

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***BANGKOK HAUNTS*, John Burdett, Knopf. \$24.95**

Sonchai Jitpleecheep, the Royal Thai Police detective, who spends much of his emotional time negotiating the minefield between his devout Buddhism and the corrupt police department he works for, returns for his third outing. After a terrific start with *Bangkok 8*, Burdett was, I thought, a little off his game in *Bangkok Tattoo*. Not to worry: he's back on top form here as Sonchai investigates after viewing a video which is clearly a snuff film starring Sonchai's one time obsessive love. Characters, from Sonchai's mother who runs the Old Men's Club (yes, Viagra is a feature here) to his boss who could not be more crooked if he tried (and he does try), make this a very smart and very funny series.

***RAVEN BLACK*, Ann Cleeves, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

I picked this up because it won the 2006 Duncan Lawrie Dagger Award in England (previously the CWA Gold Dagger). I thought that Cleeves wrote gentle mysteries set in even gentler parts of England. I was only half right. This is an edgy thriller that opens on a New Year's Eve in a remote hamlet in the Shetland Islands. A lonely man named Magnus Tait is at home waiting for visitors who never arrive. The next morning the body of a young teenage girl is discovered in the snow and Inspector Jimmy Perez investigates. Inspector Jimmy Perez on the Shetland Islands? That's part of the story, too. I should pick up Ann Cleeves more often.

***EYE OF THE BEHOLDER*, David Ellis, Putnam. \$24.95**

This is Ellis's fifth book and, I think, his best. At the very eerie beginning of this story there has been a massacre at Mansbury College. Six female students have been discovered in the basement, murdered and mutilated. There doesn't seem to be any doubt about the culprit, a part-time handyman to whom all the evidence points and who seems disinclined to deny the murders. So justice takes its course, and Paul Riley, the assistant DA who was responsible for putting the man away, attends his execution. Before he died, did he mouth something to Paul? Yes, he did. He said, "I'm not the only one." This is just terrific story telling.

***DEPARTURE LOUNGE*, Chad Taylor, Europa Editions. \$14.95**

I'm finding it hard to get this story out of my mind. It's a simple one. One day, the parents of Caroline May went for a walk with their dog, leaving teenager Caroline lying on the couch listening to music. That was the last time Caroline was seen. This story tells of how this disappearance haunts the community for years after, especially Mark

Chamberlain, a small-time thief who attended high school with Caroline, and Harry Bishop, the alcoholic cop who investigated the case. A simple story but a devastating one.

ON MY READING LIST

***THE SLEEPING DOLL*, Jeffery Deaver, Simon & Schuster. \$26.95**

Special agent Kathryn Dance who was first introduced in Deaver's novel, *Cold Moon*, hunts down escaped killer Daniel Pell, a Charles Manson figure who mesmerizes, seduces and exploits people for his own murderous ends. In order to track him, Kathryn must use the people from the cult Pell once headed and the girl known as The Sleeping Doll, the only survivor of her family's slaughter at Pell's hand.

***REQUIEM FOR AN ASSASSIN*, Barry Eisler, Putnam. \$24.95**

John Rain decides to quit the business but it isn't going to be that easy. CIA operative Jim Hilger kidnaps Dox, Rain's close friend and partner, and offers Rain a choice: one more assignment or Dox dies.

***THE NAZI HUNTER*, Alan Elsner, Arcade Publishing. \$26.00**

This is billed as a gripping thriller that mixes partisan Washington politics, the search for ex-Nazi criminals, and a crazed, right wing militia intent on bringing down the government. And that's enough for me.

***SPARE CHANGE*, Robert B. Parker, Putnam. \$24.95**

For those of you who think it has been entirely too long since Parker produced a book, well, your long wait is over. Here Boston P.I. Sunny Randall joins forces with her father to crack a thirty-year-old case.

***SECRET ASSET*, Stella Rimington, Knopf. \$24.95**

MI5 Intelligence Officer Liz Carlyle is back, and in her second adventure, one of her agents reports suspicious goings on at an Islamic bookshop. A surveillance operation is immediately put into place, but Liz suddenly finds herself taken off the case when her boss, the Director of Counter Terrorism, receives a tip-off that a mole is at work inside British Intelligence. Rimington, who was the first woman Director General of MI5, writes thrillers packed with an insider's knowledge.

***THE LADY IN BLUE*, Javier Sierra, Atria Books. \$25.95**

The author of *The Secret Supper* turns his attention to the American Southwest. Ever since she quit her job with the U.S. Defense Department, Jennifer Narody has been plagued with eerie images of a "blue spirit." This same image appeared to leaders of the Jumano tribe in New Mexico 362 year earlier, announcing the arrival of the conquistadors. Meanwhile, a journalist is hunting for rumored relics of the shroud of Turin. He will eventually be led to Los Angeles where Jennifer Narody unwittingly

holds the key to the mystery that the Catholic Church and the Defense Department are determined to decipher – the enigma of The Lady in Blue.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***THE CLEANER*, Brett Battles, Delacorte Press. \$22.00**

Jonathan Quinn is a “cleaner,” a freelance operative who disposes of bodies and ties up loose ends. When “The Office” calls and gives Quinn his latest case, it seems simple enough: he’s to investigate an arson in Colorado. But the case turns sour, and Quinn is soon running for his life. He needs to know who wants him dead, and his only hope may be a woman from his past who’s reluctant to help.

***STRAITS OF FORTUNE*, Anthony Gagliano, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Introduces Jack Vaughn, a disgraced New York cop who is now a Miami personal trainer or, as he likes to put it, “gym rat for hire.”

***SOON I WILL BE INVINCIBLE*, Austin Grossman, Pantheon. \$22.95**

Doctor Impossible – evil genius, mad scientist, diabolical time-traveler, wannabe world dominator – has just broken out of prison. Again. Fatale, a patchwork woman of skin and chrome built by the NSA to be the next generation of warfare, is suddenly given the chance every superhero dreams of: to join the once-famous group of beautiful young superheroes who have been reunited to stop Doctor Impossible.

***TRIPLE HOMICIDE*, Charles Hynes, St. Martin’s Press. \$24.95**

This first novel by one of New York City’s top District Attorneys begins in 1992, in a courtroom in Long Island where a young and much-decorated police sergeant is about to stand trial for triple homicide. The story that precedes this tells of two generations of New York cops and of two men who dared challenge the fabled “blue wall” of silence.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***SEVERED*, Simon Kernick, Bantam Press.**

When Sean Tyler wakes up in an unfamiliar room lying next to the headless corpse of a girl he met recently, he knows its going to be a bad day! There’s a note on the TV in the room telling him to press DVD and Sean watches the footage of him stabbing somebody. Its faked of course, but who is going to believe him?

***ABSOLUTION*, Caro Ramsay, Penguin.**

When PC Alan McAlpine guarded a woman in her hospital bed after she had been savagely attacked back in 1984, he had no idea that case would haunt his career. Now, two decades later, he is a Detective Chief Inspector leading the hunt for the “Crucifixion Killer.” This is a new series.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Abu-Jaber, Diana, *Origin*, Norton. \$24.95. A fingerprint expert's investigation of a series of crib deaths leads her back to the mystery of her own childhood.

Archer, Jeffrey, *Cat O'Nine Tales*, St. Martin's. \$27.95. Short stories, nine of which are based on stories he was told in prison.

Babson, Marian, *Only the Cat Knows*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95. When Vance's twin sister Vanessa is pushed down the stairs, he wants to know who did it. He's going to get some help from an unexpected source: Vanessa's white Angora cat, Gloriana.

Berberian, Viken, *Das Kapital*, Simon & Schuster. \$22.00. Billed as a novel of love and money markets, this tells of a hedge-fund trader who makes his profit by the financial collapse of overseas markets – and ensures them with the aid of a hired assassin.

Billingham, Mark, *Buried*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. DI Tom Thorne is on special assignment to the Kidnap Unit when a young boy disappears.

Buchanan, Edna, *Love Kills*, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00. Britt Montero, ace crime reporter, is helping the Cold Case Squad find a killer as well as trying to solve the mystery of the Honeymoon Killer.

Carrington, Tori, *Foul Play*, Forge. \$23.95. Sofie Metropolis – Greek American PI from Queens. Part Janet Evanovich, part My Big Fat Greek Wedding.

Carson, Paul, *Betrayal*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Dr. Frank Ryan, Chief Medical Officer at Dublin's Harmon Penitentiary, is kidnapped and embroiled in a seemingly unending nightmare.

Chattam, Maxim, *The Cairo Diary*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. In Cairo in 1928, several children disappear and are found mutilated in the tombs outside the city. British Inspector Jeremy Matheson follows the trail while grappling with his own past as well as with the charged political situation in British-occupied Cairo.

Christopher, Nicholas, *The Bestiary*, Dial Press. \$25.00. A young man turns his fascination with animals into a personal obsession when he begins to search for the *Caravan Bestiary*, a medieval text containing the animals not granted passage on Noah's ark, which has been missing for eight hundred years.

Coulter, Catherine, *Double Take*, Putnam. \$25.95. Julia Ransom, mourning her husband's death, is attacked while out for a walk. Special Agent Stone sees a connection between that assault and her husband's death.

Craig, Philip R., *Vineyard Stalker*, Scribner. \$24.00. This is the late author's final tale of J.W. Jackson, ex-Boston cop, who now solves crimes on Martha's Vineyard.

de Castrique, Mark, *Final Undertaking*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. Funeral home owner and former cop Barry Clayton gets to the bottom of a medical scam.

Ellis, Robert, *City of Fire*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Beautiful women are being murdered in LA by a sociopath dubbed Romeo. Lead Detective Lena Gamble finds herself in the midst of a conspiracy that threatens her job.

Evanovich, Janet, *Lean Mean Thirteen*, St. Martin's Press. \$26.95. The phenomenon continues as Stephanie Plum finds herself in her most dangerous and hilarious adventure yet.

Goodis, David, *Nightfall*, Millipede. \$14.00. More classic noir back in print. With an introduction by Bill Pronizini.

Goodis, David, *The Wounded and the Slain*, Hard Case Crime. \$6.99. A lost noir classic out of print for over 50 years.

Goodman, Carol, *The Sonnet Lover*, Ballantine. \$24.95. When her student dies under mysterious circumstance, literature professor Rose Asher finds herself caught up in a search for a folio containing lost sonnets of Shakespeare.

Granger, Ann, *The Companion*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A new mystery series set in Victorian London where a young woman, hired as a companion, finds herself investigating the bizarre death of her predecessor.

Greenlaw, Linda, *Slipknot*, Hyperion. \$24.95. A new series introducing marine investigator Jane Bunker who moves back to her home town in Maine to get some peace and quiet. But murder happens in sleepy fishing communities too.

Greenwood, Kerry, *Earthly Delights*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. Introducing Corinna Chapman, former banker turned baker and amateur sleuth, along with her eccentric Australian friends.

Grippando, James, *Lying with Strangers*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. A young doctor is convinced that the car that drove straight at her on a snowy night was driven by somebody trying to kill her.

Guthrie, Allan, *Hard Man*, Harcourt. \$23.00. Scottish noir from the author of *Kiss Her Goodbye*.

Havill, Steven, F., *Final Payment*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Posadas County Undersheriff Estelle Reyes-Guzman has her hands full with the first public piano concert of her son and the Hundred Mile Bicycle Race. And murder.

Howard, Linda, *Up Close and Dangerous*, Ballantine. \$25.95. Romantic suspense from the author of *Cover of Night*.

Joseph, Alison, *Shadow of Death*, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. Sister Agnes returns in the latest by this British author.

Kalla, Daniel, *Blood Lies*, Forge. \$24.95. An emergency room doctor is on the run determined to find his believed-to-be dead twin.

Kandel, Susan, *Christietown*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Cece Caruso, mystery biographer and amateur detective, returns, this time finding murder while researching Agatha Christie.

Kava, Alex, *Whitewash*, Mira. \$24.95. Scientist Sabrina Galloway finds cover ups and traitors lurking in the highest offices in the land when toxic waste leaks into Florida's waterways.

Lehane, Con, *Death at the Old Hotel*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Bartender Brian McNulty finds his Christmas festivities are marred by murder.

Lowell, Elizabeth, *Innocent as Sin*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Best-selling author Lowell serves up more romantic suspense.

Ludlum, Robert, *The Bourne Betrayal*, Warner Books. \$25.99. A new Jason Bourne adventure penned by Eric Van Lustbader.

Lynn, Jackie, *Jacob's Ladder*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. In the middle of another investigation, Rose Franklin discovers a visitor from New Mexico dead in his camper.

Morgan, Richard K., *Thirteen*, Del Rey. \$24.95. Set in the near future, Carl Marsalis is a hit man who has lost his desire to kill.

Richtel, Matt, *Hooked*, Twelve Hardcover. \$24.99 Nat Idle narrowly survives an explosion in an Internet Café when a stranger hands him a note warning him to exit immediately. The handwriting on the note belongs to his deceased girlfriend.

Robothom, Michael, *The Night Ferry*, Doubleday. \$24.95. A young policewoman breaks all the rules to get to the bottom of the mysterious death of the best friend she betrayed.

Saul, John, *The Devil's Labyrinth*, Ballantine. \$25.95. An exorcist has learned how to reverse the mysterious art – to summon evil instead of driving it out.

Swann, Leonie, *Three Bags Full*, Doubleday. \$22.95. A murder mystery with a twist. The detectives are sheep (led by Miss Maple) who must discover who killed their beloved shepherd.

Temple, Peter, *The Broken Shore*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$25.00. The five time winner of the Australian Ned Kelly award examines the dark side of down under.

Thurlo, Aimee and David, *False Witness*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A simple investigation for Sister Agatha turns into a deadly situation.

Trinchieri, Camilla, *The Price of Silence*, Soho Press. \$22.00 A teacher takes a Chinese woman under her wing and finds herself on trial for murder – a trial that reveals her family members' dark secrets.

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