

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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### ALL OVER THE NET!

As you all know, I've had a website for years. Now I've joined the **MySpace** community!

If you are on **MySpace**, do add me to your friends and you will receive bulletins about what I'm reading and reviewing. Check me out at: [www.myspace.com/sallyowen](http://www.myspace.com/sallyowen)

For those of you who are not on **MySpace** (and those of you who do not have access to a computer!!!), you can still get **BOOKAHOLIC** in the usual ways: via my website or a hard copy in the mail.

-- *Sally*

### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

#### **RED SEA, Emily Benedek, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95**

This author's name seemed very familiar to me, but not in the context of thriller writing. I know her as the writer of at least two non-fiction books on the Navajo and as an experienced journalist. So why this exceptionally fine first novel about international terrorism? She was reporting on counter terrorism for *Newsweek* and came into contact with a high-level Israeli counter-terrorism expert. Because of what he had to say, Benedek decided that his story could only be told in fictionalized form. Intrigued? I was. Four commercial airliners are blown out of the sky in international airspace, and retired Israeli Special Forces commander Julian Granot is called in to investigate. Granot makes the horrifying discovery that the crashes conceal a more diabolical attack. This will keep you up at night.

#### **INTERRED WITH THEIR BONES, Jennifer Lee Carrell, Dutton. \$25.95**

The restored Globe theater is about to put on its production of Hamlet. The director and Shakespeare scholar, Kate Shelton, is given a box by her mentor Rosalind Howard, who asks that Kate meet her later on Hampstead Heath. There she will reveal the meaning of the contents of that box. But before that meeting can take place, the Globe is burned down and Roz is found dead, murdered in the same way as Hamlet's father. Kate is now on the run from a killer and must decipher the clues contained in the box. Did

Shakespeare write a work that has never, until now, seen the light of day? Carrell is an academic who has taught in the history and literature programs at Harvard. But don't hold that against her. Here she has fashioned a thriller which will appeal to Dan Brown fans and those who enjoy biblio mysteries. That would include me.

**20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY GHOSTS, Joe Hill, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

This delightful collection was originally published in 2005 and is now being reissued because, I assume, of the success of *Heart-Shaped Box*, a novel which I found to be a less-than-satisfying read. Short stories are obviously Hill's strong suit. This collection is extraordinary. Not a clunker among the 15 disturbing, and sometimes touching, entries. Christopher Golden, who introduces the collection, calls "*Pop Art*" "transcendent. The single best short story I have read in years." I must agree. It's up there with "*Hi, Howya Doin!*" by **Joyce Carol Oates**. Short stories are hard to write, I hear. Hill makes it look easy.

**ABSOLUTION, Caro Ramsay, Pegasus Books. \$25.00**

Back in 1984, PC Alan McAlpine was given the job of guarding a young woman in the hospital after she'd been savagely attacked with acid. Twenty years later, McAlpine, now a Chief Inspector, is trying to solve a series of killings by a psychopath dubbed the Crucifixion Killer. What I particularly love about this first novel is not so much the police procedural aspect, although that is certainly first class, as the characters of McAlpine, his wife, and his colleagues. These people are fully fleshed out, and McAlpine is such a flawed and complex character that I wonder if, perhaps, only a woman could invent him, and I mean that in a positive sense. Am I being chauvinistic? Probably. But this is the second book in as many months where I have been very favorably impressed by the multi-dimensional aspects of a main male character (the first is *Heartsick* by **Chelsea Cain**). This story held me captive until the last page. There have been some mixed reviews. Ignore them and judge for yourself.

## ON MY READING LIST

**DEAD HEAT, Dick Francis & Felix Francis, Putnam. \$25.95**

After the death of his wife, Mary, we feared that Dick Francis would not write again. But then came *Under Orders*. Now, Francis has teamed up with his son, Felix, to write another mystery set against the backdrop of Britain's famed Two Thousand Guineas Stakes. Sadly, Mr. Francis is ailing and recently had his foot amputated. The UK Edition is the true first but, please, don't anybody go looking for signed copies. At least not from Francis *Pere*.

**NIGHT WORK, Steve Hamilton, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

Hamilton's first stand-alone tells the story of Joe Trumbull, a juvenile probation officer working in Kingston, New York. Two years ago, while at his bachelor party, his fiancée was strangled at her parents' home. Since then, Joe has not been interested in another

relationship. He is finally persuaded to go on a blind date which goes surprisingly well. The woman is then found dead, and Joe begins to realize that there is someone out there with plans to destroy him.

***THE 47<sup>TH</sup> SAMURAI*, Stephen Hunter, Simon & Schuster. \$26.00**

It has been entirely too long since the last Bob Lee Swagger thriller, but he's back, just getting used to retirement and spending some time with his family, when a Japanese war veteran, Philip Yato, asks for help finding a lost military sword. Swagger tracks down the blade, but when a maniac, claiming to be samurai, murders the Yato family and steals the sword, Swagger is back in action.

***THE SHOTGUN RULE*, Charlie Huston, Random House. \$21.95**

This stand-alone thriller from Huston is the story of four teenagers in Northern California in the 1980s who go looking for trouble – and find it. With each book, Huston seems to gain new fans. Glad to see that his latest is in hard cover.

***GIRLS*, Bill James, Countryman. \$23.95**

This is the 23<sup>rd</sup> Harpur and Iles novel, and it is the 22<sup>nd</sup> time that I am going to try and persuade you to read this underrated author. I understand that this is about opinion. For every two of you who say, "Thank you!" four of you say, "Huh?" Look, James is an acquired taste. His cops are crooked, although they want no trouble on their patch, and his crooks are charming. Cases rarely get solved but limp from book to book. Crooks and cops talk to each other in language that is almost Shakespearean in its construction and there are times that you yearn for somebody to root for. But the characters are larger than life, and the series remains, for me, a positive addiction. Doesn't all that intrigue you? If it doesn't, well, it's my list this title is on, and I'm thrilled that James keeps writing and keeps getting published. I can't wait.

***THE CITY OF DREAMING BOOKS*, Walter Moers, Overlook Press. \$26.95**

Optimus Yarnspinner, a young writer, inherits from his godfather an unpublished short story by an unknown author. His search for the author's identity takes him to Bookholm. On entering the town, Optimus feels as if he has opened the door of a gigantic second-hand bookshop. He is captured by evil genius Pfistomel Smyke, who maroons him in the catacombs underneath the city where reading books can be genuinely dangerous. Sounds like a must for us bibliophiles, yes?

***TOKYO YEAR ZERO*, David Peace, Knopf. \$24.00**

Peace is the author of an extraordinary series of books, *The Red Riding Quartet*, police procedurals set in the author's native Yorkshire while the Yorkshire Ripper is at large. He then moved to Tokyo and this is his first novel set there. Set in post WWII Japan, a serial killer is on the loose amongst the rubble of the city. I expect this to be dark and extraordinarily well written.

***THE TENDERNESS OF WOLVES*, Stef Penney, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00**

In the isolated settlement of Dove River in the nineteenth century, a man is found murdered and a seventeen-year-old boy disappears. The only clue is a set of tracks heading north into the forest. Groups of vigilantes and rescue workers head out into the wintry landscape, braving wild beasts and worse, to uncover the truth before the blizzards erase all evidence. This was published last month and I missed it. But you shouldn't. From what I'm hearing, this is a terrific first novel. Collectors: the true first edition comes from the UK where it received the *Costa Prize*.

***THE BEST AMERICAN CRIME REPORTING 2007*, Otto Penzler & Thomas H. Cook, Series Editors. Ecco. \$14.95**

This series is gaining new devotees with each outing. The editors along with their guest editor – Linda Fairstein this year – delve through newspapers and periodicals to find the best and most entertaining true crime writing of the year: a remarkable piece on David Berkowitz by Steve Fishman; book collectors and those who like to steal from them by Allison Hoover Bartlett; Ariel Levy ponders the very small differences between men and women who teach when it comes to preying on their pupils.

***THE BEST AMERICAN MYSTERY STORIES*, Otto Penzler, Series Editor. Carl Hiaasen, Editor. Houghton Mifflin. \$28.00 hardcover. \$14.00 paperback.**

The best-selling series continues to receive glowing reviews for maintaining its very high standard. Stories from **Peter Blauner, James Lee Burke, Louise Erdrich, Jim Fusilli, Laura Lippman, Scott Wolven**, etc., etc.

***DARK OF THE MOON*, John Sandford, Putnam. \$26.95**

Virgil Flowers is a member of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, brought there by Lucas Davenport. In the small town of Bluestem, a man is killed when he's trapped inside his burning home. There's plenty of citizens with reasons to dislike the victim, but possible murder is not what disturbs Flowers. It's that it comes so quickly after two other murders. Three murders in a small town means that it isn't a coincidence, and it has to be personal.

***GRAVE IMPORTS*, Eric Stone, Bleak House Books. \$24.95**

A couple of years ago I read a book called *The Living Room of the Dead*, which introduced Ray Sharp. Those of you who read it, including me, adored this take on the classic noir novel. Now, Ray Sharp is back in this sequel that finds him caught up in the illegal trade in stolen Cambodian art. Set in Shenzhen, just north of Hong Kong, and Thailand, this is, I am sure, going to be a roller coaster ride.

## FIRST MYSTERIES

***SNITCH JACKET*, Christopher Goffard, Overlook Press. \$24.95**

Benny Bunt, an over-educated misfit and ex-speed addict, spends much of his time at the Greasy Tuesday, a Southern California dive teeming with local legends. He is totally captivated by one of them – Gus “Mad Dog” Miller, a Vietnam vet who sports a necklace of severed ears. Benny loves Mad Dog’s Falstaffian personality, but Benny is soon in trouble when he’s arrested on suspicion of double murder. The publisher calls this a combination of classic noir, dark comedy, and a misfit’s memoir.

***MY LADY JUDGE*, Cora Harrison, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$24.95**

A murder mystery set in sixteenth-century Ireland when the western seaboard was home to an independent kingdom that lived peacefully by the ancient Celtic laws. Mara is the judge and lawgiver in this stony kingdom, and she solves her cases under the fascinating legal system of ancient Ireland.

***DEATH BY RODRIGO*, Ron Liebman, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00**

Crime boss Rodrigo Gonzalez hires ex-cop attorneys Mickie Mezzonatti and Junior “Junne” Salerno to get him out of jail on bond – or else. Problem is, the judge has denied bail. When Rodrigo’s friends start showing up on the pair’s doorstep for answers, Mickie and Junne face the case of a lifetime. In addition, Junne is gay and closeted, struggling secretly to maneuver through a testosterone-charged world of cops and criminals.

***HIGH SEASON*, Jon Loomis, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95**

After nine years as a Baltimore cop, Frank Coffin has had enough of murder and returns home where he takes the job as Provincetown’s sheriff, hoping for a quieter life. When a vacationing TV evangelist goes missing and is found strangled and dressed in full drag, Frank must try to catch the killer even as the body count rises.

## NON-MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***THE WATER CURE*, Percival Everett, Graywolf Press. \$22.00**

This is the confession of Ishmael Kidder, successful romance writer, who tortures the man who killed his daughter. Madison Smartt Bell says “If Percival Everett isn’t already a household name, it’s because people are more interested in politics than truth.”

***VANILLA BRIGHT LIKE EMINEM*, Michel Faber, Harcourt. \$23.00**

Sixteen short tales from the author of one of my favorite books, *Under The Skin*—a novel I defy you to get out of your mind once you’ve read it.

***TALES OF GRACEFUL AGING FROM THE PLANET DENIAL*, Nicole Hollander, Broadway. \$19.95**

Hollander has been saying things women only confide to their closest girlfriends for decades now, usually through her character, Sylvia, known for her bad attitude. Now she takes on the ultimate female nightmare – getting old. Not for everybody maybe. But certainly for me.

***THE INDIAN CLERK*, David Leavitt, Bloomsbury. \$24.95**

In 1913, G.H. Hardy, considered the greatest British mathematician of his age, receives a letter from a self-professed mathematical genius claiming to be on the brink of solving the most important unsolved mathematical problem of his time. Populated with luminaries such as D.H. Lawrence, Bertrand Russell, and Ludwig Wittgenstein, this novel is about our need to find order in a world on the brink of unimaginable change.

***THE WINDS OF MARBLE ARCH*, Connie Willis, Subterranean Press. \$40.00**

Twenty-three novellas and short stories from Willis.

## NEWS FROM THE UK

***DYING TO SIN*, Stephen Booth. HarperCollins.**

The latest atmospheric and terrifying thriller set in the Peak District of England and featuring Detectives Frye and Cooper.

***RAIN BEFORE IT FALLS*, Jonathan Coe. Viking.**

The story of a Shropshire family in the last half of the twentieth century, from one of the best UK writers of his generation.

***EXIT MUSIC*, Ian Rankin. Orion.**

The latest, and last, Inspector John Rebus mystery.

***THE LATE HECTOR KIPLING*, David Thewlis. Picador.**

Hector Kipling is an artist who has everything. But it's amazing how quickly a life can unravel. Stalkers, con-men, corpses, S&M, and the Tate Modern all feature in this witty novel about art and death from actor Thewlis.

***DANCING WITH DEMONS*, Peter Tremayne. Headline.**

The new Sister Fidelma investigation.

***THE ADVERSARY*, Michael Walters. Quercus.**

Inspector Nergui returns to the backstreets of Ulan Bataar and Mongolia's desolate steppes in the second installment of Walters' unique crime series.

**CHAMELEON'S SHADOW, Minette Walters. Macmillan.**

Lieutenant Charles Ackland, home from Iraq with serious head injuries, finds it hard to control his aggression, particularly towards women. The police are also looking at him for three "gay" murders in London.

**BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

**Allen, Thomas, Thomas Allen: *Uncovered***, DAP. \$24.95. A collection of photography that uses paperback pulp covers to create funny and intriguing hard-boiled art.

**Bannister, Jo, *Flawed***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Brodie Farrell's newest case is a complicated conspiracy involving child abuse, cover-ups, and organized crime.

**Benedict, Laura, *Isabella Moon***, Random House. \$24.95. A nine-year-old's abduction reveals the dark underbelly of a Kentucky town.

**Brewer, Steve, *Cutthroat***, Bleak House Books. \$24.95. Solomon Gage works for billionaire Dominick Sheffield and his family and is fiercely loyal. But when he hears something he shouldn't from one of the Sheffield family, he finds himself dealing with the dirty doings of the Sheffield sons.

**Dunn, Carola, *The Bloody Tower***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A trip to the Tower of London leaves Daisy Dalrymple in the midst of a puzzling case of murder.

**Edwardson, Ake, *Frozen Tracks***, Viking. \$25.95. Inspector Erik Winter is faced with two seemingly unrelated sets of perplexing crimes. Set in Gothenburg, Sweden.

**Ellis, Warren, *Crooked Little Vein***, Wm. Morrow. \$21.95. Ellis, a graphic novelist, presents here a thriller about a second secret US Constitution and the search to retrieve it.

**Forrest, Christopher, *The Genesis Code***, Forge. \$23.95. A secret code is at the center of this thriller that includes everything from the I Ching to ancient Mayan culture.

**Gerritsen, Tess, *The Bone Garden***, Random House. \$25.95. Gerritsen's latest thriller has an historical edge to it.

**Hammett, Dashiell, *The Dain Curse, The Glass Key and Selected Stories***, Knopf.

\$24.95. The Everyman edition of two of Hammett's novels plus four short stories. With an introduction by James Ellroy.

**Holland, Thomas, *KIA***, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00. Kel McKelvey, military forensics investigator, is back investigating another complex crime.

**Jungstedt, Mari, *Unspoken***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. It is winter on Gotland and a fourteen-year-old girl is missing. Is her disappearance connected to the brutal murder of alcoholic photographer Henry Dahlstrom? Anders Knutas and his team investigate.

**Lycett, Andrew, *The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes***, Free Press. \$28.00.

Biographer Lycett researched thousands of previously unavailable documents to shine a new light on Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Sherlockians rejoice!

**MacDonald, Patricia, *Stolen in the Night***, Atria Books. \$24.95. A taut tale of a twenty-year-old murder, a present-day killer, and the death penalty's controversial role in the criminal justice system.

**McDonald, Craig, *Head Games***, Bleak House Books. \$24.95. Hector Lassiter, author, recovers Pancho Villa's missing head. Within hours, Lassiter and the writer from *True*

*Magazine* sent to profile him are targets of competing fraternities, Mexican bandits and U.S. Intelligence services. The chase extends across 1957 – 1970 America.

**McInerny, Ralph, *Irish Alibi***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Roger and Philip Knight help two southern students at Notre Dame who are suspects in a murder.

**Mankell, Henning, *Kennedy's Brain***, New Press. \$26.95. A Swedish woman's search for what really killed her son leads her to an Africa wrought with HIV and the pharmaceutical companies that exploit it.

**Manotti, Dominique, *Dark Horsemen***, Arcadia. \$19.95. A group of French school friends from 1968 reunite twenty years later as their lives spin out of control in this tale of drugs, politics, and horse racing.

**Nadelson, Reggie, *Fresh Kills***, Walker & Co. \$24.95. Artie Cohen gets involved when his nephew is released from the young offenders' institution where he's been since he stabbed Heshey Shank to death. This is the last in the post 9/11 "archipelago trilogy" from Nadelson.

**Nasaw, Jonathan, *When She Was Bad***, Atria Books. \$25.00. Former FBI agent E.L. Pender returns for the fourth time to tackle the latest psychopath preying on the innocent.

**Ocean, T. Lynn, *Southern Fatality***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Jersey Barnes is an ex-Marine who finds herself in the middle of a high-stakes cover-up involving one of the most prominent banks in America. Soon she's investigating, with the help of a very attractive partner, her father's geriatric friends, a computer hacker named Soup, and a faithful dog.

**Patterson, James & Roughan, Howard, *You've Been Warned***, Little Brown. \$27.99. A young woman in New York City is haunted by a nightmare which starts to become a reality.

**Peters, Elizabeth, *The Mummy Case***, Wm. Morrow. \$19.95. The third Amelia Peabody mystery back in print.

**Rose, M.J., *The Reincarnationist***, Mira. \$24.95. After a bomb explodes in Rome, Josh Ryder, photojournalist, has memories that invade his mind. But they're not his memories. Josh turns to the Phoenix Foundation, a research facility that documents cases of past life experiences. What he discovers is profoundly disturbing.

**Schatzing, Frank, *Death and the Devil***, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95. In the year 1260, a cathedral designer is murdered setting off a shadowy conspiracy.

**Schechter, Harold, *The Devil's Gentleman***, Random House. \$25.95. Roland Molineux was a very wealthy member of late 19<sup>th</sup> century New York's high society. He had fame, fortune, and luxury, and he killed to keep it that way. A true account.

**Sharp, Zoe, *Second Shot***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Charlie Fox is in New England to protect the beautiful Simone and her little girl and to search for Simone's long lost father. It is not going to be easy.

**Simon, Michael, *Last Jew Standing***, Viking. \$25.95. Detective Dan Reles of Austin Homicide has to deal with his deadbeat father in the fourth installment of this entertaining series.

**Tapply, William G., *One-Way Ticket***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Boston attorney Brady Coyne takes on the Boston mob when a friend and client is severely beaten.

**Vacchs, Andrew, *Terminal***, Pantheon. \$24.95. Burkes reaches back in time to keep a blood-commitment to a brother from his prison past and avenge the cold-case rape and murder of a young girl.

**Watson, Larry, *Sundown, Yellow Moon***, Random House. \$24.95. A haunting novel about a middle-aged writer returning to the shocking act of violence that led to his father's suicide 40 years ago.

**White, Michael C., *Soul Catcher***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Augustus Cain, a Mexican-American war vet and down-on-his-luck gambler, is asked by a wealthy land owner to track down two run-away slaves.

**Wilhelm, Kate, *A Wrongful Death***, Mira. \$24.95. Barbara Holloway returns in this fast-paced legal thriller.

**Woods, Stuart, *Shoot Him If He Runs***, Putnam. \$25.95. Stone Barrington and Holly Barker pursue a master spy and murderer to the beautiful Caribbean island of St. Marks, a paradise that conceals corrupt politicians and a few American ex-pats with murky pasts.

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