's no gun and no trace of a bullet. On a table lies a suicide note. All signs seem to point to a supernatural killer, but Liebermann the scientist knows better. This is the first in a series set in the Vienna of Freud, Klimt, and Mahler. It was first published in the UK last year.

## FIRST MYSTERIES

***THE JURY MASTER*, Robert Dugoni, Warner Books. \$24.95**

David Sloane is the best wrongful death attorney in San Francisco. He's known as a lawyer who can make juries do just about anything. But despite his professional success, he's plagued by a childhood he cannot consciously remember. He receives a package from a White House confidant, who then turns up dead, and the contents reveal a history he never could have imagined. David must then depend on men he's never met to expose a 30-year conspiracy.

***SHADOW OF DEATH*, Patricia Gussin, Oceanview Publishing. \$22.95**

Laura Nelson is a medical student, wife, and mother, trying to find a balance between her family and career. It is 1967 and, as the worst violence in the history of Detroit erupts around her, Laura's life changes in an instant when she becomes both a victim of a violent crime and a murderer. With a persistent and perceptive detective on her trail and a host of incidents that suggest her secret may not be a secret, Laura must face her fears and her toughest critic – herself.

***18 SECONDS*, George D. Shuman, Simon & Schuster. \$23.00**

Sherry Moore is a blind psychic who has the ability to “see” the last eighteen seconds of a murder victim's life by touching the corpse. When Lieutenant Kelly O'Shaunissy begins her investigation of the disappearance of young women from desolate areas in Wildwood, New Jersey, she reluctantly accepts Sherry's help. Together the two women set out to discover the identity of the killer.

***THE BOOSTER*, Jennifer Solow, Atria. \$24.00**

Jillian Siegel has a wonderful life in Manhattan which is marred by only one thing – she just keeps stuffing her Gucci handbag with high-priced designer clothes and leaving the store without paying. But she's not just any kleptomaniac, she is part of a highly organized South American shoplifting ring. How she came to be part of this strange world is the story here.

***BEAUTIFUL LIES*, Lisa Unger, Crown. \$24.00**

Ridley Jones is the privileged daughter of a doting father and a lovely mother. Her life is just about perfect until she performs a good deed that unleashes a chain of events that shatters all her illusions. Ridley is suddenly forced to question everything she knows about herself and her family as she wanders into a dark world she never knew existed.

## NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE MERCY ROOM*, Gilles Rozier, Little Brown. \$22.95**

In a small town in occupied France during World War II, a teacher of German is recruited by the Gestapo to translate sensitive documents. The narrator sits outside the commandant's office and watches prisoners being led away before being deported. The teacher cares only for books and has never done anything heroic until a Jewish soldier is among the prisoners. The teacher recognizes him from their lives before the war and in an unprecedented act of boldness, sneaks Herman out of headquarters, brings him home, and hides him in the cellar along with a cache of banned books. We never know the gender of the narrator so we don't know how many levels of transgression and risk the teacher is taking by hiding Herman.

***NIGHT WATCH, Sarah Waters, Riverhead Books. \$24.95***

This novel tells the story of four Londoners: three women and a young man whose lives connect in ways that are surprising and not always known to them. Moving back through the 1940s – through air raids, blacked-out streets, illicit liaisons, and sexual adventure – to end with its beginning in 1941, this is bound to be a terrific read from the author of *Tipping the Velvet* and *Fingersmith*.

**NEWS FROM THE UK*****FALSE IMPRESSION, Jeffrey Archer, Macmillan***

When an aristocratic old lady is brutally murdered in her home the night before 9/11, it takes all the resources of the FBI and Interpol to work out the connection between her death, the date, and the theft of a Van Gogh painting. This is also being published in the US this month, but Archer is a Brit.

***CHEMISTRY OF DEATH, Simon Beckett, Bantam***

The long-dead body of a young woman is found in a ditch in the Norfolk marshlands. Dr. Daniel Hunting, once a high-profile forensic anthropologist until a devastating personal tragedy, is asked to help out.

***RIGHTEOUS MEN, Sam Browne, HarperCollins***

A series of murders are linked by only one thing: the victims had all performed an act of exceptional goodness. Rookie journalist Will Monroe sees the beginning of a glittering career, but it won't be that easy. This first novel is set in New York.

***STABBING AT THE STABLES, Simon Brett, Macmillan***

When Jude pays a visit to Long Bamber Stables, she discovers the co-owner of the stable, Walt Fleet, stabbed to death. Jude and Carole make some discreet enquiries and discover that Long Bamber Stables is a hotbed of dangerous passions and murderous rivalries.

***LIZARD'S BITE, David Hewson, Macmillan***

Nic Costa and Gianni Peroni are ordered to investigate a fire, which has claimed two lives, in a glass foundry in the glass-making region of Murano. Events quickly spiral out of control.

***GAME OF SOLDIERS, Stephen Miller, HarperCollins***

In St. Petersburg, the people are seething and everybody seems to be impatient with their idle rulers, the Romanovs. Pyotr Ryzkhov, a government agent, is providing bodyguard service to a key member of the government when he witnesses the death of a child prostitute. He is convinced it is murder and, as the investigation widens, he is led to Serbia and the shot at Sarajevo that will reverberate around the world.

**RELICS, Pip Vaughan-Hughes, Orion**

Brother Petroc is a novice monk in rural England. His is framed by a Templar Knight for the brutal murder of a church official and is forced to run for his life.

**CHICKENFEED: World Book Day Quick Read, Minette Walters. Macmillan**

This novella is based on the true story of the “chicken farm murder” which took place in Sussex in 1924. Norman Thorne, still protesting his innocence, was hanged for the murder of Elsie Cameron in 1925. (There are several promotional World Book Day Quick Read titles being published in the UK over the next couple of months.)

**COLLECTING**

I was browsing through catalogs and discovered that there is a new Dave Robicheaux mystery coming from James Lee Burke. According to the UK Catalog, it will be published in June. According to the US Catalog, it will be published in July. You know what that means! Chaos! Stay tuned for news of the true first.

**BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

**Alleyn, Susanne, *Game of Patience*, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95.** A historical mystery set in Paris in the uneasy and turbulent years between the Terror and the rise of Napoleon.

**Apodoca, Jennifer, *Thrilled to Death*, Kensington. \$22.00.** Samantha Shaw must clear her grandfather’s name when an arrogant magician who has accused him of taking out a hit on him, dies.

**Archer, Jeffrey, *False Impression*, St. Martin’s Press. \$27.95.** US Edition.

**Black, Cara, *Murder in Montmartre*, Soho Press. \$23.00.** Aimee Leduc returns in this excellent series, each set in an arrondissement of Paris.

**Bowen, Rhys, *Oh Danny Boy*, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95.** PI Molly Murphy sets out to catch a serial killer in 1900s New York.

**Boyne, John, *Crippen*, St. Martin’s Press. \$24.95.** In 1910, the remains of former music-hall singer and wife of Dr. Hawley Crippen are found in the cellar of their house. But the doctor and his mistress, disguised as father and son, have already boarded a cruise ship bound for America. This is the story of the real Dr. Crippen who ended his life on the gallows.

**Britton, Andrew, *The American*, Kensington. \$24.00.** CIA agent Ryan Kealey teams up with a British agent and will have to break every rule in order to hunt down a former pupil, now part of a terror network.

**Daheim, Mary, *The Alpine Recluse*, Ballantine. \$23.95.** Set in the Pacific Northwest and featuring newspaper editor Emma Lord.

**Dietz, William C., *Snake Eyes*, iBooks. \$21.95.** FBI Special agent Christine Rossi meets ex-SEAL Jack Dexter who sweeps her off her feet and offers clues to a Chinese slave labor case she is working on.

**Eggleton, Clive, *The Renegades***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. When a British secret service operative is killed in a London restaurant shoot-out, the SIS thinks that he was caught in the crossfire of a robbery. But Peter Ashton doesn't think so.

**Farmer, Jerrilyn, *Desperately Seeking Sushi***, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. A Madeline Bean culinary mystery.

**Graham, Janice, *The Tailor's Daughter***, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. A young Victorian girl defies convention by working in her father's tailoring firm. What follows is passion, deception, murder, madness, and fabulous clothes.

**Handler, David, *The Sweet Golden Parachute***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Two of Dorset's most troublesome brothers are returning from a two-year stint in prison. When a homeless man is murdered, Mitch Berger and Desiree Mitry step in to investigate.

**Havill, Steven F., *Statute of Limitations***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Under sheriff Estelle Reyes-Guzman and ex-Sheriff Bill Gastner investigate strange goings on at a motel in Posadas County, New Mexico.

**Hoag, Tami, *Prior Bad Acts***, Bantam. \$26.00. Minneapolis homicide detective Sam Kovac and his wisecracking partner Nikki Liska return in this tale of murder, kidnapping, and betrayal.

**Hynd, Noel, *The Enemy Within***, Forge. \$25.95. In the year 2009, a pot-smoking female secret service agent, who sees ghosts, is assigned to thwart an assassin who's out to kill the president.

**Kaminsky, Stuart M., *Terror Town***, Forge. An Abe Lieberman mystery.

**Kellerman, Jonathan, *Gone***, Ballantine. \$26.95. An Alex Delaware novel.

**Kray, Roberta, *Johnny Frank***, Carroll & Graf. \$25.00. An ex-con teams up with the man who sent him to prison for some well-planned payback on London's mean streets.

**McManus, Patrick F., *The Blight Way***, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00. This new series set in the Rockies introduces maverick local sheriff Bo Tully.

**Miyabe, Miyuki, *Crossfire***, Kodansha. \$24.95. Junko Aoki has the ability to psychically start fires, a talent she uses to avenge crimes. The trail of bodies across Tokyo brings her to the attention of the police and an underground vigilante group.

**Mountain, Fiona, *Bloodline***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Natasha Blake must solve a crime where ghostly fingerprints are clues to a cold-blooded crime hidden for generations.

**Nesser, Hakan, *Borkmann's Point***, Pantheon. \$22.95. Introduces Chief Inspector Van Veereren to American readers. First published in 1994, this whodunit won the Swedish Crime Writers Academy Prize for Best Novel.

**Perry, Anne, *Dark Assassin***, Ballantine. \$25.95. The fifteenth novel featuring inspector William Monk.

**Rhoades, J.D., *Good Day in Hell***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Bounty hunter Jack Kelly and deputy Marie Jones team up when misfits out for fame and revenge start a merciless killing spree at a local church.

**Schechter, Harold, *The Tell-Tale Corpse***, Ballantine. \$24.95. Edgar Allan Poe investigates a series of murders with the help of a young Louisa May Alcott.

**Swift, Virginia, *Hello, Stranger***, HarperCollins. \$24.95. Unconventional sleuth, academician "Mustang" Sally Alder, returns in the fourth in this series.

**Tishy, Cecelia, *All in One Piece***, Mysterious Press. \$24.95. Second in the series featuring psychic-sleuth, Regina Cutter.

**Vine, Barbara, *The Minotaur***, Shaye Areheart. \$25.00. Kirstin Kvist, a young Swedish nurse, arrives at Lydstep Old Hall in Essex, England, to care for a man diagnosed with schizophrenia. But Kirstin soon finds reason to doubt that diagnosis.

**White, Randy Wayne, *Dark Light***, Putnam. \$24.95. Doc Ford is visited by an old woman who tells him a story of a rendezvous with a German submarine off the coast of Florida sixty years earlier. Now a Category Four hurricane could uncover the wreck of a boat – and the truth.

**Wilson, John Morgan, *Rhapsody in Blood***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Disgraced journalist Benjamin Justice takes a short vacation and becomes involved in two old deaths and a new murder.

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](mailto:sallyowen@verizon.net).

Or via mail:

Sally Owen

1825 Foster Avenue, Apt. 2J

Brooklyn, NY 11230

Phone: 718-434-1705

Visit [www.owenbookseller.com](http://www.owenbookseller.com)