

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

May 2007

Vol. 5, No. 6

EDGAR WINNERS!

Best Novel – *The Janissary Tree* by Jason Goodwin

Best First Novel by an American Author – *The Faithful Spy* by Alex Berenson

Best Paperback Original – *Snakeskin Shamisen* by Naomi Hirahara

For the complete list of nominees and winners, log on to Mystery Writers of America website: www.mysterywriters.org

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***ON CHESIL BEACH*, Ian McEwan, Doubleday. \$22.00**

Not a mystery but not to be missed, especially if you're a McEwan fan. This slim volume takes place in 1962 on the eve of the decade that will change almost everything. But not in time for Edward and Florence. This young couple is on their honeymoon. They were married this morning and they are now at their hotel. They are both virgins and both are terrified, for different reasons, of their wedding night. Those of you who were born after that decade may find it incomprehensible that two people could be so innocent, but those of you who are older may recognize that McEwan has captured perfectly that awful, fumbling time, full of misunderstandings and unspoken reproaches. McEwan is, I suspect, a genius.

***THE FACE OF DEATH*, Cody McFadyen, Bantam. \$24.00**

Last year, I read the first book in this series, *Shadow Man*, which introduced FBI Special Agent Smoky Barrett. I wrote then that this author is an amazing and talented writer who is extremely hard to read. And he hasn't let up with his second book. Sixteen-year-old Sarah Langstrom asks for Smoky's help after the killer she calls The Stranger kills her foster family. But this isn't the first time The Stranger has killed those close to Sarah. He (surely not she) has been killing everyone Sarah ever loved since she was six. Smoky must find out who this monster is and why he inflicts this pain on Sarah in this sadistic manner. The narrative is interrupted with Sarah's diary excerpts. McFadyen is writing the best serial killer books since Thomas Harris introduced Clarice Starling.

THE INTRUDERS, Michael Marshall, HarperCollins.

Jack Whalen, ex-LAPD cop, is trying to become a writer. He and his wife, a corporate executive, live a fairly idyllic life: Jack tries to come up with an idea as good as the first book he wrote and Amy brings home the bacon. That life begins to go awry when Jack receives a phone call from Amy's phone while she's away on a business trip. But it's not Amy. It's a cab driver who tells Jack that the phone was left in his cab and he's merely calling "home" as a courtesy. Jack tries to reach Amy at her hotel but is told that she's not there, never has been. Nor does she appear to have checked in anywhere else. The nightmare begins. And what a nightmare! It is impossible to predict where this is going and where Jack's journey to find Amy will lead him. But you'll be glad to be on this ride. Marshall has become one of my favorite authors. His Ward Hopkins trilogy is outstanding and he doesn't disappoint here.

THE BIG GIRLS, Susanna Moore, Knopf. \$24.00

This extraordinary novel is told through four voices: Helen, an inmate at the women's prison, Sloatsburg; Dr. Louise Forrest, the chief of mental health services at Sloatsburg and Helen's therapist; Ike Bradshaw, corrections officer; and Angie, a starlet in Hollywood. What is fascinating here is that the speaker is never identified by the author, and you are left to figure out who's narrating by what they are saying. And what they are saying is chilling. There has been an unspeakable crime and we gradually realize what that crime is and the effect it is having on the four speakers. I was left with the feeling that there is sometimes less difference than we realize between those of us on the outside and the incarcerated. A tour de force by Moore.

THE TAKEDOWN, Patrick Quinlan, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$21.95

There is no doubt in my mind that after only two books, Patrick Quinlan has proved himself a force to be reckoned with when we talk about the next wave of important crime writers. I was, at first, disappointed that he had not followed up his terrific debut, *Smoked*, with another Smoke Dugan mystery (he'll get back to that character, I hear). But I see a pattern forming. Quinlan writes like Quentin Tarantino directs: short, sharp takes on a number of very well-drawn characters as the story unfolds for the reader. Dick Miller has spent three years in jail for dealing and possession. Now he's out, but he has a problem. Dot Racine, his boss, is dead and she's in the trunk of his car. Did he kill her? Dick can't be sure but before we find out we'll meet Nestor Garcia, a cocaine dealer and one of Dot's former flames, Cool Breeze, Block, and Desiree. Not all of them will survive this wild ride. A great follow-up to *Smoked*.

ON MY READING LIST

BAD LUCK AND TROUBLE, Lee Child, Delacorte. \$26.00

The highest compliment an author can get I suppose is to be talked about behind his back by other authors. Admiringly. With awe. I overheard such talk recently about Lee Child and his Jack Reacher series. What Child has done is invent a character, Jack Reacher, a

loner and an enigma, and put him in a variety of situations in a variety of locales. He thus has created a series character within a series where each entry reads like a stand-alone. The series is addictive but the author is afforded the luxury of breaking his own mold with every book. Brilliant! For those of you who are collectors, the UK edition precedes this edition.

***THE WOODS*, Harlan Coben, Dutton. \$26.95**

Twenty years ago, four teenagers at a summer camp walked into the woods at night. Two were found murdered and the others were never seen again. Paul Copeland, the county prosecutor of Essex, New Jersey, whose sister was one of those never found all those years ago, can't help thinking that a homicide victim may be one of the campers who disappeared with his sister. This sounds a little like *Into the Woods* (see below), but that's a coincidence.

***THE UNQUIET*, John Connolly, Atria Books. \$25.95**

A new novel by Connolly has become an anticipated event, but it's been a while since he gave us a Charlie Parker mystery, so the anticipation, for me anyway, is palpable. A psychiatrist is missing, following revelations about the harm done to children in his care. A killer is obsessed with finding the truth about his own daughter's disappearance and is seeking revenge. Charlie Parker finds himself between the truth about the psychiatrist and those who will go to any lengths to keep it hidden. Oh, I can't wait.

***ZOO STATION*, David Downing, Soho Press. \$23.00**

John Russell, a journalist, is in Berlin in 1939 where he writes human-interest pieces for British and American newspapers. When an acquaintance approaches him to do some work for the Soviets, Russell is reluctant, but can't resist the offer. When the British and the Nazis notice his involvement with the Soviets, Russell is dragged into the murky world of warring intelligence services.

***WHITE CORRIDOR*, Christopher Fowler, Bantam. \$24.00**

Fiction's oddest couple, John May and Arthur Bryant of London's Peculiar Crimes Unit, are faced with another strange case. Bryant and May set out to attend the International Spiritualists' Convention, despite warnings of a massive snowstorm heading their way. When the two detectives are stranded with dozens of other motorists, they realize that a notorious killer is also stranded on the same stretch of highway. Can they get to the killer before he gets to his next victim? They're old, they're cranky, and they're chaotic (*New York Times Book Review*) and this is a marvelous series.

***IN THE WOODS*, Tana French, Viking. \$24.95**

In 1984 Dublin, as dusk begins to fall, children playing in the woods return to their homes. Except for the three who do not. The police find one of the children gripping a tree trunk, his sneakers filled with blood, unable to recall anything. Twenty years later, that boy is a detective on the Murder Squad, and when a young girl is found murdered in the same woods, he finds himself investigating a case chillingly similar to his own unsolved mystery.

***CHRISTOPHER'S GHOSTS*, Charles McCarry, Overlook Press. \$25.00**

McCarry's new novel introduces his hero, Paul Christopher, as a young boy in the 1930s who witnesses an unspeakable atrocity committed by an S.S. officer. At the height of the Cold War in Europe, that S.S. man emerges from the ruins of postwar Germany to destroy the last living witness to his crime. McCarry is among the very best writers of espionage at work today.

***INVISIBLE PREY*, John Sandford, Putnam. \$26.95**

Lucas Davenport is back, this time investigating the death of two elderly women, killed in their home. As he looks more closely at the crime, a pattern emerges which leads Davenport to believe that the victims are not random and that the killer or killers are expecting him.

***GHOSTWALK*, Rebecca Stott, Doubleday. \$24.95**

In 2002, a Cambridge historian is found dead, floating down the Cam, leaving her magnum opus on Sir Isaac Newton's alchemy unfinished. She had been investigating a series of suspicious circumstances surrounding Newton's appointment as a Fellow of Trinity College in 1667. That year, two Fellows died by falling down staircases, apparently drunk, another died in a field, and a fourth was expelled. If this was a coincidence, it was one that secured Newton's future. When Lydia Brooke steps in to finish the book, strange events begin to occur, and when those events escalate to murder, the present becomes entangled with the seventeenth century, with Sir Isaac at the center of the mystery. This is a first novel getting all kinds of buzz in the UK.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***WALL AND MEAN*, Tom Bernard, Norton. \$24.95**

George Wilhelm is about to become one of the most successful young bond traders in the business. He's a gambler, and his poker skills have helped turn big profits on the Emerging Markets desk. Unfortunately those same skills have got him trying to out-trade the sports bookies in Vegas, and he has a ruinous gambling debt. When the Brooklyn mafia sends two hit men to collect, things get ugly in a hurry. Set against the bond-market boom of 1993, this is a fast-moving debut.

***A GOOD AND HAPPY CHILD*, Justin Evans, Shaye Areheart. \$24.00**

George Davies, desperate to save his quickly unraveling marriage, begins seeing a therapist. As he delves into his childhood memories, he begins to recall the trauma of his father's unexpected death and the visions he experienced in its wake. When a mysterious murder is revealed, remembering the past becomes the only way George can protect himself, and his family. This is described as a literary thriller cum ghost story. That's good enough for me.

***IN SECRET SERVICE*, Mitch Silver, Touchstone. \$25.00**

Amy Greenberg, a young American academic, is summoned to Ireland to claim the contents of her grandfather's safe deposit box, in which she finds only one thing: an undiscovered manuscript by Ian Fleming. The pages detail Fleming's real-life involvement in British Intelligence and contain information so confidential, so explosive that Amy soon discovers that people on both sides of the Atlantic are willing to kill to protect its secrecy. This is an absolutely irresistible premise, yes?

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE***RANT*, Chuck Palahniuk, Doubleday. \$24.95**

This is an oral history (fictional of course) of Buster "Rant" Casey, in which an assortment of friends, enemies, admirers, detractors, and relatives have their say about this evil character who may or may not be the most efficient serial killer of our time. Always expect the unexpected from Palahniuk.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***PELAGIA AND THE BLACK MONK*, Boris Akunin. Weidenfeld & Nicolson**
Second in the Sister Pelagia series.

***THE UNQUIET*, John Connolly. Hodder & Stoughton**

A Charlie Parker mystery. I have described it at the beginning of this newsletter but the UK is the true first. And it comes with a CD.

***LOLLIPOP SHOES*, Joanne Harris. Bantam Press**

A sequel to the very well received *Chocolat*.

***PROMISED LAND*, David Hewson. Macmillan**

Ex-Cop Bierce was convicted of killing his family, although he has no recollection of doing so. Now he's out of prison and he's teaming up with Alice Loong who has questions about the death of her mother on that same day in 1983. Hewson's first stand alone.

***A THOUSAND SPLENDID SUNS*, Khaled Hosseini. Bloomsbury**

By the author of *The Kite Runner*. Miriam is only fifteen when she is sent to marry Rasheed in Kabul, where she endures the Taliban and a life of struggle against starvation and fear.

***BROKEN SKIN*, Stuart MacBride. HarperCollins**

The new Logan McRae thriller.

CROW STONE, Jenni Mills. HarperCollins

This debut thriller weaves together past and present to answer the sinister secrets buried in the ancient stone quarries under Bath in the UK.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Andrews, Lori, *The Silent Assassin*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Geneticist Dr. Alex Blake investigates a brutal murder that may have connections to the Vietnam War in Andrews' second thriller.

Baldacci, David, *Killer Genius*, Warner. \$26.99. Former Secret Service agents Sean King and Michelle Maxwell investigate a murder at a retreat for scientific geniuses working on the most sophisticated microprocessor in the world.

Barclay, Alex, *Dark House*, Delacorte. \$23.00. In a north Texas town, two boys made a pact that would unite them forever. Two decades later, one lies dead and the other is about to make sure that the man responsible pays.

Barnard, Robert, *A Fall From Grace*, Scribner. \$24.00. Detective Inspector Charlie Peace and his wife, Felicity, are shocked when Felicity's father moves to their village. Soon rumors of improper behavior and murder taint the family.

Booth, Stephen, *The Dead Place*, Bantam. \$25.00. The anonymous caller who taunts DC Ben Cooper and DS Diane Fry could be just a hoax, but Diane is certain she's dealing with a murderer.

Box, C.J., *Free Fire*, Putnam. \$24.95. Joe Pickett, no longer a game warden in Wyoming, is asked to investigate the slaughter of four campers in Yellowstone National Park.

Brogan, Jan, *Yesterday's Fatal*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Rhode Island reporter Hallie Ahern uncovers something much bigger than a fatal car crash as she tries to land a story above the fold.

Cutler, Judith, *Cold Pursuit*, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. A colleague is ill and Chief Superintendent Frances Harman puts off retirement to handle a rash of "happy slappings" and minor assaults in Kent, which soon escalate into assaults.

Davis, Lindsey, *Saturnalia*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Marcus Didius Falco tries to find a very famous enemy of Rome who has disappeared from house arrest without a trace.

De Juan, Jose Luis, *This Breathing World*, Arcadia. \$24.95. The stories of two men – one in first century Rome, the other at modern day Harvard – both sexual outsiders, both driven to murder.

Douglas, Carole Nelson, *Cat in a Red Hot Rage*, Forge. \$24.95. Midnight Louie and Temple Barr scramble to prove the innocence of a member of the Red Hat Sisterhood when a young member is strangled.

Eriksson, Kjell, *The Cruel Stars of the Night*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Police Inspector Ann Lindell investigate the disappearance of a local professor, but when a corpse of an elderly man does turn up, the dead man is not the professor. Lindell must find the connection between these crimes.

Frey, Stephen, *The Fourth Order*, Ballantine Books. \$24.95. A stand-alone thriller that exposes one of the financial world's darkest practices and lands a deal-maker in a web of international intrigue.

Frost, Mark, *Second Objective*, Hyperion. \$24.95. A World War II thriller based on a shocking real-life German operation run by "the most dangerous man in Europe."

Gordon, Alan, *The Lark's Lament*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. In 1204, the Fools' Guild is under attack from the forces of Pope Innocent III. They need somebody to intercede with the Pope on their behalf, but murder becomes a distraction.

Graham, Mitchell, *Majestic Descending*, Forge. \$24.95. It was supposed to be a vacation with the promise of romance, but murder has made a luxury ocean liner a crime scene.

Hammond, Gerald, *A Dead Question*, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. Detective Inspector Honey Laird suspects that her next door neighbor Dr. McGordon is hiding a shocking secret.

Housewright, David, *Dead Boyfriends*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Unlicensed P.I. Rushmore McKenzie's violent past comes back to haunt him. The fourth in this series.

Jackson, Lisa, *Absolute Fear*, Kensington. \$19.95. Madness, deceit and twisted revenge that reveals the dark secrets of a long shuttered mental institution.

Koontz, Dean, *The Good Guy*, Bantam. \$27.00. An ordinary man is mistaken for a hired killer in this new thriller from Koontz.

Lewis, Roy, *Death Squad*, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. While handling a new client, a footballer accused of drug dealing, solicitor Eric Ward becomes involved with a darker investigation, and revelations about his past acquaintance with a prostitute may threaten both his professional and personal lives.

Lindsay, Frederic, *Tremor of Demons*, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. At first Edinburgh detective Jim Meldrum notices only one odd detail on the newly discovered corpse he is examining – the slippers are on the wrong feet. Then he discovers the mutilation.

Marston, Edward, *The Painted Lady*, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. The pursuit of a married and then widowed beauty may point the way to her husband's killer for architect sleuth Christopher Redmayne in 17th century London.

Patterson, James, *The 6th Nanny*, Little Brown. \$27.99. The Women's Murder Club returns to tackle a madman on the loose in San Francisco.

Penny, Louise, *A Fatal Grace*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Second Armand Gamache mystery set in Quebec.

Pringle, Peter, *The Day of the Dandelion*, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00. Introducing Arthur Hemings, scientist-adventurer and cunning spy who confronts a murderous international conspiracy to control the world's food supply.

Rehder, Ben, *Gun Shy*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Mitch Campbell, charismatic spokesman for the National Weapons Alliance, is not who he seems to be and someone from his past is about to make his secret public.

Riggs, Cynthia, *Shooting Star*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Ninety-two-year-old Victoria Trumbull investigates when the actors in a play she has written, based on Frankenstein, drop dead.

Rosenfelt, David, *Play Dead*, Warner Books. \$24.99. When defense attorney Andy Carpenter rescues a golden retriever, little does he realize the unlikely series of events that will follow.

Rushing, Robert A. *Resisting Arrest: Detective Fiction and Popular Culture*, Other Press. \$29.00. A fascinating and entertaining look at how the detective yarn has affected every level of culture from literature to popular TV shows.

Singer, Randy, *False Witness*, Waterbrook. \$18.95. In this Christian legal thriller, a group of law students get too involved with a couple in the witness relocation program and a valuable algorithm that could change the internet.

Terrell, Heather, *The Chrysalis*, Ballantine Books. \$21.95. Manhattan attorney Mara Coyne defends a prestigious auction house against the claim that the centerpiece of its upcoming sale is a Nazi wartime theft.

Viets, Elaine, *Murder With Reservation*, NAL. \$21.95. Helen Hawthorne's new position is in a Fort Lauderdale hotel, but the dead-end job proved too literal when a maid is found dead in the hotel dumpster.

Wagner, Jan Costin, *Ice Moon*, Harcourt. \$25.00. Devastated by his wife's death, Finnish police detective Kinmo Joentaa is compelled to return to work where he investigates a serial killer who is providing "peaceful" deaths for his smothered victims.

White, Kate, *Lethally Blond*, Warner Books. \$24.99. Bailey Weggins investigates behind the scenes of a hot new TV show.

Wiersema, Robert J., *Before I Wake*, St. Martin's Press. \$21.95. A literary supernatural thriller in which a small girl in a coma appears to have miraculous healing powers.

Willocks, Tim, *The Religion*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$26.00. This epic account of the 1565 Turkish siege of Malta is the first in a planned trilogy and introduces swash-buckling sword-for-hire adventurer Tannhauser.

Sally Owen is a book dealer and works at the Mysterious Bookshop in New York City.

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