

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS*, Giles Blunt, Henry Holt. \$19.95**

Blunt's marvelous series set in Algonquin Bay continues, as that small community tries to cope with an unusual outbreak of suicides. Detective John Cardinal, called out to the scene of a jumper, discovers that the victim is his own wife who has, apparently, succumbed to her battle with manic depression. When Cardinal receives anonymous notes about his wife's death, he begins to suspect homicide. This continues to be one of the best written and least read series. I cannot understand how this winner of Britain's Silver Dagger and Canada's Arthur Ellis Award (and nominee for other awards) continues to be overlooked by the public. I'd hate to see Blunt become one of the all-too numerous talents who never get their due.

***HEART-SHAPED BOX*, Joe Hill, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

This supernatural thriller has a unique premise: Judas Coyne, once a legendary metal rocker, is a collector of the bizarre. When his assistant tells him that he has found a ghost for sale on the internet, Jude knows he has to have it in his collection. When it is delivered, Jude discovers that it is the vengeful soul of Craddock McDermott, the stepfather of Anna who killed herself when Jude dumped her – Jude is a serial dumper of women. And now that he has the ghost, Jude can't get rid of it. Joe Hill does not want to be known as Stephen King's son but, folks, he is. He wants to be judged on the book alone. Despite wanting to love this book (because he's Stephen King's son and because I love a good ghost story), I didn't. There came a point when I found I didn't care enough for Judas Coyne or whether or not he got rid of the ghost. Hill is getting good reviews, just not from me.

***CON ED*, Matthew Klein, Warner Books. \$23.99**

January isn't over and already this is on my Ten Best of the Year list. This caper introduces Kip Largo who was once the best con man in the biz. He's been trying to go straight since leaving prison, working at a dry cleaners, but his heart isn't in it. He's sorely tempted when Lauren Napier, the wife of billionaire venture capitalist Ed Napier, asks him to steal her husband's money for her, but he doesn't give in until he learns that his only son is in debt to the Russian mob. This is a very smart, very funny story. The twists, the turns, and the cons kept me riveted. This is being billed as a debut novel. It isn't. Matthew Klein has already been published in England. His book, *Switchback*, came out there in November. You will want that after reading this.

***BORDERLANDS*, Brian McGilloway, Macmillan New Writing**

Reviewers always hope that a book by “the next big author” will fall into their hands. It often does, although that author does not necessarily get the attention the reviewer thinks or hope he or she will. Nevertheless, it is a thrilling moment, and it does happen a couple of times a year, thus proving that we reviewers are an optimistic and excitable group.

*Borderlands* is the first in a series featuring Inspector Benedict Devlin whose turf butts up against the Tyrone-Downal border between the North and South of Ireland, an area where the investigative team must first establish exactly whose case this is. The murder of local teenager Angela Cashell falls within Devlin’s jurisdiction and, as he begins his investigation, he is also aware that Angela’s father has his own ideas about who is responsible. When another teenager is murdered, Devlin discovers a link between the killings and the disappearance of a prostitute twenty-five years ago. There. That’s the bare bones of the plot. I hear rumblings of “the next Ian Rankin” coming from England but I find that comparisons are rarely helpful. McGilloway is a lovely writer. You’ll want to sample his first book. Unfortunately, it isn’t available in this country, and I’m told that there are no plans to publish it here at the moment. But you know what you have to do.

***THE ECHELON VENDETTA*, David Stone, Putnam. \$25.95**

This international spy thriller is, I think, a first for this author, and a very satisfying read it is. Micah Dalton works for the CIA. He’s the man they send in when there’s some cleaning up to do – an agent gets in trouble, or worse. When his friend Porter Nauman turns up dead in an idyllic Tuscan hill town, it looks like a suicide of the most gruesome kind. Dalton, however, has questions, and when Nauman’s family is then slaughtered back home in London, Dalton gets himself heavily involved. Reading this reminded me of reading a James Bond novel, and I mean that as the highest compliment.

## ON MY READING LIST

***NAPOLEON’S PYRAMIDS*, William Dietrich, HarperCollins. \$24.95**

Ethan Gage, assistant to Benjamin Franklin and expatriate in post-Revolutionary France, wins a medallion in a card game. That night he is framed for murder and barely escapes France with his life. Faced with prison or death, Gage is offered a third choice – to accompany the new Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte, as France sails to conquer Egypt. Gage, once he arrives in Egypt, discovers that the medallion may solve one of the greatest riddles in history – who built the Great Pyramids and why. This is getting terrific advance word of mouth and lands on my list because of that.

***MISTRESS OF THE ART OF DEATH*, Ariana Franklin, Putnam. \$25.95**

Set in medieval Cambridge at the time of King Henry I, this historical from the author of *City of Shadows* begins with the murder of four children. The crimes are immediately blamed on the Jewish community and taken as evidence that Jews sacrifice Christian children. No friend of the Jews, Henry knows that without the taxes received from

Jewish merchants, his treasuries would be empty, so calls on his cousin, the King of Sicily, to send over a “master of the art of death,” an early version of the medical examiner. The Italian doctor chosen is in fact a woman, and she and her companion discover that they are looking at the work of a serial killer (not a term that was known then) who may have been on a Crusade with the King. Franklin, I’m sure, will combine her considerable historical knowledge with the modern forensic thriller.

**WINTERWOOD, Patrick McCabe, Bloomsbury. \$23.95**

When Redmond Hatch, devoted husband and father, revisits the secluded mountains where he grew up, he meets Auld Pappie Ned, a harmless local fiddler and teller of tales. Or so Hatch thinks. Ned sets off a chain of events - from the disappearance of Hatch’s daughter to the remembrance of a troubled boyhood to a secret glimpse into an unstable marriage. Nothing, and no one, are ever quite what they seem in this tale of love, death, and identity. McCabe is considered by many to be one of Ireland’s finest living writers.

**HIGH PROFILE, Robert B. Parker, Putnam. \$24.95**

When the body of a controversial talk-show host is discovered hanging from a tree in the town of Paradise, police chief Jesse Stone finds himself investigating a highly public case. Then the body of a young woman is discovered, and Stone’s life kicks into high gear as he delves into the stormy relationship of the victims.

**STEP ON A CRACK, James Patterson with Michael Ledwidge, Little Brown. \$27.99**

The prolific Mr. Patterson starts a new series here. During a state funeral for a former First Lady in New York City, armed men, disguised as monks, seize the church and seal themselves inside with more than 100 of the most powerful people in America. Enter NYPD officer Michael Bennett, lead negotiator, whose wife has just been diagnosed with a devastating disease and who faces the prospect of bringing up his 10 (yes 10) children without her. What jumps out at me is Patterson’s collaborator here. Michael Ledwidge is the author of *The Narrowback* and knows New York like the back of his hand. This should be very interesting.

## FIRST MYSTERIES

**THE LIAR’S DIARY, Patry Francis, Dutton. \$24.95**

When Ali Mather comes to town, she forms an instant friendship with Jeanne Cross. When a murderer strikes, and Jeanne’s son is arrested, we learn that the key to the crime lies in the diaries of these two very different women...but only one of them is telling the truth.

**CONSEQUENCES OF SIN, Clare Langley-Hawthorne, Viking. \$22.95**

Introducing Oxford graduate, aspiring journalist and devoted suffragette Ursula Marlow. Despite her father’s insistence that she marry, Ursula prefers championing her causes and

waiting for true love. But when her good friend is accused of murdering her lover, Ursula, convinced of her friend's innocence, digs deep and discovers some startling facts. This is the first in an Edwardian mystery series featuring the heiress.

***SHADOW OF THE RAVEN*, David Sundstrand, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

Francisco Flynn, son of an Irish railroad man and a woman of the Paiute tribe, is an officer in Land Management but his real concern is for the desert's threatened animal life. When he starts to see ominous connections between human and animal deaths, he investigates. This looks to be the start of a new series.

***THE LYING TONGUE*, Andrew Wilson, Atria Books. \$24.00**

Adam Woods, fresh from University, arrives in Venice and becomes the personal assistant of novelist Gordon Crace. As Adam learns more about the scandal that brought Crace to Venice, he resolves to make his own reputation by secretly writing Crace's biography. But outsmarting Gordon Crace isn't that easy, and the two soon find themselves locked in a contest over the right to determine how the story of Crace's life will end. By the author of *Beautiful Shadow*, the biography of Patricia Highsmith.

## THE 2007 EDGAR NOMINEES

I am listing the three main categories only.

### BEST NOVEL

*The Pale Blue Eye* – Louis Bayard  
*The Janissary Tree* – Jason Goodwin  
*Gentleman and Players* – Joanne Harris  
*The Dead Hour* – Denise Mina  
*The Virgin of Small Plains* – Nancy Pickard  
*The Liberation Movements* – Olen Steinhauer

### BEST FIRST NOVEL BY AN AMERICAN AUTHOR

*The Faithful Spy* – Alex Berenson  
*Sharp Objects* – Gillian Flynn  
*King of Lies* – John Hart  
*Holmes on the Range* – Steve Hockensmith  
*A Field of Darkness* – Cornelia Read

### BEST PAPERBACK ORIGINAL

*The Goodbye Kiss* – Massimo Carlotto  
*The Open Curtain* – Brian Evenson  
*Snakeskin Shamisen* – Naomi Hirahara  
*The Deep Blue Alibi* – Paul Levine  
*City of Tiny Lights* – Patrick Neate.

How odd a group is that? The Best Novel does not specify that the author should be an American but I'm thinking that the **Mystery of Writers of America** might have showcased this country's writers a little better in this category. I'm not certain where Steinhauer comes from, but Goodwin, Harris, and Mina are, I believe, Brits.

I haven't read even one of the Best Paperback Originals which might just show how out of touch I am. But I'm betting that there are a lot of you scrambling to read these titles.

Here are my picks from the first two categories. (I'm nearly always wrong.)

***The Pale Blue Eye* - Louis Bayard**

***King of Lies* - John Hart**

## NEWS FROM THE UK

***SATURNALIA*, Lindsey Davis, Century.**

Marcus Didio Falco is pitted against his old rival, the Chief Spy Anacrites, as they race to find a famous enemy of Rome who was captured but now seems to have escaped.

***GONE TO GROUND*, John Harvey, Heinemann.**

Will Grayson and his partner Helen Walker are called in to investigate the violent death of Stephen Bryan, a gay Cambridge academic.

***THIRD HEAVEN CONSPIRACY*, Giulio Leoni, Harvill Press.**

In a disused church on the outskirts of Florence in 1300, the Master Craftsman, Ambrogio, is found murdered. Young Dante Alighieri, Prior to the City of Florence, is called in to investigate.

***SAVAGE GARDEN*, Mark Mills, HarperCollins.**

Set in Italy in 1958, this tells the story of two unsolved murders – one committed in the late Renaissance, the other in 1944 during the dying days of the German army's occupation.

***A GENTLE AXE*, R.N. Morris, Faber & Faber.**

Two frozen bodies are found in a corner of Petrovsky Park in St. Petersburg in the winter of 1867. In his first case since that described in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, Detective Porfiry Petrovich suspects a complex crime.

***JACQUOT AND THE MASTER*, Martin O'Brien, Headline.**

Chief Inspector Daniel Jacquot is called to an artist's retreat in Provence where a young woman has been murdered.

**BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

**Allen, Conrad, *Murder on the Celtic***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Latest in this delightful Ocean Liner series. This one has Sir Arthur Conan Doyle on board.

**Anderson, Patrick, *The Triumph of the Thriller***, Random House. \$24.95. A fascinating account of how and why the thriller became the world's favorite kind of book – and why that's a good thing. Non-fiction.

**Auster, Paul, *Travels in the Scriptorium***, Henry Holt. \$22.00. An old man wakes with no memory of who he is or how he arrived in an unfamiliar room. A manuscript and photographs on the desk are apparently meant to help him unravel his identity.

**Bass, Jefferson, *Flesh and Bone***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. A forensic anthropologist investigates the death of a young man. Second in the series by the founder of The Body Farm.

**Beaton, M.C., *Death of a Maid***, Mysterious Press. \$23.99. Hamish Macbeth investigates the murder of a local cleaning woman.

**Bernhardt, William, *Capital Threat***, Ballantine. \$25.95. Ben Kincaid finds himself involved in the most controversial Supreme Court nomination in the nation's history.

**Berry, Steve, *The Alexandria Link***, Ballantine. \$25.95. Bookseller Cotton Malone is on a quest for the lost Library of Alexandria, the most important collection of ancient knowledge ever assembled.

**Biddle, Cordelia Frances, *The Conjurer***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. First in a crime series set in Philadelphia in 1842 and introducing Martha Beale.

**Bland, Eleanor Taylor, *Suddenly A Stranger***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A Marti MacAlister mystery.

**Block, Paul & Vaughan, Robert, *The Masada Scroll***, Forge. \$24.95. An ancient scroll, predating the four gospels of the New Testament, combines Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. An Irish priest must unravel its secrets, but are the world's three major faiths ready to combine into one?

**Bohjalian, Chris, *The Double Bind***, St. Martin's Press. \$25.00. Laurel Estabrook works in a homeless shelter where she meets a man who used to be a successful photographer. When he dies, she becomes obsessed with his life.

**Born, James O., *Field of Fire***, Putnam. \$25.95. When a gunrunner's car explodes, Alex "Rocket" Duarte, an ATF agent, finds himself hunting for what appears to be a serial bomber.

**Borthwick, J.S., *Foiled Again***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Sarah Deane investigates when a student at The Drama School at Bowmouth College is killed.

**Brown, Rita Mae, *Puss 'n Cahoots***, Bantam. \$25.00. Harry and Fair Haristeen get to go on their long-delayed second honeymoon, but when their hosts are robbed, Mrs. Murphy has to pounce in, lend a paw as it were, to solve the mystery.

**Browne, Robert Gregory, *Kiss Her Goodbye***, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95. An ATF agent must try to save his teen daughter's life. She's been buried alive by a cult leader who has been shot dead.

**Conde, Maryse, *The Story of the Cannibal Woman***, Atria. \$24.00. On a dark night in Cape Town, Rosalie's husband goes out for a pack of cigarettes and never comes back. Rosalie, a clairvoyant, seeks the truth about her husband's apparent murder.

- Crombie, Deborah, *Water Like A Stone***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James are on holiday in Cheshire but murder, both past and present, intrudes.
- Dickinson, David, *Death on the Nevskii Prospekt***, Avalon. \$24.95. Coaxed out of retirement, Lord Francis Powerscourt heads to St. Petersburg where a British diplomat has been murdered as Russia edges towards revolution.
- Dixon, Keith, *The Art of Losing***, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95. An independent filmmaker's financial problems lead him into the world of gambling.
- Dorsey, Tim, *Hurricane Punch***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. It's the worst hurricane season on record, and two seasoned killers are vying for the title "Florida's most wanted psychopath." Yes, Serge A. Storms is back.
- Dugoni, Robert, *Damage Control***, Warner Books. \$24.99. Successful attorney Dana Hill investigates the beating death of her twin brother while dealing with a breast cancer diagnosis and a husband who is having an affair.
- Gallagher, Nora, *Changing Light***, Pantheon. \$22.00. A young painter in New Mexico discovers a man, ill and disoriented, near her house. He has gone AWOL from the Los Alamos project.
- Greeley, Andrew M., *Irish Linen***, Forge. \$25.95. Nuala Anne McGrail investigates two different wartime mysteries – a young man gone missing in Iraq and the memoirs of an Irish diplomat in Nazi Germany.
- Haines, Carolyn, *Fever Moon***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Set in 1944 New Iberia, Louisiana, where Henri Bastion, a wealthy plantation owner, has been brutally murdered.
- Hammett, Dashiell, *The Crime Wave: Collected Nonfiction***, Vince Emery. \$24.95. The celebrated creator of Sam Spade also wrote a syndicated column (gathered here for the first time) that dealt with topics as diverse as politics, World War II and writing the mystery.
- Hockensmith, Steve, *On the Wrong Track***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Big Red and Old Red sign on to guard the Pacific Express and find themselves trapped en route to San Francisco with deadly secrets and a killer hidden among the passengers.
- Isaacs, Susan, *Past Perfect***, Scribner. \$25.00. Katie Schottland, fired from the CIA for no apparent reason, is contacted by a former colleague and finds herself back in the game.
- Kaplan, Janice, *Looks to Die For***, St. Martin's Press. \$24.00. When a prominent plastic surgeon is accused of murder, his wife finds that she has a talent for hunting down murderers.
- Kling, Christine, *Wrecker's Key***, Ballantine. \$24.95. Tugboat captain Seychelle Sullivan wants to quit the salvage business altogether when a colleague turns up dead.
- McDermid, Val, *The Grave Tattoo***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A psychological thriller in which a present-day murder has its roots in the eighteenth century and the mutiny on the H.M.S. Bounty.
- McGrory, Brian, *Strangled***, Atria. \$25.00. Newspaperman Jack Flynn finds himself involved in a case that seems to echo a long-closed case - that of the Boston Strangler.
- May, Peter, *The Fourth Sacrifice***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. American forensic pathologist, Margaret Campbell and Chinese police detective Li Yan are partners once against as they investigate an outbreak of gruesome murders that shake Beijing.

- Montero, Mayra, *Dancing to "Almendra"***, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$24.00. A chronicle of love, murder, and the mob in pre-Revolutionary Havana.
- Morris, Bob, *Bermuda Schwartz***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Hidden treasure, murder, romance, rum, set in Bermuda.
- Pastor, Ben, *The Water Thief***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Aelius Spartianus, historian, is embroiled in murder and mystery in the summer of 304 AD.
- Pike, Christopher, *Falling***, Forge. \$24.95. "The Acid Killer" is sending the Feds DVDs of murders he commits against women he thinks are unfaithful to their husbands.
- Rees, Matt Beynon, *The Collaborator of Bethlehem***, Soho Press. \$22.00. A modest schoolteacher in Bethlehem becomes an unlikely detective to save his former pupil, a Palestinian Christian, from imminent execution.
- Reiss, R. Scott, *Black Monday***, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00. The ultimate weapon is a plague that kills nobody: an oil eating microbe that destroys all gas-operated machines and brings the world economy to a halt.
- Robb, J.D., *Innocent in Death***, Putnam. \$25.95. Lieutenant Eve Dallas hunts for the killer of a seemingly ordinary history teacher and uncovers some extraordinary surprises.
- Skibbins, David, *The Star***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Warren Ritter makes his third appearance as he helps his daughter tackle her estranged husband, a policeman, who has taken their son.
- Spiegelman, Peter, *Red Cat***, Knopf. \$22.95. John March, PI, takes on his most surprising client yet, his smug older brother David, who is being stalked by a woman he met on the internet.
- Van Patten, Vince & Randisi, Robert, *The Picasso Flop***, Mysterious Press. \$24.99. Murder on the World Poker Tour.

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