

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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The Mystery Writers of America has announced the **2008 Edgar Award Nominees!**

<http://www.theedgars.com/nominees.html>

I know we'll all have a lot to say about these. I'll be starting in the next issue of *Bookaholic*.

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***THE ANATOMY OF DECEPTION*, Lawrence Goldstone, Delacorte. \$24.00**

I tend to avoid historical thrillers unless I am told that a book reads like *The Alienist* by Caleb Carr. And this did remind me of that classic historical. It is 1889 and in a Philadelphia morgue, young doctors are learning their craft, as they still do, on the bodies of the dead. When the body of a young woman is uncovered, what those physicians see shocks them and within days, one doctor, Ephraim Carroll strongly suspects that he knows not only the woman's identity but also the horrific events that led to her death. This story is peopled with real-life characters such as William Osler, surgeon William Stewart Halsted, and controversial painter Thomas Eakins and is set at a turning-point in American medicine when forensic science was in its infancy and butchery was giving way to intelligent surgery. Goldstone, together with his wife Nancy, is better known to us as a non-fiction writer of books about books, but I look forward to more fiction of this caliber.

***THE MONSTERS OF TEMPLETON*, Lauren Groff, Hyperion. \$24.95**

I am going to make no apologies for the fact that this is not really a mystery. It came into my hands, I opened it up, and was transported. Wilhelmina Upton returns to her hometown of Templeton, New York, at the exact moment that an enormous monster dies in Lake Glimmerglass. She learns from her mother Vi that everything she thought she knew about her father is a lie. Vi was a hippie and told Willie that her father could have been any one of three unnamed men. She thought this was more romantic than the truth: that Willie's father still resides in Templeton. But Vi will not reveal his name. Willie decides to research the town's history to find clues to her father's identity. We are treated to that history. Templeton is based on Cooperstown and that town becomes part of the story. And if that monster in the lake gives you pause, don't let it. It adds poignancy to a beautiful story.

***THE NIGHT FOLLOWING*, Morag Joss, Delacorte Press. \$22.00**

Joss is one of those writers who started off slowly (with a series that she seems to have abandoned) but who is now gaining on those mistresses of psychological suspense, Ruth Rendell and Minette Walters. This stand alone is a meditation on, and exploration of, the lives of those affected by a hit-and-run death. The deceased is a wife and a writer and her husband's letters to her and the manuscript she was working on form two voices in the story. The other voice belongs to the driver of the car. She can make no excuse for what she's done even though she had made a startling discovery about her marriage just moments before the accident. Here's where you must indulge me, gentle reader. I thought I had this whole thing figured out. How extraordinary! I thought. Can this be? I asked myself. But by the time I finished the book I was saying, wait a minute! I'm not sure I understood that ending. I don't have the time to go back and read the book again before completing this review. So please, somebody: Read this (it's an excellent book except for the above ambiguity) and call me!

***THE BETRAYAL GAME*, David L. Robbins, Bantam. \$25.00**

I recently raved about the first book in this series, *The Assassins Gallery*, a what-if thriller about the attempted assassination of Franklin D. Roosevelt. This is the second in the series: a what-if thriller about the attempted assassination of Fidel Castro. And this one is less successful. Mikhal Lammeck, the specialist in the history and weaponry of assassins, is again at the center of the action here. However, Lammeck is sixteen years older and much less mobile. In addition, we know at the outset that the assassination attempt of Castro failed. (Because of the timing of the assassination attempt of FDR, the reader can actually speculate that he was assassinated – a far more satisfying outcome.) So, despite a terrific portrait of Cuba in 1961 and the rage of the American Mob, the CIA, and the American government, this is a more pedestrian story. One lovely twist at the end though.

ON MY READING LIST

***EIGHT MILLION WAYS TO DIE*, Lawrence Block, Wm. Morrow. \$19.95**

Not really on my *reading* list. This early Matt Scudder novel has been reissued with a new afterword by the author.

***PEOPLE OF THE BOOK*, Geraldine Brooks, Viking. \$25.95**

In 1996 Hanna Heath, an Australian rare-book expert, is offered the job of analyzing and conserving the famed Sarajevo Haggadah, which has been rescued from Serb shelling during the Bosnian war. The book is one of the earliest Jewish volumes ever to be illuminated with images. When Hanna discovers a series of tiny artifacts in its ancient binding, she begins to unlock the book's mysteries. This looks to be a wonderful biblio: the history of a book, from its creation to its conservation, from a Pulitzer Prize winning author. Irresistible.

***KILLER YEAR: A CRIMINAL ANTHOLOGY*, Lee Child, Editor, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

Stories from thirteen debut authors whose books were published in 2007. Each story is introduced by their *Killer Year* mentors who include **Lee Child, Tess Gerritsen, and Jeffrey Deaver**. There are additional stories by **Ken Bruen, Jeffery Deaver, Laura Lippman**, etc.

***THE KILLING GROUND*, Jack Higgins, Putnam. \$25.95**

When intelligence operative Sean Dillon stops Caspar Rashid at Heathrow Airport, it sets off a chain of events deeply rooted in the history of both men. Rashid was born and bred in England but has ties to a Bedouin tribe. His daughter has been kidnapped by Rashid's own father and taken to Iraq to be married to a man known as the Hammer of God, one of the Middle East's most feared terrorists. He begs Dillon for help and Dillon, who has had his own run-ins with that particular clan, sees a chance to settle some old scores.

***DUMA KEY*, Stephen King, Scribner. \$28.00**

After a falling crane crushes him inside his pickup truck, Edgar Freemantle must construct a new life. He leaves Minnesota for Duma Key, an undeveloped stretch of the Florida coast where he has rented a house. He knows that he wants to draw. But many of his paintings seem to have a power that cannot be controlled. Oh, you don't really need me to tell you the synopsis of this novel. It's Stephen King. You're going to read it or you are not.

***DIABLERIE*, Walter Mosley, Bloomsbury. \$23.95**

Ben Dibbuk's life is just about perfect. Wife, daughter, and mistress. But inside he feels nothing. This may have to do with the years he spent as a blacked-out drunk before getting it together. Then a woman from his past turns up at a party given for his wife by the magazine *Diablerie*. It's obvious that she remembers something about Ben's past that he doesn't.

***BLEEDING KANSAS*, Sara Paretsky, Putnam. \$25.95**

Paretsky, creator of V.I. Warshawski, has written a stand alone which sounds compelling if rather odd. The story features two families: the Schapens who have turned to that old-time religion and the Grelliers who have a history with the Schapens dating back to the 1850s when the two families settled the valley as antislavery emigrants. When Gina Haring, a Wiccan, moves into an empty farmhouse and starts practicing pagan rites, the Schapens are outraged and begin an active harassment campaign which fuels the enmity between the younger members of both families.

***THE PAINTER OF BATTLES*, Arturo Perez-Reverte, Random House. \$24.95**

Andres Faulques is a famous war photographer now living in solitude in a tower on the coast of Spain. He spends his days painting murals inspired by the scenes he himself has witnessed. One day his isolation is interrupted by a man who asks "Do you remember me? I'm going to kill you." The novel becomes a verbal battle over the nature of love,

life, and war. Perez-Reverte has an enormous following in this country and this stand alone will be most welcome.

***A PALE HORSE*, Charles Todd, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95**

Inspector Ian Rutledge, so damaged by World War I, is called upon to catch a brutal killer when a body is found in the ruins of an ancient abbey.

***THE CHAMELION'S SHADOW*, Minette Walters, Knopf. \$24.95**

British lieutenant Charles Acland returns home from Iraq. Previously well-adjusted, he begins to withdraw into himself and grows aggressive – particularly against women and most particularly against his ex-fiancée. Nobody writes suspense like this better than Walters. The UK edition is the true first.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***BEAUTIFUL CHILDREN*, Charles Bock, Random House. \$24.95**

One night in Las Vegas, Newell Ewing, age twelve, goes out with a friend and doesn't come home. This novel weaves together the lives of seemingly unconnected strangers and follows the harrowing year in the lives of the boy's parents while they search for their son and try to keep their marriage together.

***BLOOD OF THE WICKED*, Leighton Gage, Soho Press. \$24.00**

Introducing Brazilian Chief Inspector Mario Silva who is called in to solve a bishop's assassination and finds himself battling the police, landowners, and the church itself. I've started to read this and the writing packs quite a wallop.

***THE TIMER GAME*, Susan Arnout Smith, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

Grace Descanso was going to be a pediatric heart surgeon until she took two months off to work in a clinic in Guatemala and came back nearly destroyed. Now, five years later, Grace is using her science background as a crime-scene tech in San Diego while attending AA meetings and taking care of her five-year-old daughter. But when Grace kills a madman and then her daughter is kidnapped, Grace finds herself on a bizarre scavenger hunt.

***AN ORDINARY SPY*, Joseph Weisberg, Bloomsbury. \$23.95**

Mark Rutterberg is a CIA agent who, early on in his tenure, learns about a former operative and becomes curious about the case that led to his termination. The author is a former CIA case officer himself and the feature of the book receiving the most attention seems to be the redacted sections throughout the novel. Just as though the Agency had censored the material. I'm wondering if this adds or subtracts from the story. But I'm willing to give it a try.

NEWS FROM THE UK

STATE COUNSELLOR – FURTHER ADVENTURES OF FANDORIN, Boris Akunin. Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

Adjutant General Khrapov, newly appointed governor-general of Siberia and soon-to-be minister of the interior, is murdered in his official saloon carriage on his way from St. Petersburg to Moscow. Fandorin investigates.

THE GARDEN OF EVIL, David Hewson. Macmillan

In a hidden studio in an area of Rome where the Vatican likes to keep an eye on the city's prostitutes, an art expert from the Louvre is found dead in front of one of the most beautiful paintings that Nic Costa has ever seen – an unknown Caravaggio masterpiece. But before long, tragedy will strike Nic far closer to home.

THE TEMPLAR, THE QUEEN AND HER LOVER, Michael Jecks. Headline

Bloody revenge on the streets of Paris threatens Baldwin's royal mission in the latest in this medieval crime series.

PRETTY DEAD THINGS, Barbara Nadel. Headline

Inspector Cetin Ikmen investigates the disappearance of Emine Aksu, the flamboyant wife of an Istanbul style guru. His investigation leads Ikmen deep into Emine's strange and colorful past.

A VIGIL OF SPIES, Candace Robb. Century

As his master, the Archbishop of York, lies dying, Owen Archer must investigate a callous murder. Set in 1373.

EMPIRE OF SAND, Robert Ryan, Headline

This is a fictionalized account of the life of Lawrence of Arabia before he became a pivotal figure in the Arab revolt of World War I. It is 1915 and a young intelligence officer named Thomas Edward Lawrence is in Cairo awaiting his chance for action. He runs a network of agents across the Levant and is convinced that an Arab revolt is the only way to remove the Ottoman presence, and leave a free self-governed Arabia. Not a mystery, but this sounds fascinating. I think T.E. Lawrence is such a fascinating figure, don't you? Or am I confusing him with Peter O'Toole?!

THE HOUSE AT MIDNIGHT, Lucie Whitehouse. Bloomsbury

Lucas Heathfield inherits Stoneborough Manor in Oxfordshire where, he imagines, he and his group of friends can spend time away from London. But from the beginning the house exerts a strange influence on the inhabitants.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Bernhardt, William, *Capitol Conspiracy*, Ballantine. \$25.95. Ben Kincaid faces his greatest challenge yet as he maneuvers through Washington's halls of power to battle an enemy on American soil.

Block, Lawrence, *A Diet of Treacle*, Hard Case Crime. \$6.99. Sex, drugs, and murder in beatnik-era Greenwich Village. Back in print for the first time in fifty years.

Box, C.J., *Blue Heaven*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Young William and Annie have just seen four men commit murder. And the men know exactly who the children are – Blue Heaven is named for the hundreds of retired Southern California cops who make the area their home. A stand alone from the author of the Joe Pickett series.

Brown, Rita Mae, *The Purrfect Murder*, Bantam. \$25.00. The sixteenth outing for Mary Minor "Harry" Haristeen and those sleuthing cats Mrs. Murphy and Pewter, along with corgi Tee Tucker. Definitely for the pet lover!

Bunker, Edward, *Stark*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Ernie Stark is a grifter with a heroin addiction, trying to kill his way through a maze of lowlifes. From the late Bunker.

Cannell, Stephen J., *Three Shirt Deal*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Detective Shane Scully is fighting to save a man railroaded for murder, while his marriage to Alexa is unraveling.

Clement, Blaize, *Even Cat Sitters Get the Blues*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. The third installment featuring Floridian pet-sitter Dixie Hemingway who discovers the dead body of a mansion gate-keeper.

Emerson, Earl, *Primal Threat*, Ballantine. \$24.95. Zak Polanski and his friends are in the mountains for a cycling trip when they are tracked down by a jealous ex-boyfriend from the city intent on terrorizing Zak.

Emley, Dianne, *Cut to the Quick*, Ballantine. \$23.95. Detective Nan Vining, introduced in *The First Cut*, investigates the savage murders of a wealthy billboard tycoon and his girl friend.

Evanovich, Janet, *Plum Lucky*, St. Martin's Press. \$17.95. This is a Stephanie Plum Between-the-Numbers novel which is the same as saying it's a Stephanie Plum novel. Addictive reading for so many.

Franklin, Ariana, *The Serpent's Tale*, Putnam. \$25.95. The second novel featuring Adelia Aguilar, the mistress of the art of death, who is summoned by King Henry II to solve the death of his mistress by poisoning. The chief suspect is the King's wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine, and Adelia soon finds herself up against this formidable adversary.

Fulmer, David, *The Blue Door*, Harcourt. \$25.00. Philadelphia boxer Eddie Caro's first case helping out a PI leads him to a cold case involving a missing soul singer.

Grippando, James, *Last Call*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. Miami lawyer Jack Swytek and the man he saved from death row must piece together a decades old conspiracy that leads to the city's elite.

Jance, J.A., *Hand of Evil*, Touchstone. \$25.95. L.A. news anchor Ali Reynolds returns in a thriller about incest and murder.

Kelly, Jim, *The Skeleton Man*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Reporter Philip Dryden follows the Army into the abandoned hamlet of Jude's Ferry to report on

maneuvers there. But artillery shells reveal a hidden cellar with a skeleton hanging from a noose.

Kertesz, Imre, *Detective Story*, Knopf. \$21.00. Antonio Martens was a torturer for the secret police of a defunct dictatorship. Now in prison, Martens writes about his involvement in the surveillance, torture, and assassination of a dissident. This is a story told from the point of view of a man living outside morality as he rationalizes the world he lived in.

Lescroart, John, *Betrayal*, Dutton. \$26.95. When Dismas Hardy agrees to clean up the caseload of recently disappeared attorney Charlie Bowen, he thinks it will be easy, but he begins to uncover a terrible truth that takes him into the realm of assassination and treason.

McGarrity, Michael, *Death Song*, Dutton. \$24.95. The killing of a deputy sheriff in Lincoln County and the brutal murder of the deputy's wife in Santa Fe bring Police Chief Kevin Kerney and his Mescalero Apache son, Sergeant Clayton Istee, back together in a double homicide investigation.

Read, Cornelia, *The Crazy School*, Grand Central Publishing. \$23.99. Madeline Dare, the ex-debutante introduced in the first book in this series, is working as a teacher at a boarding school for emotionally disturbed teenagers. Soon she feels trapped in a school full of lunatics – and they are not the students.

Richards, Linda L., *Death Was the Other Woman*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Kitty Pangborn becomes secretary to Dexter Theroux in Depression-era L.A. But after Dex takes a job with the mistress of one of L.A.'s most corrupt businessmen, Kitty isn't so sure what side of the law she's on.

Robinson, Peter, *Friend of the Devil*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. DCI Alan Banks investigates the murders of two young women found at the same time: one on a bed of leather and the other a quadriplegic in her wheelchair posed at the edge of a cliff. The UK edition is the true first.

Sansom, C.J., *Winter in Madrid*, Viking. \$25.95. A thriller set during the Spanish Civil War by the author of the historical series featuring Henry VIII. The UK edition precedes the US.

Ure, Louise, *The Fault Tree*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Blind auto mechanic Cadence Moran is almost run down by a speeding car on the way home from work. She is the only witness to the murder of her elderly neighbor and the driver believes she's seen the getaway car.

Vincent, E. Duke, *Black Widow*, Bloomsbury. \$23.95. The life of Vinny Vesta, begun in the novel *Mafia Summer*, continues.

Wesley, Valerie Wilson, *Of Blood and Sorrow*, One World. \$23.95. An old acquaintance asks private investigator Tamar Hayle to track down her missing child.

Woods, Stuart, *Beverly Hills Dead*, Putnam. \$25.95. A sequel to *The Prince of Beverly Hills*, this tells the story of murder, political intrigue, and betrayal set in 1940s Hollywood, the era of the "Red Scare" when almost anybody could be a suspect.

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