

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***AMMUNITION*, Ken Bruen, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$13.95**

I don't have to tell Bruen fans much about this story except that Inspector Brant is shot. If you've been following the exploits of this rogue cop, then you know the list of suspects is long and from both sides of the law. Brant isn't dead of course and I almost felt sorry for the shooter. Didn't want to be in his shoes when Brant got out of the hospital.

***THE ACCIDENT MAN*, Tom Cain, Bantam Press.**

Every now and again I receive, anonymously, an advance reading copy from the UK. It is always a book I have just heard about, or one I am longing to read. Whoever is orchestrating these timely gifts, thank you. This one is an absolute doozy and should be published in the UK right about now. Samuel Carver works for a shadowy organization and takes care of the sleaze that pollutes our world. He has just corrected a man who deals in people-trafficking and is looking forward to resting when he is contacted and told that there is an urgent job to be done. There is a man, a terrorist, who needs to be taken out. He is the threat, but there may be peripheral damage. Carver hates harming innocent civilians but it seems that he might have to this time. 12.19 a.m. A Mercedes leaves the Ritz Hotel in Paris. 12.25 a.m. A car loses control in a Paris underpass. 3.57 a.m. Three people are pronounced dead. This should sound familiar to you. Carver understands very quickly what he has done, and that he has been set up. He is now on the run. But from whom? Great stuff.

***THE DEATH LIST*, Paul Johnston, Mira. \$24.95**

Award winner Johnston introduces Matt Wells, a novelist who has had very limited success with his previous books and who is now looking for a winning formula. Wells is receiving e-mails from one of his devoted fans, but these e-mails are beginning to turn nasty. The writer obviously knows entirely too much about Matt: where his ex-wife and daughter live for instance and what has just been delivered to his house. Matt soon finds himself embroiled with a killer known as the White Devil who is looking for a ghost writer to tell his story. Matt finds himself unable to do anything but obey this psychopath since he is being incriminated in the murders and his family and friends are on the list of potential victims. I should warn you that a dog is killed at the beginning of this story. I know that I'm not the only reader who would like to see the disclaimer "no animals were hurt in the telling of this story" on even the bloodiest of books. Be warned.

MERCILESS, Richard Montanari, Ballantine Books. \$24.95

I love this series featuring Jessica Balzano and Kevin Byrne, homicide detectives who seem to be assigned the most horrific, and interesting, cases. When a body is found by Philadelphia's Schuylkill River posed as a fairy-tale princess, it is only the beginning of a bizarre and gruesome string of murders where the victims are posed in attitudes inspired by childhood bedtime stories. Detectives Balzano and Byrne must track down this ruthless killer who seems to be as elusive as he is deadly. One of the delights of this story is that it is not just a straightforward who-is-it: there's a violent and bloody exchange in a diner at the beginning of the book that will involve Byrne and there's an odd pair of avengers on the loose whom I found myself rooting for. An excellent entry in this series.

THE MUSEUM OF DR. MOSES: TALES OF MYSTERY AND SUSPENSE, Joyce Carol Oates, Harcourt. \$24.00

How does she do it? I opened this collection of short stories rather than the author's last three novels (all published within the past year) because, well, it's the shortest. I read *Hi! Howya Doin!*, and my mouth fell open. An extraordinary story involving a jogger that Oates has written anaerobically. I was blown away by the talent here. If that's not enough, read *The Man Who Fought Roland LaStarza* – one of Oates's great loves is boxing and it shows here – or *Valentine*, *July Heat Wave*, or the title story and you too will join me in saying, how does she do it?

ON MY READING LIST

DEAD CONNECTION, Alafair Burke, Holt. \$19.95

When two young women are murdered on the streets of New York, exactly one year apart, Detective Ellie Hatcher is put on special assignment with the task force. The killer has left behind a clue connecting the killings to FirstDate.com, a popular online dating service, and Flann McIlroy, the homicide detective, is convinced that only Ellie can help him pursue his terrifying theory: someone is using the internet to launch a killing spree against the women of New York City.

NEW ENGLAND WHITE, Stephen L. Carter, Knopf. \$26.95

In his second novel, following *The Emperor of Ocean Park*, Carter once again sets the action in the New England university town of Elm Harbor where a murder begins to bring to light the racial complications of the town's past. Lemaster Carlyle, the university president, and his wife Julia Carlyle, a dean of the divinity school, are African Americans living in "the heart of whiteness." The murder of a man who, years ago, was Julia's lover, brings to the fore the secrets of a prominent family, even as Julia closes in on the motive behind the murder.

***A SPY BY NATURE*, Charles Cumming, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95**

Alec Milius is recruited by MI6 and eagerly begins the rigorous selection process for British Intelligence. Although he doesn't make the cut, he does land a job at Abnex, a British oil company with interests in the Caspian Sea. Directed to befriend two charismatic employees of a rival American oil firm, Milius finds himself in the murky world of industrial espionage, manipulated by both MI6 and the CIA.

***HITMAN*, Parnell Hall, Pegasus Books. \$24.00**

Hall, who has been writing quite a successful little series featuring the Crossword Puzzle Lady, brings back private eye Stanley Hastings here. And there are a lot of us who applaud that move. Martin Kessler, a contract killer, wants out of the game and he hires Stanley to watch his back in case someone wants him dead. Someone does, and Stanley fails to spot him so pretty soon the bodies are piling up.

***THUNDER BAY*, William Kent Krueger, Atria Books. \$24.00**

The eighth Cork O'Connor mystery finds the ex-sheriff back in Aurora, Minnesota, setting up shop as a private investigator. His first case, a request by the Ojibwa medicine man to find the son that he fathered, gets complicated when a murder attempt is made on the Indian's life.

***SILENCE*, Thomas Perry, Harcourt. \$25.00**

I will read anything by Thomas Perry. Nobody puts me on the edge of my seat faster. Six years ago, Jack Till helped Wendy Harper disappear (shades of Jane Whitefield?). In an effort to smoke her out, Harper's business partner is now being framed for her presumed murder, and Till must find her before assassins Paul and Sylvie Turner do.

***THE SECRET SERVANT*, Daniel Silva, Putnam. \$25.95**

In Amsterdam, a terrorism analyst, Ephraim Rosner, lies dead, murdered by a Muslim immigrant. The Amsterdam police believe the killer is a deranged extremist, but others know better. Gabriel Allon must find out what Rosner knew and when he does, it confirms his worst fears: a major terrorist operation is in the works. Silva has slowly but surely become one of the foremost writers of international thrillers.

***CRUSADE*, Robyn Young, Dutton. \$25.95**

This is the second in the trilogy surrounding the Crusades. Anyone (like me) with an interest in the Knights Templar should make sure not to miss this. This volume starts in 1274 when, after years of bloodshed, there is peace in the Middle East, due to the efforts of a mysterious group known as the Brethren (the title of the first volume). However, ruthless Western merchants are trying to reignite war in the Holy Land in the hope that they can turn a profit.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***A BEAUTIFUL BLUE DEATH*, Charles Finch, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

Charles Lenox, Victorian gentleman and armchair explorer, is approached by his friend Lady Jane who asks him to look into the death of one of her former servants who has, apparently, committed suicide. Lenox suspects murder.

***THE CHESS MACHINE*, Robert Lohr, Penguin Press. \$24.95**

In Vienna in 1770, Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen unveils an amazing invention, the Mechanical Turk, an unbeatable chess-playing automaton. It is actually an illusion. Inside the machine is the Italian dwarf Tibor, an extraordinary chess player who nobody can beat. When a beautiful countess dies under mysterious circumstances in the presence of the automaton, the Mechanical Turk falls under a cloud of suspicion and the machine and the inventor become the targets of espionage, persecution, and intrigue. This is based on a true story.

***THE LATE HECTOR KIPLING*, David Thewlis, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00**

Actor Thewlis takes up the pen to write a black comedy about one man's desperate struggle to escape his own midlife crisis, a crisis that leads to murder.

***CASANEGRA*, Blair Underwood, Atria Books. \$25.00**

With the help of Tananarive Due and Steven Barnes, Underwood, the actor, has penned a mystery introducing Tennyson Hardwick. Tennyson is an actor who has a history as a sex-for-pay gigolo. When his father, a decorated LAPD captain, has a stroke, Tennyson has to save himself from taking the fall for murder.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***GONE WITHOUT A TRACE*, Caroline Carver. Orion.**

The first in a series of thrillers featuring former army captain Jay McCauley.

***FIRST AMONG SEQUELS*, Jasper Fforde. Hodder & Stoughton.**

Thursday Next returns in this adventure in which Sherlock Holmes is killed at Reichenbach Falls and his series is stopped in its tracks. At the same time, Miss Marple dies in an inexplicable car accident, bringing her series also to a close.

***PLEA OF INSANITY*, Jilliane Hoffman. Penguin.**

Julia Valenciano is a young ambitious prosecutor with a case that could launch her career. The defendant is David Marquette, a successful Miami surgeon. The victims are Marquette's wife and three small children. The plea is not guilty by reason of insanity. By the author of *Retribution*.

MISSING PERSON'S GUIDE TO LOVE, Susanna Jones. Picador.

Isabel, Owen, and Julia were childhood friends. But when they were fifteen, Julia disappeared. Years later Isabel returns home for Owen's funeral. She suspects that Owen may have been responsible for Julia's death and she's hoping to find closure.

JACQUOT AND THE FIFTEEN, Martin O'Brien. Headline.

Chief Inspector Daniel Jacquot investigates when members of a football team start to die – a team that the inspector once played for.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Adair, Cherry, *White Heat*, Ballantine. \$21.95. Romantic suspense featuring Max Aries, T-FLAC agent.

Adam, Paul, *Oracle Lake*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. When photo-journalist Maggie Walsh gets a tip that the Dalai Lama has just died, it seems like the scoop of a lifetime. But when she follows the Dalai Lama's acolytes on a trek into Tibet, she realizes that there is more at stake than her career.

Baron, Aileen G., *The Gold of Thrace*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. In her third archaeological mystery, Tamar Saticoy plunges into a murderous antiquities trade ring.

Carey, Mike, *The Devil You Know*, Warner Books. \$24.99. Introducing Felix Castor, exorcist, who accepts one final assignment. Trouble is, the more he discovers about the ghost in the archive, the more things refuse to add up. And it's not the ghosts who scare Felix, it's the living.

Davidson, Craig, *The Fighter*, Soho Press. \$24.00. Set in the world of illegal bare-knuckle boxing.

Delaney, Kathleen, *And Murder For Dessert*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. A snippy guest chef is a no-show at an upscale dinner. Was it murder?

Depoy, Phillip, *A Widow's Curse*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Folklorist Fever Devilin is hired to uncover the provenance of a mysterious medallion. But the case gets complicated when the owner of the medallion is found murdered.

Disher, Garry, *Chain of Evidence*, Soho Press. \$23.00. Australian crime thriller featuring Hal Challis.

Goldman, Mary Elizabeth, *To Love and Die in Dallas*, Forge. \$24.95. The murder of a senator's wife reunites three of her old friends.

Evans, Jon, *Invisible Armies*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. When Danielle Leaf agrees to deliver a passport as a favor to a friend, she has no idea what she is getting herself into: a war between a multinational company and the army of protesters who oppose it.

Fossum, Karin, *The Indian Bride*, Harcourt. \$23.00. On the day a bachelor's new Indian wife is expected to arrive in a small Norwegian town, a battered female corpse is discovered in a meadow. An Inspector Sejer mystery.

Goodwin, Jason, *The Snake Stone*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$25.00. Yashim Togaly – the dashing eunuch investigator from the Edgar Winning novel *The Janissary Tree* – returns to the streets of nineteenth century Istanbul.

- Greenwood, Kerry, *Blood and Circuses***, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. Bored with married life, 1920s flapper Phryne Fisher investigates circus sabotage.
- Halliman, Timothy, *A Nail Through the Heart***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Introduces travel writer Poke Rafferty. This one is set in Bangkok.
- Hewson, David, *The Seventh Sacrament***, Delacorte Press. \$22.00. Detective Nic Costa must solve a cold case if he is to find the missing son of archaeology professor Giorgio Bramante.
- Hooper, Kay, *Blood Dreams***, Bantam. \$25.00. A new series in which the Special Crimes Unit must join forces with a rogue civilian agency to stop a fearsome serial killer.
- Hosp, David, *Innocence***, Warner Books. \$24.99. Scott Finn is now a solo practitioner who dabbles in civil litigation, divorce law, and criminal defense. With the help of detective Tom Kozlowski, Finn takes on a case that will put both their lives in danger.
- Hurwitz, Gregg, *The Crime Writer***, Viking. \$24.95. Drew Danner, a crime novelist, wakes in a hospital bed with no memory of the night before when he was discovered holding a knife over the dead body of his ex-fiancée.
- Jungersen, Christian, *The Exception***, Doubleday. \$26.00. Four women work together for a small nonprofit that disseminates information on genocide. Two of them receive death threats and, as the tensions mount, they all discover that none of them is exactly the person she seems to be.
- Konrath, J.A., *Dirty Martini***, Hyperion. \$23.95. Chicago Police Lieutenant Jacqueline “Jack” Daniels must catch a sicko who’s poisoning the city’s food supply.
- Koryta, Michael, *A Welcome Grave***, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95. The third novel featuring private investigator Lincoln Perry.
- Maron, Margaret, *Hard Row***, Warner Books. \$24.99. Judge Deborah Knott becomes involved in a murder that will lead her into the desperate realm of undocumented farm laborers.
- Muller, Marcia, *The Ever-Running Man***, Warner Books. \$24.99. Sharon McCone is hired by her husband’s security firm to track down the man who has been setting off explosive devices at the firm’s various offices.
- O’Neil, Vincent H., *Reduced Circumstances***, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$22.95. Fact-checker Frank Cole is moonlighting as a dispatcher for the Midnight Taxi Service where he becomes involved in a disappearance and murder.
- Magnan, Pierre, *Death in the Truffle Wood***, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95. Commissaire Laviolette arrives in a small peaceful village in Provence to investigate why several of the town’s citizens are missing. It isn’t long before their bodies turn up.
- Martin, William, *The Lost Constitution***, Forge. \$24.95. Antiquarian book dealer Peter Fallon returns in this mystery that examines constitutional issues.
- Masters, Priscilla, *Slip Knot***, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. An accused killer is found dead in his cell and Martha Gunn wants some answers.
- Patterson, James, *The Quickie***, Little Brown. \$27.99. With Michael Ledwidge, Patterson once again serves up a summer thriller about a one-night stand gone terribly wrong.
- Pearson, Ridley, *Killer Weekend***, Putnam. \$24.95. Patrolman Walt Fleming once saved the life of U.S. Attorney General Elizabeth Shaler. Now she’s about to announce her

candidacy for the presidency in Sun Valley, and Walt Fleming, now county sheriff, expects a security nightmare.

Pronzini, Bill, *Savages*, Forge. \$24.95. A Nameless Detective mystery.

Rendell, Ruth, *The Water's Lovely*, Crown. \$25.95. The latest in psychological expense from arguably the best in the biz. The UK edition preceded this.

Rollins, James, *The Judas Strain*, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95. Another conspiracy thriller – this one set during Marco Polo's trip to China.

Ross, Joel N., *White Flag Down*, Doubleday. \$24.95. A novel set during WWII and based on newly declassified documents.

Stewart, Mariah, *Last Breath*, Ballantine. \$19.95. Two FBI agents delve in the world of ancient artifacts and come face to face with a maniacal killer.

Stone, Nick, *Mr. Clarinet*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. This brilliant debut is now available in a US Edition. Set in Haiti in the mid-nineties, this is about as dark as it gets.

Tallman, Shirley, *The Cliff House Strangler*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Nineteenth-century lawyer Sarah Woolson is involved in a complicated murder plot involving ghosts, gypsies, and City Hall.

Thor, Brad, *The First Commandment*, Atria Books. \$25.95. Homeland Security operative Scot Harvath is forced to mount his own operation to catch a Guantanamo escapee turned assassin.

Trow, M.J., *Maxwell's Point*, Allison & Busby. \$25.95. Peter Maxwell returns in another hard to solve mystery.

Wall, Kathryn R., *Sanctuary Hill*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Bay Tanner, sometime private investigator, is in Hilton Head where she recovers a cooler bobbing along on the incoming tide, never imagining the misery she will unleash when she discovers what's inside.

Wimberley, Darryl, *Pepperfish Keys*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Special Agent Barrett Raines, the first African American investigator to work for the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, finds himself in a professional crisis over a botched investigation.

Zubro, Mark Richard, *Hook, Line, and Homicide*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A simple fishing vacation goes awry when a local bully is murdered.

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