

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

June 2006

Vol. 4, No. 7

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***COME CLOSER*, Sara Gran, Berkeley. \$13.00**

Written several years ago but only just published here, this disturbing little gem comes from the author of *Dope*, which remains one of my most enjoyable reads of 2006. I consumed this in one sitting, quite unable to tear myself away from the horrors which mounted up page by page. Amanda is happy. She adores her husband and enjoys her job. Then everything begins to go wrong, starting with those tapping sounds that neither she nor her husband can explain. Then there are those strange urges Amanda gets, the voices in her head which become more insistent, and the woman who seems to be following her. This is very scary stuff.

***A GARDEN OF VIPERS*, Jack Kerley, Dutton. \$24.95**

This is the third mystery in a series featuring detectives Carson Ryder and Harry Nautilus of Mobile, Alabama. When a young reporter is murdered, the detectives start looking for motives that go beyond a standard homicide. Ryder and Nautilus also find themselves in the world of the Kincannon family, a philanthropic clan at the top of the social register who appear to have ties to Ryder's journalist girlfriend. Then Ryder is abducted. The connections between the murder, the socialite family, Ryder's disappearance, and a bearded man form a web of intrigue that will have to be unraveled before time runs out. This sharp, suspenseful, well-written series is not getting the attention it deserves.

***DON'T I KNOW YOU?*, Karen Shepard, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95**

When a murder takes place on the Upper West Side of New York in 1976, it sets off a series of reactions in that neighborhood that reverberate over the years. Twelve-year-old Steven comes home to find his mother murdered. The detective in charge of the case is solicitous of the boy but it soon becomes obvious that the trail is growing cold. Steven goes to live with his father who has remarried. A year later, Lily Chin, who lives in that neighborhood, is preparing for her wedding but can't help feeling that her fiancé knows something about the unsolved murder. And ten years later, as Louise Carpanetti succumbs to cancer, she wonders if she should tell anybody what she suspects about her son. By the end of this elegant and moving novel you may know who murdered Steven's mother. On the other hand you may not. This is a meditation on how a neighborhood murder affects the residents and it will haunt you.

***PARTING SHOT*, Jonathan Stone, Thomas Dunne Books. \$23.95**

Stone is a master of plot twists, so when I read the premise of this story, I just had to see where he went with it. I was not disappointed. Sam Stevens is a charismatic TV reporter covering a sniper who is killing with no pattern. Sam is married to a wife he despises and who despises him in return. The hold they have on each other is not their son, but Sam's ambition and his reputation as a happily married man and his wife's ability to blackmail Sam with that. And, as I said, there's a sniper who has no pattern, and Sam knows the details of those killings. You think you know where this is going? You only know the half of it. I lost count of the twists.

ON MY READING LIST***THE FAITHFUL SPY*, Alex Berenson, Random House. \$24.95**

John Wells has been undercover for so long that the CIA is no longer even sure he's alive, or loyal. He is both, but during his years in the Middle East he has become a practicing Muslim and has at times questioned the Western way of life and the American agenda. His loyalty is tested when he is sent to the United States as part of a sleeper cell – a double agent. When two bombs rock Los Angeles, the CIA can't help but suspect him. When Wells finally receives the expected call from his al Qaeda contact, the pieces start to slip into place. This would seem to be far more complex than many of the books on terror being written.

***BY A SLOW RIVER*, Philippe Claudel, Knopf. \$23.00**

As the First World War rages, the daily life of a small French town near the front is hardly disturbed. But within a year, this illusion of ordinariness is shattered by the deaths of three innocents. A charming schoolmistress takes her own life; an eight-year-old girl is strangled; and the wife of the local policeman dies in labor as her husband hunts for the child's murderer. For twenty years the policeman studies his notebooks looking for clues to bring him peace of mind and justice to the wicked. And as his detective work proceeds his effort leads to an unimaginable widening of the tragedy. This sounds absolutely fascinating to me.

***THE COLD MOON*, Jeffery Deaver, Simon & Schuster. \$26.00**

On a cold December night in New York City, two people are brutally murdered – their deaths marked by moon-faced clocks ticking away the victims' last minutes on earth. More murders are planned and Lincoln Rhyme and Amelia Sachs have only hours to stop the brilliant Watchmaker, whose obsession with time drives him to plan his carnage with the precision of a fine timepiece.

***THE LAST ASSASSIN*, Barry Eisler, Putnam. \$24.95**

When John Rain learns that his former lover, Midori, is raising their child in New York, he heads for the Big Apple. But Rain's enemies have been watching and his sudden appearance puts mother and child in danger. Rain is forced to use the same deadly talents

he had been hoping to leave behind. This excellent series is right up there with the top thrillers of recent years.

TEN SECOND STAIRCASE, Christopher Fowler, Bantam. \$24.00

The latest Bryant and May mystery finds our cranky team from the Peculiar Crimes Unit tracking a bizarre killer nicknamed “The Highwayman.” Arthur Bryant notices an eerie similarity to a series of murders spanning London’s history – and a killer straight from the city’s nightmares. This continues to be an engaging and original series.

BLOOD FEVER: A JAMES BOND ADVENTURE, Charlie Higson, Miramax. \$16.95

The second *Young Bond* adventure, while aimed at Young Adult readers, is a must for Bond fans. Here, James is still thirteen, and back at Eton looking forward to his school trip to Sardinia. But all is not tranquil on that beautiful island. There have been disappearances, important artwork has been stolen, and the Millennaria – a ruthless Roman society thought to be extinct – is still active. And one of his teachers has been acting strangely as well. Of course, at Eton, that isn’t unusual. But I digress. The first in this series was a great read, and YA books can often be better than adult fiction.

MARKED MAN, William Lashner, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95

Attorney Victor Carl wakes up with his suit in tatters, his socks missing and a new tattoo he doesn’t remember getting. He has other problems too. His client, a wanted man, needs to come in out of the cold, and he’s got a stolen Rembrandt. That painting, a missing girl, and, of course, the mysterious tattoo lead Carl into his most challenging case yet.

COLD KILL, David Lawrence, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95

Detective Stella Mooney finds herself at a crime scene in a London park where the brutalized corpse of a young woman has just been discovered. When a man walks into a Notting Hill police station and confesses, it seems to be an open-and-shut case, but Stella has her doubts. Third entry in this excellent series which has yet to take off this side of the pond.

ON, OFF, Colleen McCullough, Simon & Schuster. \$25.95

The author of *The Thorn Birds* has written a thriller set in a Connecticut research center where anyone among the staff of scientists and doctors could be the twisted murderer of innocent young girls. Written as a “whodunit,” this novel is set in 1965 when few forensic techniques were available to Lieutenant Carmine Delmonico, who is assigned to solve what first seems to be a single murder.

BLOOD MASK, Joyce Carol Oates writing as Lauren Kelly, Ecco Press. \$24.95

Drewe Hildebrand disappears from her estate on the Hudson River, seemingly abducted. Her niece is too traumatized to describe the abductors and a provocative exhibit of avant-

garde “bio-art” including a blood mask of Drew Hildebrand is disrupted by protestors. Lauren Kelly explores the world of “bio-artists” and their admirers in her latest thriller.

MURDER IN THE ROUGH, Otto Penzler, Editor, Mysterious Press. \$24.95
Stories by **Ken Bruen, Christopher Coake, Steve Hamilton, Laura Lippman, and Ian Rankin**, among others, endear this collection to me. I can’t think of a more boring game than golf, but these writers should liven up the greens until I can get to the 19th hole.

THE BOOK OF THE DEAD, Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child, Warner Books. \$25.95

The New York Museum of Natural History receives back the gem collection stolen by the psychotic killer, Diogenes, brother of FBI Agent Pendergast. The collection has been ground to dust and, to offset the PR nightmare of this fiasco, the museum decides to reopen the Tomb of Senef which was quietly closed in the 1930s. But when the tomb is unsealed, the killings begin again. This is a continuation of the story begun in *Dance of Death*.

PIECE OF MY HEART, Peter Robinson, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95

Detective Inspector Alan Banks’s latest case involves the murder of a freelance music journalist and will take him back more than thirty years, into the mystery of an old murder that may be chillingly connected.

TERRORIST, John Updike, Knopf. \$25.00

Eighteen-year-old Ahmad, son of an Irish-American mother and an Egyptian father, lives in the faded town of New Prospect, New Jersey, overlooking Manhattan. His devotion to Allah and the sacred words of the Qur’an leads him to commit himself to an act of terror. Not a mystery but surely, from this author, a must-read.

FIRST MYSTERIES

SEQUENCE, Lori Andrews, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95

Alexandra Blake is a geneticist at the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology (AFIP) where she uses her research into the genetics of viruses to try and find a vaccine to combat biowarfare. But when a serial killer appears to be preying military bases across the country, Alex drops her research to cover forensics on the case. This is the first in what looks to be a new series from an expert on law and genetics.

VENETIAN HOLIDAY, David M. Campbell, St. Martin’s Press. \$23.95

Kate Fujimori and her associate Freddy Doloreux plan to rob Venice’s newest museum. It should be easy – Kate has stolen art treasures all over the world for fun and profit. But things start to go haywire when a bumbling pair of rival thieves are after the same painting. To complicate matters, Freddy has accepted a contract on Kate’s life, and the local abbot appears to have been turned into a zombie.

***DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE*, Jackie Lynn, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

When her husband leaves her for a younger woman, Rose Franklin buys a camper and sets off. While she's at a camp site in North Carolina, a respected and well-liked man in the community commits suicide for no apparent reason. As Rose gets to know the local characters, she begins to unravel the mystery of why a man loses his faith and the consequences of his loss. This series will weave spirituality and redemption into each mystery.

***THE CHINATOWN DEATH CLOUD PERIL*, Paul Malmont, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00**

Set in the 1930s, this debut opens in New York City's legendary White Horse Tavern. Regulars Walter Gibson (creator of *The Shadow*) and Lester Dent (creator of *Doc Savage*) are that era's greatest scribes and also its greatest rivals. As they debate the nature of pulp for L. Ron Hubbard (a fiction writer before he embraced Dianetics), they are propelled into a genuine pulp adventure as they try to thwart a madman intent on creating a new global empire. Sorry to put all that info in parentheses, but not everybody is a pulp fan. This sounds fascinating and highly original.

***THE SERIAL KILLERS CLUB*, Jeff Povey, Warner Books. \$24.95**

When the protagonist of this improbable story defends himself against a serial killer's attack, he finds a mysterious personal ad inviting him to join a party hosted by Errol Flynn. What he discovers is a group of 18 killers, all bearing the names of Hollywood stars who share the thrill of killing. Our hero becomes Douglas Fairbanks Jr., with no intention of following the rules of the club. Instead he plans to kill the killers one by one. This kind of satirical fiction was made popular by Jeff Lindsay and his series featuring Dexter.

***A FIELD OF DARKNESS*, Cornelia Read, Mysterious Press. \$22.95**

Introducing Madeline Dare, born into a blue-blood family and married to a genius inventor. When a set of long-buried dog tags link her favorite cousin to the scene of a vicious double homicide, Maddie sets out to clear her cousin's name, but she instead uncovers a web of intrigue and family secrets.

***DARK CIRCLES*, Lila Shaara, Ballantine Books. \$24.95**

Gina Paletta was once a top model, but now she and her two young sons live in a small college town where she is an academic. Her peaceful life is disturbed when photos of her are posted on a website. The young men who put them there are not only her students, they are also suspects in the murder of classmate.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE LIES OF LOCKE LAMORA*, Scott Lynch, Bantam. \$23.00**

This first novel launches a fantasy series which is already getting a great deal of attention. In a colorful city run by an omnipotent crime boss, there is no honor among thieves, except for the Gentlemen Bastards, led by the eccentric and brilliant Locke Lamora. But five thousand thieves, murderers, prostitutes, beggars and thugs can't be all wrong, and Locke and his band have broken the rules a few too many times.

***THE END OF CALIFORNIA*, Steve Yarbrough, Knopf. \$23.95**

Pete Barrington returns to his home, Loring, Mississippi, after an absence of 25 years. He opens a new practice and runs into memories he'd rather forget even as his wife and unsettled daughter contend with this alien society. Yarbrough is one of our most gifted writers and here presents a shocking portrait of small-town life, where people turn to booze, gossip, and feckless sex in their struggles with provincial claustrophobia.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***THE SWORD OF SHAME: MEDIEVAL MURDERS*, Simon & Schuster**

Stories by **Michael Jecks, Susanna Gregory, Bernard Knight, Philip Gooden, Simon Beaufort, and Ian Morson.**

***SCARED TO LIVE*, Stephen Booth, HarperCollins**

Ben Fry and Diane Cooper return in another psychological thriller set in England's Peak District. Their latest case will take them halfway across Europe and back again.

***WHITE BOYS DON'T CRY*, John Fullerton. Macmillan**

A tale of friendship, love, betrayal and murder, set in Cape Town in 1994, the year of South Africa's first non-racial elections.

***GUARDIAN OF THE KEY*, Clio Gray, Headline**

First in a new historical crime series set during Napoleonic times.

***TARNISHED CHALICE*, Susanna Gregory, Time Warner**

On a bitter winter night in 1356 Matthew Bartholomew and Brother Michael arrive in London. But the Friary in which they are staying is not the safe haven they imagine.

***RELENTLESS*, Simon Kernick, Bantam**

John Meron receives a call from his friend Jack Calley, a lawyer. As Calley screams into the phone, Meron hears him being murdered. His last words, spoken to the killer, are the address of Meron who is soon being hunted and he has no idea why.

RAILWAY VIADUCT, Edward Marston, Allison & Busby

As a train speeds over the Viaduct, the dead body of a man is hurled into the canal below. Inspector Robert Colbeck and Sergeant Victor Leeming investigate.

BROTHER GRIMM, Craig Russell, Hutchinson

A girl's body lies on a Hamburg beach and Jan Fabel of the city's murder squad is called in. When other murders occur, it becomes clear that each new crime is a grisly reference to folk stories collected by the Brothers Grimm.

THREE BAGS FULL, Leonie Swann, Doubleday

When a herd of sheep discover their shepherd murdered, they set out to solve the crime. Miss Maple, their leader, heads the detectives as they uncover clues, sometimes eating them, and the inexplicable ways of their human counterparts.

COLLECTING

Rumors put to rest:

Pegasus Descending by **James Lee Burke**, the new Dave Robicheaux mystery, will be published in the US before the UK.

The new Harry Bosch mystery, *Echo Park*, by **Michael Connelly** will, unfortunately, be a UK first. The limited edition will be published by Dennis McMillan Publications.

The Night Gardener by **George P. Pelecanos** will be a US first. Again, the limited edition will be published by Dennis McMillan Publications.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Bayard, Louis, *The Pale Blue Eye*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. A grisly murder takes place on the grounds of West Point and, with the help of a young cadet named Edgar Allan Poe, retired detective Gus Landor investigates.

Craig, Philip R., *Dead in Vineyard Sand*, Scribner. \$24.00. This is the seventeenth Martha's Vineyard mystery.

Davis, Lindsey, *See Delphi and Die*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A Marcus Didius Falco novel.

Diamond, Diana, *The Other Woman*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Romantic suspense set in the cutthroat worlds of Washington politics and New York publishing.

Edwardson, Ake, *Never End*, Viking. \$24.95. Detective Erik Winter returns, chasing a copycat rapist and murderer.

Evanovich, Janet, *Twelve Sharp*, St. Martin's Press. \$26.95. Stephanie Plum, New Jersey's premier troublemaker, is once again struggling with her tangled love life, her chaotic family, and her gift for destroying every car she drives.

Howard, Linda, *Cover of Night*, Ballantine Books. \$26.95. Romantic thriller set in a bed-and-breakfast run by a young widow who must contend with a trio of brutal thugs invading her inn.

Hyde, Elisabeth, *The Abortionist's Daughter*, Knopf. \$23.95. The murder of a young female doctor, the director of the Center for Reproductive Choice, ignites the passions of a small Colorado town.

Irby, Lee, *The Up and Up*, Doubleday. \$19.95. This sequel to *7,000 Clams* finds Frank Hearn in 1920s Miami dealing with real estate sharks, crooked cops, and the most famous woman in the world, film star Gloria Swanson.

Judson, Daniel, *The Darkest Place*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A series of drowning deaths in a small summer resort community on Long Island implicates a local college professor, himself recovering from the accidental drowning death of his only son.

Kandel, Susan, *Sam Spade in the Green Room*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Cece Caruso is thrilled that her biography of Dashiell Hammett is headed for the big screen. Even better, she gets to tutor the actor case for the lead. He's not that bright but he's really cute. Too bad he might also be a killer.

Kent, Bill, *Street Legal*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Featuring obituary writer Shep Ladderback and his assistant Andy Cosicki.

Kjaerstad, Jan, *The Seducer*, Overlook Press. \$28.95. A successful TV documentary producer returns from the World's Fair in Seville to find his wife dead on the living room floor.

Lamar, Jake, *The Ghosts of Saint-Michel*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Second in the series featuring African Americans in Paris.

Lowell, Elizabeth, *The Wrong Hostage*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Romantic suspense blends with legal drama in this thriller.

Lynds, Gayle, *The Last Spymaster*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. A master spy turned traitor has spent years in the tightest maximum security prison. Now he's escaped and Agent Elaine Cunningham is the 'hunter' assigned to find him.

McGovern, Cammie, *Eye Contact*, Viking. \$24.95. A young girl is murdered and the only witness is a child who cannot tell what he saw.

O'Marie, Sister Carol Anne, *Murder at the Monk's Table*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A sister Mary Helen mystery.

Parker, Robert B., *Blue Screen*, Putnam. \$24.95. Sunny Randall is hired as a bodyguard to a young starlet and discovers some ugly truths about her.

Patterson, James, *Thriller*, Mira. \$24.95. A collection of thriller stories, edited by Patterson, by **Lee Child, David Liss, Douglas Preston**, etc.

Reuben, Shelly, *The Skirt Man*, Harcourt. \$24.00. In the small town of Killdeer, New York, the Skirt Man is a character who mortifies those close to him. When he is killed in a house fire, Meredith and Sebastian Bly investigate.

Scoppetone, Sandra, *Too Darn Hot*, Ballantine Books. \$24.95. Second mystery set in World War II New York City and featuring Faye Quick.

Staeger, Will, *Public Enemy*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. A terrifying new enemy has infiltrated America and only Julie Laramie, a CIA analyst, and her old friend W. Cooper can stop them.

Thomas, Will, *The Limehouse Text*, Touchstone. \$24.00. Victorian enquiry agent Cyrus Barker and his assistant Thomas Llewelyn must track down a killer intent upon gaining lethal martial arts techniques forbidden to the West.

Thor, Brad, *Takedown*, Atria. \$25.00. Navy SEAL turned counter terrorism operative, Scott Harvath, is called in when a terrorist attack takes out the bridges and tunnels in Manhattan on the 4th of July.

Thurlo, Aimee and David, *Prey For a Miracle*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Sister Agatha, with her motorcycle and German Shepherd in the side car, investigates when a young girl who is receiving divine visitations disappears.

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