

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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Season's greetings as Bookaholic celebrates the start of its 5th year!

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***THE KILLING MOON*, Chuck Hogan, Scribner. \$25.00**

Hogan, the author of the Hammet-Prize-winning *Prince of Thieves*, sets this dark piece in the small town of Black Falls, Massachusetts, where native son Don Maddox has returned. Nobody seems to know why Maddox, who left on a scholarship, is back and working with the small corrupt police force, but he's certainly asking a lot of questions especially about a local sex offender who seems to have disappeared. This is a beautifully written thriller which sacrifices breathless pace for a slower build up of tension guaranteed to keep the pages turning. A genuine whodunit, it's ending came as a complete surprise to me.

***THE BLADE ITSELF*, Marcus Sakey, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95**

This first novel is getting all kinds of attention from the likes of Ken Bruen, Lee Child and George Pelecanos. And we're still several weeks away from publication. The praise heaped on this literary thriller is well deserved. Danny Carter has everything going for him including a well-paying job and a girlfriend. But it wasn't always that way. Back in the day Danny and his friend Evan were wild, and one particular night's folly sent Evan to jail and set Danny on the straight and narrow. Now Evan is out of jail and he thinks Danny owes him a favor. Danny thinks he might too, but he doesn't want anything to do with what Evan has in mind. Still, it's hard to resist this one last job to make amends and it's not like there isn't anything in it for Danny! Reading how Danny faces and resolves his dilemma is a real treat.

***PROBABLE CAUSE*, Theresa Schwegel, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

I completely missed this author's first book, *Officer Down*. And then it went on to win the Edgar for Best First Novel! Reading this, I can see why. Set in Chicago, *Probable Cause* tells the story of cops—good cops, bad cops, mediocre cops. And a cop is all Ray Weiss has ever wanted to be. What takes him by surprise is the company in which he finds himself. The initiation that the officers in Chicago's District 20 put him through will force him to make a choice, and it could well endanger everything he holds dear, especially his career. Schwegel writes the kind of prose that calls out for the words "gritty," "hard-boiled," and "dark" My favorite words.

***THE MAN WHO SAVED BRITAIN*, Simon Winder, Farrar, Straus and Giroux. \$24.95**

I could not resist picking this up during the week that *Casino Royale* opened with a new actor playing James Bond. This is about Bond, yes, but it's about so much more. The author grew up in England when the movies were taking the country by storm (he's a bit too young to have grown up as Fleming was writing the books). What he observes, in retrospect, is a character who embraced all that was glorious (and shameful) about the British Empire even as that Empire was fading into the sunset. Indeed, the worse the situation became for that island nation—the once-booming car industry went bust with the rise of the Japanese compact and cheaper car—the more powerful James Bond became, as he traveled the world vanquishing England's foes and assorted villains—like those Japanese. I grew up in England as Fleming was writing his books, and, while I cannot refute what Winder says about the death throes of the Empire, his take on it all seems just too cynical (or am I being too chauvinistic?). What I can't deny is how the books and films seemed to be directed towards boosting the sagging self-confidence of a once-mighty nation. I found this nothing short of totally fascinating.

ON MY READING LIST

***THE PHYSICIAN'S TALE*, Ann Benson, Delacorte. \$24.00**

Benson returns to the cycle she started with *The Plague Tales* and *The Burning Road*. In the 14th Century, the Black Death has devastated Europe. Meanwhile, in the near future, life has virtually shut down across the world due to a reappearance of the deadly Dr. Sam, an even deadlier virus. Benson, traveling back and forth in time, spins yarns that are part futuristic thriller and part historical epic.

***THE WILDFIRE SEASON*, Andrew Pyper, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

Fire chief Miles McEwan of Ross River in the Yukon is a difficult man to know. He keeps himself to himself and no one gets close except the blackened specter of a young man only Miles can see. It is wildfire season and a fire, set by human hands, begins its race towards the town's edge and, deep in the forest, someone is contemplating murder. Miles embarks on a desperate rescue mission which includes his own five-year-old daughter. Pyper wrote the powerful *Lost Girls* which turned up on many best-of-the-year lists, including mine.

***IN THIS RAIN*, S.J. Rozan, Delacorte. \$24.00**

Three years ago, a child's death sent an innocent man to prison. Ex-con Joe Cole, a former Buildings Department inspector, now lives a broken life until a woman's murder and the death of a young man open old wounds, sending Joe and his former partner on a desperate race to expose the secrets that help the powerful hide their crimes. Edgar award winner Rozan knows her architecture and knows her New York, making this a must read for me.

THE CRIMSON PORTRAIT, Jody Shields, Little Brown. \$23.99

Set in England in 1915, Shields' second novel (after the haunting *The Fig Eater*) takes on a true but little known event in World War I when surgeons were attempting to repair mutilated soldiers with face transplants. On a country estate near London, a young woman mourns the death of her husband. Her home has been turned into a military hospital and the young widow befriends a young soldier whose face, concealed by bandages, she cannot see. The friendship takes a bizarre turn when she sees the opportunity to remake the young soldier in the image of her lost husband.

AWARDS

In case you missed them....

ELLIS PETERS HISTORICAL CRIME AWARD

Red Sky Lament, Edward Wright WINNER
The Pale Blue Eye, Louis Bayard
Nefertiti: The Book of the Dead, Nick Drake
The Janissary Tree, Jason Goodwin
The Sultan's Seal, Jenny White
Sovereign, C.J. Sansom

SHAMUS AWARDS**BEST HARDCOVER**

The Lincoln Lawyer, Michael Connelly WINNER
Oblivion, Peter Abrahams
The Forgotten Man, Robert Crais
In A Teapot, Terence Faherty
The Man with Iron-On Badge, Lee Goldberg
Cinnamon Kiss, Walter Mosley

BEST FIRST NOVEL

Forcing Amaryllis, Louis Ure WINNER
Blood Ties, Lori G. Armstrong
Still River, Harry Hunsicker
The Devil's Right Hand, J.D. Rhoades

ANTHONY AWARDS**BEST MYSTERY NOVEL**

Mercy Falls, William Kent Krueger WINNER
Bloodlines, Jane Burke
Lincoln Lawyer, Michael Connelly
Red Leaves, Thomas H. Cook
To the Power of Three, Laura Lippman

BEST FIRST MYSTERY**Tilt-a-Whirl, Chris Grabenstein WINNER***The Baby Game, Randall Hicks**Die A Little, Megan Abbott**Immoral, Brian Freeman**Officer Down, Theresa Schwegel***MACAVITY AWARDS****BEST NOVEL****The Lincoln Lawyer, Michael Connelly****BEST FIRST NOVEL****Immoral, Brian Freeman****BARRY AWARDS****BEST NOVEL****Red Leaves, Thomas H. Cook****BEST FIRST NOVEL****Cold Granite, Stuart MacBride****BEST THRILLER****Company Man, Joseph Finder****BEST BRITISH FIRST NOVEL****The Field of Blood, Denise Mina****NEWS FROM THE UK*****GREEN EYE*, Vena Cork, *Headline*.**

This is the third in the Thorn series.

***THE WAXMAN MURDERS*, Paul Doherty, *Headline*.**

No information here. But it is Doherty!

***THE MALICE OF UNNATURAL DEATH*, Michael Jecks, *Headline*.**

No information. An historical no doubt.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH**Arsenault, Mark, *Gravewriter*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95.** Billy Povitch, who lost his wife in a car crash, plans to kill the man who was at the wheel the night of his wife's death, but a summons to jury duty for a murder trial changes his plans.

Ballard, Mignon F., *The Angel and the Jabberwocky Murders*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Augusta Goodnight, heavenly sleuth and guardian angel, turns up when young women, students at the local college, start to disappear.

Bannister, Jo, *Requiem For a Dealer*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Brodie Farrell gets involved when a seemingly innocuous accident on the road leaves her friend Daniel shaken. The other participant in the accident, a young hysterical girl, is accusing Daniel of trying to kill her.

Barron, Stephanie, *Jane and the Barque of Frailty*, Bantam. \$24.00. Jane Austen is staying with her brother and his wife in London while she awaits publication of her first novel. When a disgraced beauty is murdered, Jane's attempts to learn the truth lead her into the heart of a conspiracy, one with roots in the French Revolution.

Cohen, Nancy J., *Perish By Pedicure*, Kensington. \$22.00. When a Florida beauty show becomes a murder site, salon owner Marla Shore investigates.

Curzon, Clare, *The Glass Wall*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. An old woman, who can't even get out of bed by herself, falls from a seventh story window. Superintendent Mike Yeadings and Sergeant Rosemary Zycynski lead the investigation.

Farmer, Jerrilyn, *Desperately Seeking Sushi*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Madeline Bean, amateur sleuth and gourmet cook, finds herself in the cut-throat (literally) world of real estate.

Furth, Robin, and King, Stephen, *Stephen King's The Dark Tower: The Complete Concordance*, Scribner. \$22.00. This is the definitive encyclopedic reference to all seven volumes of King's epic fantasy.

Graham, Michael, *The Snow Angel*, IPG. \$23.95. Inspired by a true story, this is the tale of three detectives who confront their personal and racial demons as they search for a kidnapped boy the week before Christmas.

Graves, Sarah, *Trap Door*, Bantam. \$22.00. A Home Repair is Homicide Mystery.

Greenwood, Kerry, *Death at Victoria Dock*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. When 1920s Australian flapper Phryne Fisher promised to avenge the murder of a young man who died in her arms, she had no idea she would enter an exotic world filled with tattoo parlors, spiritualist halls, and murderous anarchists.

Hart, Ellen, *Night Vision*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Reclusive Hollywood actress Joanna Kasimir is in Minneapolis to star in a production of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*. Her old friends amateur sleuth Jane Lawless and Cordelia Thorn sense that something is amiss.

Highland, Frederick, *Night Falls on Damascus*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A historical mystery set in the dangerous world of 1930s Syria, where a criminal puzzle could unravel a tenuous peace.

Johansen, Iris, *Stalemate*, Bantam. \$26.00. Eve Duncan, forensic sculptor, is approached by a man who has a reconstruction for her. He is willing to ensure her cooperation with an offer she cannot refuse.

McInerny, Ralph, *The Letter Killeth*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A rash of threatening letters on the Notre Dame campus sparks an investigation by PI Philip Knight and his brother Roger, a Catholic Studies professor.

Meier, Leslie, *Bake Sale Murder*, Kensington. \$22.00. When the town complainer doesn't show up for her shift at the bake sale, part-time reporter and mother of four Lucy Stone finds the woman dead on her kitchen floor.

Mortimer, John, *Rumpole and the Reign of Terror*, Viking. \$24.95. While defending a dull theft charge, Rumpole finds that the new terrorist laws have hamstrung his courts.

Navarro, Julia, *Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud*, Bantam. \$23.00. A fire at the Cathedral of Turin and the discovery of a mutilated body lead Italy's Art Crime Department chief Marco Valoni to discover a plot to steal the famous shroud.

O'Hehir, *Erased From Memory*, Berkley. \$23.95. Carla Day and her Egyptologist father, who suffers from Alzheimer's, investigate the murder of a man found dead with an ankh in his mouth.

Pottinger, Stanley, *The Boss*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. When Spin Patterson's wife sues him for divorce and threatens to sue him for everything he's worth, the multi-millionaire sets out to protect his empire, no matter what the cost.

Roberts, David, *The Quality of Mercy*, Carroll & Graf. \$24.95. As the Nazis seize Austria in 1938, well-known anti-Fascist correspondent Verity Brown is deported along with a young Jew she saved – but not for long. He is soon murdered at Lord Mountbatten's estate.

Shannon, John, *The Dark Streets*, Pegasus. \$25.00. In L.A.'s Koreatown, PI Jack Liffey searches for a missing film student – but he's not the only one looking for her. The girl was involved with militant Asian radicals and is wanted by Homeland Security.

Siverling, Michael, *The Sorcerer's Circle*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Jason Wilder is about to close the private investigation office owned by his mother when an elderly man comes in. Someone is trying to kill him. Jason gives him the brush off but later learns that the old man has indeed been murdered.

Spring, Michelle, *The Night Lawyer*, Ballantine. \$24.95. A young woman accepts a job with a daily tabloid. She arrives in the evening to take a look at the morning edition and, while the docks along the Thames are busy during the day, she soon learns that nighttime is an entirely different matter.

Thurlo, David and Aimee, *Surrogate Evil*, Forge. Half vampire Navajo police officer Lee Nez uses his night walking abilities to bring down an Albuquerque king pin.

Twining, James, *The Black Sun*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. Three cities and three bizarre thefts. Tom Kirk follows an elaborate trail of clues laid down by a secret order of SS knights in the dying days of Nazi Germany that will lead to a fabled treasure lost for over half a century.

Weir, Charlene, *Edge of Midnight*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Cary Black leaves her abusive policeman husband and flees to the small town of Hampstead, Kansas. When she arrives, she finds the woman who is to shelter her missing.

Wilson, Derek, *Unquiet Spirit*, Carroll & Graf. \$25.95. A psychic investigation of a haunted Cambridge college turns into a murder investigation for parapsychologist Dr. Nathaniel Gye when the professor most opposed to the ghost hunt drops dead.

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