

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***DEEP STORM*, Lincoln Child, Doubleday. \$24.95**

Beneath the Atlantic Ocean is a science research facility. Its purpose is to excavate a recently discovered site believed to be the legendary Atlantis, the ancient civilization steeped in myth. Dr. Peter Crane is asked to visit the site following a series of strange illnesses among the crew members. While trying to uncover the cause, Crane comes to understand that this operation beneath the sea and out of sight of the world conceals something far more complicated and deadly than a medical mystery. As always, Child managed to pull me in to his thriller. Guilty? Yes. A pleasure? Definitely.

***THE CLOUD OF UNKNOWING*, Thomas H. Cook, Harcourt. \$24.00**

David Sears is being interrogated by Detective Petrie. We don't know if Sears is a suspect of some kind or if he is helping the police with an investigation. But the story he has to tell is chilling. His sister, Diana, married to Mark, is becoming convinced that the drowning death of their son, Jason, was no accident. As her e-mails and faxes to David become more frantic, she starts to build a case against her husband, while David fears for her sanity. The tension here is palpable and the ending, as always with Cook, astounding. I didn't love this quite as much as I loved *Red Leaves*, Cook's last book, but I believe I'm in the minority.

***THE BOOK OF NAMES*, Jill Gregory and Karen Tintori, St. Martin's Press. \$19.95**

The premise is fascinating. By Kabbalistic tradition, the Book of Names contains the names of each generation's thirty-six righteous souls, or Hidden Ones. It is the merits of these souls that keep the world stable. As this story begins, Hidden Ones start to die of unnatural causes, and the world grows increasingly unstable. Professor David Shepherd finds himself battling the Gnoseos, a secret religious sect whose goal is to destroy the world. And speaking of names, surely there has to be one soon for the sub-genre to which this thriller belongs. Maybe a DBrown Thriller or an Armageddon. Whatever. I find them hard to resist. So far, they are uniformly well-written, thought-provoking, and a whole lot of fun.

***THE FIFTH VIAL*, Michael Palmer, St. Martin's Press. \$25.95**

Natalie Reyes is suspended from Harvard Medical School after an act of insubordination. Her mentor sends her to Rio De Janeiro to present a medical paper while she awaits reinstatement. Medical genius Joe Anson is working on a serum which could save lives,

if he can only stay alive to complete his research. Chicago detective Ben Callahan is hired to find the identity of a dead man. These three people have no apparent connection. This medical thriller is so twisty, so full of action, that it is almost impossible to put down. And the premise is frightening. Ever wonder where your blood samples go? Ever wonder who determines who gets an organ transplant?

***THE TERROR*, Dan Simmons, Little Brown. \$25.99**

I am a huge fan of Dan Simmons but am intimidated by historical thrillers running to 700 plus pages. They have to be extremely well written to engage me for the time needed to appreciate a slowly developing story. So I approached this novel with some trepidation. I needn't have worried. I was transported. Set in the mid-nineteenth century, the story takes place aboard *HMS Terror* which is trying to forge a northwest passage through the Arctic. The hardships are extraordinary as *The Terror* remains trapped in the Arctic ice for two years, but they are nothing compared to the fear faced by the crew as something out there in the darkness stalks the ship, snatching members of the expedition who are never seen again, or leaving their mangled bodies on the ice. Read this in the warm. I discovered that the chill created by Simmons became very real.

ON MY READING LIST

***ZUGZWANG*, Ronan Bennett, Bloomsbury. \$24.95**

This mystery set in St. Petersburg in 1914 begins with the murder of a newspaper editor. Dr. Otto Spethmann, psychoanalyst, receives a visit from the police soon after. There has been another murder in the city and somehow he is implicated. Dr. Spethmann is drawn deeper into the intrigue as he discovers that he, his patients, and his daughter may all be pawns in a game larger than anything he could have imagined. Bennett is an extraordinary British writer and this book was originally serialized in one of Britain's daily newspapers in the tradition of Charles Dickens and Arthur Conan Doyle.

***SACRED GAMES*, Vikram Chandra, HarperCollins. \$27.95**

Sartaj Singh, a Bombay police officer, receives an anonymous tip which promises an opportunity to capture Ganesh Gaitonde, criminal overlord of Mumbai. The confrontation between Sartaj and Ganesh is at the heart of this literary crime novel as it becomes clear that the game these two players thought they were engaged in is in fact part of a much larger scenario. This novel is already a huge success in Europe.

***UNTITLED #2*, Robert Crais, Simon & Schuster. \$25.95**

I can't tell if the "title" here is real or a holding action until inspiration hits. It doesn't matter, Crais's latest spotlights Joe Pike with Elvis Cole helping out, and that means a must read for us fans.

FORESTS OF THE NIGHT, David Stuart Davies, St. Martin's Minotaur.**\$23.95**

Invalidated out of the army after losing an eye, John Hawke sets up as a private detective. In the autumn of 1940 he is engaged to investigate the mysterious death of a woman who led a double life. What is the connection between her brutal murder and the fading film actor Gordon Moore? This turns up on my list because I cannot resist stories set in wartime London plus the author is an internationally recognized expert on Sherlock Holmes and Conan Doyle.

DUST, Martha Grimes, Viking. \$25.95

An old friend pulls Richard Jury into the investigation surrounding the murder of wealthy bachelor Billy Maples. Jury finds himself in the Sussex town of Rye where he stays at Lamb House, the home where Henry James composed his three masterworks. Can't resist this one since Rye is a favorite town of mine and James's house is just around the corner from one of the greatest English Inns, *The Mermaid Inn*, which was built in 1156 and completely renovated in 1420, and serves the best roast beef.

TROUBLE, Jesse Kellerman, Putnam. \$24.95

It's clear that Kellerman has inherited writing talent from his parents. His first book was very well received. His second tells the story of a medical student, Jonah, living in New York City, who stumbles across a murder in progress. He rushes to the defense of the woman and inadvertently kills her attacker. The media attention, the family of the dead man, and even the grateful victim all combine to pull Jonah into a nightmare from which he cannot seem to wake.

THE COLDEST BLOOD, Jim Kelly, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95

Kelly's psychological mysteries set in the Fens of Lincolnshire in England have been a favorite of mine since the first, *The Water Clock*. In this outing newspaper reporter Philip Dryden takes a look at a series of seemingly accidental deaths by freezing in the Arctic temperatures in the region. He follows the clues to a brilliantly executed crime. Meanwhile his wife, Laura, is slowly emerging from years in a coma and she's not sure she wants to go on living.

THE STRANGLER, William Landay, Delacorte. \$24.00

In 1963 Boston is a nervous city. There's a killer on the loose who has already claimed a dozen victims. For the three Daley brothers – Joe, a cop, Michael a prosecutor, and Ricky, a thief - crime is the family business, but when the Strangler strikes too close to home, they must each look deeper into their family's lethal secrets and into the one death that has changed them forever. Landay is the author of *Mission Flats* which won the prestigious Creasey Memorial Dagger Award for Best First Crime Novel and the Barry Award.

KILLING JOHNNY FRY, Walter Mosley, Bloomsbury. \$23.95

This is not a mystery, it is a portrayal of a man on a quest for sexual redemption in midlife. The author describes it as a "sexistential novel" and I would normally pass right

over that description but since that author is Mosley, attention must be paid. This is apparently sexually explicit and I'll be interested to see if the critics call it art or pornography. Despite it being on my reading list, I make no promises to myself.

***FIND ME*, Carol O'Connell, Putnam. \$24.95**

After a rather long hiatus New York detective Kathy Mallory, one of the more complex and interesting protagonists in mystery fiction, has returned. We are going to learn more about her background as her hunt for a brutal killer reveals much about her past. Moving the action away from New York, O'Connell begins her story in Chicago, on Adams Street, also known as Route 66, where graves of missing children are being discovered.

***A FALSE MIRROR*, Charles Todd, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95**

This series featuring Scotland Yard Inspector Ian Rutledge just seems to get stronger with each entry (this is the eighth). Here Rutledge is in Hampton Regis on the southern coast of England where his former trench mate is accused of beating the husband of a woman who jilted him. He wants Rutledge to prove his innocence. Set after World War I, the writing by the mother-and-son team has always managed to capture the melancholy that must have been prevalent at that time.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***HEAD GAMES*, Thomas B. Cavanagh, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

Introducing retired police detective Mike Garrity who, with two ex-wives, a fifteen-year-old daughter who hates him, and a brain tumor he calls "Bob" doesn't have a lot to live for. But when he's asked to find the front man of his daughter's favorite band, he sees a way to earn her respect. A PI with a brain tumor for a sidekick? This series (I'm assuming it will be a series) is bound to appeal to the fans of Carl Hiaasen.

***BIG CITY, BAD BLOOD*, Sean Chercover, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95**

Ray Dudgeon, a newspaper reporter turned private detective, takes on a job as bodyguard to a Hollywood locations manager who saw something he shouldn't have. Now he's a prosecution witness against a suspected member of the Chicago Outfit. When people start dying, everything goes to hell.

***INHERITANCE*, Natalie Danford, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95**

After her father dies, Olivia discovers a deed in his name to a house in Italy. She travels to the town of Urbino where, at first, she is charmed by the historic, art-laden city. But as Olivia looks into her father's past, she uncovers the secret that caused her father to leave his family and his country behind.

***EXIT A*, Anthony Swofford, Scribner. \$25.00**

The year is 1989 and Severin Boxx, aged seventeen, lives on an Air Force base in Japan. He is secretly in love with Virginia, the daughter of the general who runs the base.

Virginia, whose Japanese mother died in childbirth, has fallen in with the Japanese Underground. She disappears and Severin returns to the States. Now Severin, in his thirties, prepares to find the long-lost Virginia. Swofford is the author of *Jarhead*, his military memoir.

NEWS FROM THE UK

SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS, Boris Akunin. Weidenfeld & Nicolson

Erast Fandorin faces two very different adversaries: one, a swindler abroad in Moscow in 1886; the other, a serial killer who strikes terror into the heart of the Moscow slums in 1889.

STRANGERS, Carla Banks. HarperCollins

Psychological mystery. No further information.

LOSING YOU, Nicci French. Michael Joseph

Nina Landry is supposed to be taking her children on a Christmas vacation. But her 15-year-old daughter has yet to return from a night out.

SEVENTH SACRAMENT, David Hewson. Macmillan

Nic Costa and Leo Falcone are back in Rome where they soon find themselves embroiled in a mystery involving the ancient cult of Mithras and the House of Bones.

PAINTED LADY, Edward Marston. Allison & Busby

Historical. No further information.

THREE KINGS OF COLOGNE, Kate Sedley. Severn House

The murdered body of a young woman is unearthed on land which belonged to the Magdalen Nunnery. Roger the Chapman investigates.

WRAPPING UP 2006

The New York Times published its 100 Notable Books of the Year recently. I was shocked, shocked that there were so few mysteries included, but here are books from the list that should be in your collection:

Arthur and George by **Julian Barnes**. A metaphysical mystery starring Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

Forgetfulness by **Ward Just**. An American spy revisits his earlier life after his French wife is murdered. Considered one of Just's best outings.

The Keep by **Jennifer Egan**. Set in a castle and a prison, old grievances surface.

Lisey's Story by **Stephen King**. The widow of a celebrated writer takes up arms against a murderous stalker.

One Good Turn by **Kate Atkinson**. A road-rage incident in Edinburgh sets off a string of murders.

Only Revolutions by **Mark Z. Danielewski**. A road trip novel that reads like a head trip.

The Road by **Cormac McCarthy**. This apocalyptic novel turns up on many lists as best book of the year.

Special Topics in Calamity Physics by **Marisha Pessl**. A first novel. Young woman joins a circle of students around a charismatic teacher with a tragic secret.

Suite Francaise by **Irene Nemirovsky**. Author's two novellas written just before she was murdered at Auschwitz in 1942.

Terrorist by **John Updike**. An American high school boy is intoxicated by Islamic radicalism.

While I applaud the above titles and have all of them in my collection, here is my list of mystery favorites for the year, alphabetical by author:

Kate Atkinson – *One Good Turn*. Atkinson's second mystery does not have the heft of her first, but that still puts her way ahead of many more seasoned writers.

Sara Gran – *Dope*. This is a little noir gem set in New York in the 1950s.

Elizabeth Hyde – *The Abortionist's Daughter*. A wonderful page-turner and a compelling whodunit.

Cody McFadyen – *Shadow Men*. A first mystery introducing a troubled investigator. Very brutal but the writing shimmers.

Patrick Quinlan – *Smoked*. First in a series I hope. I'm betting Quinlan is going to become a force to be reckoned with. Depends on his next outing.

Jed Rubinfeld – *The Interpretation of Murder*. Another first mystery. Ignore the bad reviews (it did get some) and concentrate on New York at the turn of the last century and Freud's visit.

Karin Slaughter – *Triptych*. A stand alone and Slaughter's best book to date for me.

Nick Stone – *Mr. Clarinet*. Yet another first effort. This will be published here next year. Extraordinary story in an extraordinary setting (Haiti).

Daniel Woodrell – *Winter's Bone*. Woodrell continues to be one of our great under appreciated writers.

Jess Walter – *The Zero*. This harrowing account of the days following 9/11 will set the literary standard.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Abbott, Megan, *The Song is You*, Simon & Schuster. \$23.00. This tale, based on the real-life disappearance of actress Jean Spangler in 1949, is getting lots of pre-pub. buzz.

Berlinski, Claire, *Lion Eyes*, Ballantine. \$23.95. During a heat wave in Paris an American novelist gets into an online affair with a man who may be a spy.

Bodman, Karma Small, *Checkmate*, Forge. \$23.95. Sparks fly between a female computer genius and an Air Force Lt. Colonel as a Muslim terror group works to start war between Afghanistan and India.

Braun, Lillian Jackson, *The Cat Who Had 60 Whiskers*, Putnam. \$23.95. Koko and Yum Yum obviously have more than nine lives each as they take on their twenty-ninth case along with their owner, James Qwilleran.

Clarke, Richard A., *Breakpoint*, Putnam. \$25.95. A group of terrorists take the next step. Their aim is to disconnect the globe – destroy computer grids, communications satellites, Internet cable centers, and biotech firms – and send the world’s economies, governments, and communication systems into chaos.

Cooper, Natasha, *Evil is Done*, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$24.95. Barrister Trish Maguire learns of a violent death that will force her to ask if her first client is a murderer.

Crider, Bill, *Murder Among the O.W.L.S.*, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95. Sheriff Dan Rhodes’s inquiry about a stray cat leads him to what appears to be an accidental death, except it’s no accident.

Darwin, Emma, *The Mathematics of Love*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Set in 1819 and 1976, a debut that takes on the horrors of war and the timeless power of love.

Deutermann, P.T., *Spider Mountain*, St. Martin’s Press. \$24.95. Ex-cop Cam Richter pursues a vicious gang through the Smoky Mountain wilderness.

Diamond, Susan, *What Goes Around*, Wm. Morrow \$24.95. Five women come together for a little vengeance and to make sure that justice is done.

Estill, Katie, *Dahlia’s Gone*, St. Martin’s Press. \$23.95. Sand Williams is asked by her neighbor to keep an eye on her son and step-daughter while she and her husband are out of town. When Sand checks in on the two teenagers, she discovers that one of them has been brutally murdered.

Evanovich, Janet, *Plum Love*, St. Martin’s Press. \$16.95. Despite no number in the title, this is definitely a Stephanie Plum novel, as our Steph and the gang ring in the new year with laughs and thrills.

Fairstein, Linda, *Bad Blood*, Scribner. \$26.00. Alexandra Cooper is in court prosecuting a businessman charged with the murder of his wife when an explosion rocks Manhattan. An accident? Retribution? Or terrorism?

Folsom, Allan, *The Machiavelli Covenant*, Forge. \$25.95. A string of murders leads former LAPD detective Nicholas Marten to an illegal bio-weapons program and a secret order that controls the secrets to political power.

Frazer, Margaret, *The Traitor’s Tale*, Berkley. \$24.95. Dame Frevisse teams up with a wandering player to track down a list of traitors to the crown, even as she starts to wonder if she herself is part of a larger conspiracy.

Fulmer, David, *The Dying Crapshooter’s Blues*, Harcourt. \$23.00. In 1920s Atlanta, a thief moves uneasily in both black and white circles. But the murder of a black gambler and a Yuletide jewelry robbery soon put the smooth operator into a deadly vise.

Gardner, Lisa, *Hide*, Bantam. \$25.00. Annabelle Mary Granger opens up a newspaper one morning and discovers she is supposed to be dead. This discovery thrusts her into the center of a twenty-year-old crime with terrifying repercussions.

Grippando, James, *When Darkness Falls*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. Miami attorney Jack Swyteck takes on a homeless man as a client and nothing is as it seems.

- Haig, Brian, *Man in the Middle***, Warner Books. \$25.99. Army lawyer Sean Drummond is caught between duty to Washington's elite and the soldiers in Iraq.
- Harper, Karen, *The Hooded Hawke***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. The ninth installment of the author's Elizabeth I mystery series features the young Francis Drake and quite a few dead bodies.
- Hollon, Frank Turner, *Blood and Circumstances***, MacAdam Cage. \$23.00. A prison psychiatrist's pre-trial interviews with a man accused of killing his brother reveal an intricate and intense tale of family dysfunction and madness.
- Jance, J.A., *Web of Evil***, Touchstone. \$25.95. Second in series featuring ex-television journalist Ali Reynolds.
- Johnson, Dolores, *Pressed to Kill***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Mandy Dyer, dry cleaner, notices that her customer Ardith Brewster is looking good these days. She's met a new man. You know Ardith is going to turn up dead.
- Krentz, Jayne Ann, *White Lies***, Putnam. \$24.95. Paranormal power, deception and danger are the hallmarks of this tale of romantic mystery and suspense.
- Larsson, Asa, *The Blood Spilt***, Delacorte. \$22.00. The murder of a female priest sends shockwaves through a small community in Sweden. Attorney Rebecka Martinsson is drawn into the mystery and becomes consumed with the world of the dead woman, a world of hurt and healing, sin and sexuality, and lethal sacrifice.
- Lescroart, John, *The Suspect***, Dutton. \$26.95. Gina Roake, a partner in Dismas Hardy's law firm, takes on a high-profile case that becomes more and more disturbing.
- Lippman, Laura, *Baltimore Blues***, Wm. Morrow. \$19.95. To mark the 10th anniversary of the author's first novel, which introduced Tess Monaghan, comes this hardcover edition.
- McIntyre, Hope, *How To Marry a Ghost***, Mysterious Press. \$24.99. Ghost writer Lee Bartholomew returns to plan her mother's wedding and solve the murder of a competitor.
- McLarty, Ron, *Traveler***, Viking. \$24.95. Jono Riley makes a trip back to his roots in East Providence, Rhode Island, when he learns that the first girl he ever loved has died.
- Martin, P.D., *Body Count***, Mira. \$24.95. As the FBI investigates a serial killer, profiler Sophie Anderson finds herself dreaming of his victims.
- Mooney, Chris, *The Missing***, Atria Books. \$25.00. When a serial killer begins killing young women, Darby is shocked to discover that this case is linked to her own past.
- Peters, Christoph, *The Fabric of Night***, Doubleday. \$23.95. Albin Kranz and his lover Livia are on vacation in Istanbul when Albin witnesses a murder in the hotel across the way but, like a Hitchcock film, there is no evidence of the crime and nobody will believe him.
- Reaves, Sam, *Homicide 69***, Carroll & Graf. \$26.95. Distracted by worries over his eldest son stationed in Vietnam, Chicago detective Mike Dooley investigates the murder of a playboy bunny which he suspects was not a sex killing.
- Rule, Anne, *Too Late to Say Goodbye***, Free Press. \$26.00. This true story begins in December 2004 when Jenn Corbin, the wife of a successful dentist, was found dead with a bullet in her head, apparently a suicide. What followed was one of the strangest murder investigations of our time.
- Stabenow, Dana, *A Deeper Sleep***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. P.I. Kate Shugak is working on a case involving the murder of a woman by her husband. He's been the

subject of investigations before and he's never been convicted. And he isn't this time. Kate and her colleagues are convinced he's gotten away with murder.

Thomas, Donald, *The Execution of Sherlock Holmes*, Pegasus. \$24.00. Crossing historical fact with fiction, Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson are brought out of retirement to investigate the most notorious true crime in the annals of history.

Unger, Lisa, *Silver of Truth*, Crown. \$23.00. Ridley Jones picks up prints at a photo lab and finds herself hunting down a ghost and in the center of a global network of crime.

Willig, Lauren, *The Deception of the Emerald Ring*, Dutton. \$24.95. The third in the Pink Carnation series is full of romance, adventure, and mistaken identities.

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