

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

July 2006

Vol. 4, No. 9

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***LEARNING TO KILL*, Ed McBain, Harcourt. \$25.00**

Here is a collection of stories, gathered together just before McBain's death last year, written between 1952 and 1957 under his various pseudonyms for the magazine *Manhunt*. McBain introduces these stories with an essay about his beginnings as a writer and then introduces each section with witty explanatory notes. Read it and weep. This is a moving reminder of why McBain is among the great writers of his generation and why we miss him so much.

***THE EXPECTED ONE*, Kathleen McGowan, Touchstone. \$26.95**

With so many books jumping on *The* (very successful) *DaVinci Code* bandwagon, it's sometimes difficult to separate the gold from the fool's dust, but I've read most of them and what we have here is a veritable Fort Knox. This book, incorporating twenty years of research, is just the first of several as I understand it, and introduces Maureen Paschal, a history professor known in academic circles for rescuing women from the discard pile and putting them back into their rightful place in history. You will know immediately that the woman who most interests her is Mary Magdalene and, as the book opens, Maureen is researching the history of that much maligned woman. Whore or wife of Jesus? Well, that is the question and I defy you to be able to put this book down once the historical evidence starts mounting up. And it's all put together in an intriguing thriller that I found every bit as exciting (sometime more so) than the aforementioned Dan Brown blockbuster. I can hardly wait for the next installment.

***THE ASSASSIN'S GALLERY*, David L. Robbins. Bantam. \$25.00**

In January of 1945, an assassin comes ashore at Newburyport, Massachusetts. Her mission is one of the most important of the war. Meanwhile, in Scotland, Mikhal Lammeck, a history professor and trainer of some of the deadliest assassins, is approached by one of his old students who tells him that the U.S. believes there will be an attempt on the life of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The cat and mouse game between "Judith" the assassin and Lammeck is breathtakingly exciting and if you think you know that the assassination attempt failed, think again. What if the assassination of FDR was one of the 20th century's greatest cover-ups? You will not be able to put this down.

WINTER'S BONE, Daniel Woodrell, Little Brown. \$22.95

Ree Dolly is a sixteen-year-old who has grown up in the poverty of the Ozarks. Her father, Jessup, has gone, and Ree spends most of her time fending for her two younger brothers and her mother, whose dementia has left her helpless as a baby. When Deputy Baskin visits to tell Ree that her father has jumped bail, Ree is hardly surprised. What she didn't know is that Jessup Dolly put up the house as bail and that Ree and her family will lose everything they have if he doesn't show for his court date on charges of cooking crystal meth. This is the story of Ree's quest to bring her father back. It is also an exquisitely written book about poverty, dashed dreams, and the love and misery "family" can create. Woodrell has been compared to Cormac McCarthy, Jim Thompson, and even William Faulkner. Yes, he's all that.

ON MY READING LIST**HIT PARADE, Lawrence Block, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

After five years, Block is bringing back his hit man, John Keller. This is the third in the series and that's all the information I have. But that's all we need.

TALK, TALK, T.C. Boyle, Viking. \$25.95

Dana and Bridger, who meet in a club, are in love. But what they learn, and can hardly believe, is that a man named William "Peck" Wilson has been living a life of criminal excess at Dana's expense. As they set out to find him, they test the limits of their life together. This story of stolen identity and the fight to get it back is bound to be extraordinary as told by this prize-winning author.

PEGASUS DESCENDING, James Lee Burke, Simon & Schuster. \$26.00

Dave Robicheaux is content. He is living the strict AA life, he has a woman he loves and a boss he respects. But when a nice young woman turns up in Louisiana passing stolen hundred dollar bills and an even nicer young woman commits suicide, Robicheaux is caught up in a web that reaches back into his own haunted history.

THE PRISONER OF GUANTANAMO, Dan Fesperman, Knopf. \$24.00

FBI veteran Revere Falk, an interrogator at Guantanamo, is assigned to a Yemeni, a man who may have valuable information about al Qaeda. But when the body of an American soldier is found washed up in Cuban territory, Falk is asked to run the investigation. And when the Defense Intelligence Agency sends its own team to "reinforce" the investigation, Falk understands there is more to this than meets the eye. Those of you who know Fesperman's work will, like me, want to snap up his latest thriller.

THE FOURTH BEAR, Jasper Fforde, Viking. \$24.95

This is the second installment of Fforde's Nursery Crime Series. In it, Jack Spratt and Mary Mary take on their most dangerous case so far: The Gingerbread Man – psychopath, sadist, genius, and murderous cookie – is on the loose. But that's not their

case. They are looking for a missing reporter, Henrietta ‘Goldy’ Hatchett who was last seen by The Three Bears living in Andersen’s Wood. But why is the porridge at such disparate temperatures when it was poured at the same time? Why do Mr. and Mrs. Bear sleep in separate beds? Jack and Mary Mary will have to answer these and other zany questions before they finally meet the Fourth Bear and The Gingerbread Man face to face. This inspired lunacy remains a guilty pleasure of mine.

***WOLVES OF MEMORY*, Bill James, W.W. Norton. \$23.95**

I’ve said it before and I’ll say it again: This series featuring Detective Chief Superintendent Colin Harpur and Assistant Chief Constable Desmond Iles is one of the best mystery series to come out of the UK. Ever. This is the twenty-second in the series, and those of us who love him can once again savor James’s extraordinary writing, savage wit, and dark view of police work. How can you resist a series where villains have names like Panicking Ralph? Start with number one, *You’d Better Believe It*, or number 10, *Roses, Roses*.

***NO GOOD DEEDS*, Laura Lippman, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

The unsolved murder of a young federal prosecutor becomes personal for Tess Monaghan when her boyfriend brings home a street kid who doesn’t realize he holds an important key to the man’s death. Tess agrees to protect the boy, but with federal agents equally determined to learn the boy’s name, she finds out just how far official authorities will go to get their way.

***PROOF POSITIVE*, Phillip Margolin, HarperCollins. \$25.95**

Defense attorney Amanda Jaffe is representing an insane derelict charged with murder while her father Frank is the attorney for a mobster charged with the murder of a junkie. Both clients claim to be innocent despite overwhelming forensic evidence. But what if the fingerprints, ballistic tests, and other evidence analyzed by the crime lab are not what they seem? What if a CSI technician is misusing his position? When Amanda starts to investigate, people start to die. Margolin is another of my guilty pleasures.

***54*, Wu Ming, Harcourt. \$25.00**

Set during the height of the Cold War, this novel has a unique plot line. In Hollywood, Cary Grant is getting tired of cinema’s constant glamour, but Her Majesty’s Secret Service will capture his interest by offering him a bizarre diplomatic mission. In Naples, Lucky Luciano fixes horse races and launches the global heroin trade. And in Bologna, a bartender searches for true love and his missing communist father. There are cameo appearances by David Niven, Marshal Tito, and Grace Kelly. Wu Ming means no-name or anonymous in Mandarin and *54* was written by the same five authors who wrote *Q* under the pseudonym Luther Blissett.

***BREAK NO BONES*, Kathy Reichs, Scribner. \$25.95**

Forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan is teaching in Charleston, South Carolina, when she stumbles across a fresh skeleton among ancient bones. Soon she’s deep into a new case which will take her to a free street clinic where patients are going missing and

winding up dead. *Bones*, the television series, is a hit and that should propel this onto the best seller lists in a nanosecond.

THE RUINS, Scott Smith, Knopf. \$24.95

A group of friends are enjoying a lazy holiday on the beach in Mexico. They go off in search of one of their group who is headed for the Mayan ruins and begin to understand that there is a horrifying “other” among them. This is Smith’s first novel since his best-selling *A Simple Plan*.

BRETHREN, Robyn Young, Dutton. \$25.95

Will Temple joins the most powerful organization in Europe, the Order of the Knights Templar, and finds himself drawn into a world of intrigue and danger. He is charged with recovering a heretical book stolen from the order’s vaults. What Will doesn’t know is that book, in the form of a Grail romance, hides the covert plans of a secret group within the Templars known as the Anima Templi. Whoever controls the book controls the fate of the templars. This novel also traces the rise of Baybars Bundukdari, a commander in the Egyptian army, who, after assassinating the sultan, takes control of Egypt and Syria. Not only is this on my reading list, so also are *Crusade* and *Requiem*, the second and third book in this planned trilogy.

FIRST MYSTERIES

ERRORS AND OMISSIONS, Paul Goldstein, Doubleday. \$24.95

Michael Seeley is an intellectual property litigator – a defender of artists’ rights. He is also a man whose personal life and career are in free fall. So when United Pictures asks him to fly out to Hollywood and confirm legally that they own the rights to their cash-cow franchise of Spykiller films, he’s there. What Michael discovers will plunge him into the politics of the blacklisting era and the world of Nazi-occupied Poland. The author is the Lillick Professor of Law at Stanford Law School and one of the country’s leading authorities on intellectual property law.

CLAIRE FONTAINE CRIME FIGHTER, Tracey Enright, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95

Introducing Claire Fontaine—rich, sexy, and sophisticated—and Henry Bennett—fat, sloppy, and a really poor dresser. He’s a private eye and she’s his assistant (according to Henry) or partner (according to Claire). Together they investigate the murder of a young woman who liked to party and stumble across secrets that the rich and famous are desperately trying to hide.

THE CITY IS A RISING TIDE, Rebecca Lee, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00

Justine Laxness is a money manager at a non-profit organization. Her love for her boss is unrequited despite an a deep friendship and extensive history. It is this obsession that spurs Justine to embezzle funds from her workplace and lend the money to an old flame

who has resurfaced in her life. Every action she takes has unforeseen ramifications, fueling betrayal and destruction around her.

***STILL LIFE*, Louise Penny, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95**

This introduces Monsieur L'Inspecteur Armand Gamache of the Surete du Quebec who, with his team, are called in to investigate a suspicious death in a rural village south of Montreal. The locals are certain it's a hunting accident but Gamache thinks not. (This just won the Debut Dagger from the Crime Writers Association of the UK).

NEWS FROM THE UK

***FACES OF ANGELS*, Lucretia Grindle, Macmillan**

On a hot day in Florence, newly wed Mary Warren, desperate to escape her husband's possessive eye, breaks away from their tour group in the Boboli Gardens and wanders into a maze of trees. She is attacked and her husband brutally murdered.

***AFTER THE MOURNING*, Barbara Nadel, Headline**

In October 1940, undertaker Francis Hancock is called out to Epping Forest to attend to the corpse of a young gypsy girl. Meanwhile, the Military Police are looking for a German gypsy believed to be a Nazi spy.

***SHIFTING SKIN*, Chris Simms, Orion**

Jon Spicer and his partner Rick Saville investigate a series of killings by a madman known as the Butcher of Belle Vue. This monster partially skins his victims, exposing muscle, tendons, and ligaments.

***HIDDEN ASSASSIN*, Robert Wilson, HarperCollins**

For Javier Falcon, a routine investigation into a fire turns up bomb-making equipment. Suddenly he finds himself at the center of a full-scale terror alert. Falcon turns up a bizarre link between Islamic terror acts and a shadowy and well-connected Catholic organization bent on revenge.

COLLECTING

***PLAYBACK*, Raymond Chandler, Arcade Publishing. \$19.95**

This is the script for *Playback* adapted as a graphic novel by Ted Benoit, with illustrations by Francois Ayroles. This edition of Chandler's classic tale of betrayal, blackmail, and murder belongs in your collection, doesn't it?

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Adler, Elizabeth, *Sailing to Capri*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. When an English tycoon dies mysteriously, he leaves a note naming six people he suspects might have wanted him dead.

Anderson, Sheryl J., *Killer Deal*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Molly Forester, advice columnist by day, amateur sleuth by night, is on leave and assigned to do a feature article on the murder of an advertising executive.

Billingham, Mark, *Lifeless*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Tom Thorne goes undercover on the streets to stop a demented killer who is preying on London's most vulnerable.

Booth, Stephen, *One Last Breath*, Bantam. \$25.00. The caves beneath England's Peak District conceal a convicted killer bent on the ultimate revenge. A Ben Cooper and Diane Fry mystery.

Burton, Milton T., *The Sweet and the Dead*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Manfred Eugene "Hog" Webern, a retired Dallas deputy sheriff, goes undercover in Biloxi, Mississippi, to nail a group of criminals known as the Dixie Mafia.

Carmon, Haggai, *The Red Syndrome*, Steerforth. \$24.95. Ex-Mossad agent Dan Gordon is on the trail of what appears to be a straightforward case of money laundering. But it turns into a hunt for a weapon of bioterror and the fundamentalist splinter group threatening to unleash it.

Clark, Mary Jane, *Lights Out Tonight*, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95. Film and theater critic Caroline Enright takes a trip to a summer theater festival in the Berkshires and finds murder in a quaint college town.

Clement, Alison, *Twenty Questions*, Atria Books. \$23.00. June and Bill had the perfect marriage until Ronald Pruett was arrested for strangling Vernay Hanks. June, who worked at the local elementary school, knew both the murderer's and the victim's children.

Cook, Robin, *Crisis*, Putnam. \$25.95. A doctor plunges into a web of corruption and lies when he is served with a summons for medical malpractice.

Coonts, Stephen, *The Traitor*, St. Martin's Press. \$25.95. Tommy Carmellini is involved in espionage, terrorism, and murder.

Ford, G.M., *Blown Away*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Frank Corso investigates an unsolved bombing case. Did the bomber willingly strap the explosives to his body? Or was he forced by a malevolent mastermind?

Fossum, Karin, *When the Devil Holds the Candle*, Harcourt. \$24.00. Inspector Konrad Sejer and Jacob Skarre investigate the theft of a purse from a stroller which results in the infant's death.

Frey, Stephen, *The Power Broker*, Ballantine. \$24.95. Finance suspense featuring Christian Gillette.

Harvey, John, *Darkness & Light*, Harcourt. \$25.00. Former cop Frank Elder is once again drawn out of retirement when his ex-wife asks him to look into the disappearance of her friend Jennie's widowed sister.

Hathaway, Robin, *The Doctor Rocks The Boat*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. The fifth installment of the Doctor Fenimore series.

- Holt, Anne, *What is Mine***, Warner Books. \$24.95. Somebody is killing children in Norway. This the American debut from one of Norway's most popular writers.
- Hooper, Kay, *Sleeping With Fear***, Bantam. \$25.00. Agent Riley Crane of the FBI's Special Crimes Unit wakes up covered in blood and the last two weeks of her life wiped from her memory.
- Hosp, David, *The Betrayed***, Warner Books. \$24.95. Woman tries to find the truth about the brutal murder of her sister.
- Hunsicker, Harry, *The Next Time You Die***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Second mystery featuring Lee Henry Oswald, Dallas detective.
- Jones, Solomon, *C.R.E.A.M. Book 1***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$19.95. Karima Thomas is an ex-convict who is set up for murder and must penetrate the rough world of Philadelphia politics to clear her name.
- Konrath, J.A., *Rusty Nail***, Hyperion. \$23.95. Lt. Jacqueline "Jack" Daniels of the Chicago Police Department is, once again, up to her Armani in murder.
- Lawson, Mike, *Second Perimeter***, Doubleday. \$24.95. This sequel to *The Inside Ring* finds Joe DeMarco, the "fixer" for the Speaker of the House, in a battle of wits against a lethal female spy.
- Mina, Denise, *The Dead Hour***, Little Brown. \$24.95. Responding to a call, Paddy Meehan arrives at a villa where a blonde with blood on her face persuades her to go away and keep the incident quiet. Next morning the woman is dead.
- Muller, Marcia, *Vanishing Point***, Mysterious Press. \$24.95. Sharon McCone investigates one of San Luis Obispo County's most puzzling cold cases.
- Nugent, Andrew, *Second Burial for a Black Prince***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. In Dublin's Little Africa, a young black man collapses, bleeding from his stump of a leg that appears to have been recently amputated. When he dies, Dublin police detectives Dennis, Jim and Molly investigate.
- Patterson, James, *Judge & Jury***, Little Brown. \$26.95. FBI agent Nick Pellisante is closing in on a notorious mob boss. But the sting goes spectacularly wrong and two FBI agents are dead.
- Rendell, Ruth, *End in Tears***, Crown. \$25.00. Inspector Wexford investigates a series of seemingly unrelated murders.
- Roberts, Nora, *Angels Fall***, Putnam. \$25.95. Love, murder, and madness in the wilds of the Grand Tetons.
- Robb, J.D., *Born in Death***, Putnam. \$24.95. An Eve Dallas mystery set in 2060 New York.
- Rollins, James, *Black Order***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Sigma Force, led by Commander Gray Pierce, is once again in action - from the Himalayas to the Congo where it will face its most cunning adversaries.
- Saul, John, *In the Dark of the Night***, Ballantine. \$25.95. The Brewer family rents a large house on Phantom Lake for the summer. One of those rooms exerts a strange power over the family's son and his friends. This will surely end in murder and mayhem.
- Shelby, Jeff, *Wicked Break***, Dutton. \$24.95. PI Noah Braddock searches for a missing college student and soon realizes that there's more to this kid than academia.

Wan, Michelle, *The Orchid Shroud*, Doubleday. \$23.95. Amateur sleuths Mara Dunn and Julian Wood investigate two murders committed a century apart at a man's house in southwestern France.

Yancey, Richard, *The Highly Effective Detective*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Teddy Ruzak always dreamed of becoming a detective, and when he becomes one, his first case involves the hit-and-run of a family of geese.

Zubro, Mark Richard, *Everyone's Dead But Us*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A series of murders on a resort island turns a dream vacation into a nightmare for Tom and Scott.

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