

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

February 2008

Vol. 6, No. 3

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***THE SHADOW YEAR*, Jeffrey Ford, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95**

This is the first novel I've read by Ford, a writing professor and Edgar Award winner, and I've been depriving myself obviously. Set in a small town on Long Island in the 1960s, the strange events are seen through the eyes of a sixth grader. A classmate disappears and a man in a large white car seems to be patrolling the neighborhood. The narrator and his older brother keep track of these events in "Botch Town" which they construct from cardboard and clay in their basement. But soon the brothers realize that their young sister, Mary, is rearranging the clay figures and that her changes are reflected in actual events. With the help of their sister, they investigate the disappearance of the local boy. An odd story? Well, yes, but so well told that it had me mesmerized all the way to the last page.

***NOW YOU SEE HIM*, Eli Gottlieb, Wm. Morrow. \$22.95**

When Rob Castor, a writer, kills his girlfriend and then himself, the fallout is enormous. Especially in the small upstate New York town where he was born, and especially for his friend Nick Framingham who can't quite wrap his head around what has happened to his buddy. Shocked by the death, Nick begins to reevaluate his own life, his faltering marriage, and the strained relationship with his parents. That reevaluation is the heart of this wonderfully written novel. The brisk pace and the conclusion - which seems inevitable once you know what it is - make this a one-sitting read. Gottlieb won several prizes for his first novel, *The Boy Who Went Away*.

***CITY OF THE SUN*, David Levien, Doubleday. \$24.95**

Jamie Gabriel wakes before dawn to get on his bike and deliver newspapers in his suburban neighborhood in Indiana. But somewhere on his paper route he disappears without a trace. Fourteen months later, his parents, on the verge of giving up hope, find Frank Behr, a private investigator who, initially reluctant to take the case, begins a relentless quest to discover what happened to the boy. The theme of missing children is a popular one recently, but this first novel is an extraordinary take on it. Levien writes like a pro and has created, in Frank Behr, a remarkably well-rounded and complex PI. A hit! A palpable hit!

***ANOTHER THING TO FALL*, Laura Lippman, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Lippman has been receiving a lot of attention lately for her terrific stand-alone novels. Here she returns to her series character, Tess Monaghan, who is hired by a company

shooting a television series in Baltimore. Strange things are happening on the set and Tess is charged with watching out for the show's young lead actress. Lippman, who is married to David Simon, creator of *The Wire* and *Homicide: Life on the Street*, obviously knows whereof she writes. The story is a crackling good mystery, told with a lot of humor and set in a world where finding a killer can be hard when everybody is so accustomed to hiding their motives. Highly recommended!

ON MY READING LIST

***THE GHOST WAR*, Alex Berenson, Putnam. \$24.95**

Berenson, who won an Edgar last year for the first book in this series, once again features John Wells, the only American CIA agent to penetrate al-Qaeda. Wells is back in Washington, but when the CIA finds evidence of a surge in Taliban activity, Wells returns to Afghanistan. Berenson is a former reporter for *The New York Times* and this series is getting lots of kudos.

***NEXT OF KIN*, John Boyne, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95**

I've been a big fan of Boyne since reading *The Boy in the Striped Pajamas* and *The Thief of Time*. This thriller is set in London in 1936 where the talk is all about the affair between Edward VIII and Mrs. Simpson. A member of the aristocracy, Owen Montignac, has run up huge debts and he must find 50,000 pounds or find himself six feet under. When his late uncle's will is read in favor of Owen's cousin Stella, he finds that a royal crisis can provide the means for profit and for murder.

***A PERSON OF INTEREST*, Susan Choi, Viking. \$24.95**

When a mail bomb explodes on a campus in the Midwest, Professor Lee, an Asian American math professor, comes under suspicion. The FBI believes he may be the infamous "Brain Bomber" a terrorist whose primary targets are scientists and mathematicians. This is loosely based on the story of the Unabomber. Choi is the author of *American Woman*, a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize, which was loosely based on the story of Patty Hearst.

***DAKOTA*, Martha Grimes, Viking. \$25.95**

Andi Oliver, who was introduced in *Biting the Moon*, returns. Drifting from one State to another, she finally arrives in North Dakota where she is hired at Klavan's pig farming facility. As Andi begins to uncover the truth about Klavan's and their slaughterhouse, there are two men on her trail - one hired to kill her, the other demanding something from her forgotten past. Sounds fascinating, or confusing if you haven't read the first book in this series!

***HELL'S BAY*, James W. Hall, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

When Abigail Bates, the matriarch of one of Florida's aristocratic families, is found drowned, a chain of events is set into motion, embroiling Thorn with a family he never

knew he had and a fortune he doesn't want. Hall, in my opinion, is the most talented and most neglected of writers who set their mysteries in Florida.

L.A. OUTLAWS, T. Jefferson Parker, Dutton. \$25.95

Allison Murietta is becoming a real celebrity in Los Angeles with her compulsion to steal beautiful things, invite the media along, and then donate much of her take to charity. But rookie deputy Charlie Hood becomes involved when one of her jobs ends with ten gangsters dead and a half-million dollars worth of diamonds missing.

FIRST MYSTERIES

PUSHING UP DAISIES, Rosemary Harris, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95

A new series for horticulturists! Introducing Paula Holliday, a thirty-something media exec who traded in her stilettos for garden clogs when she moved from New York City to suburban Connecticut to start a landscaping business. When she finds a mummified body on the grounds of a dowager's estate, her career is off and running.

OBEDIENCE, Will Lavender, Shaye Areheart. \$24.00

University students are given a rather strange assignment by their Logic and Reasoning Professor. Find a hypothetical missing girl. Follow a series of clues, but if "Polly" is not found by the end of term, she will be murdered. An intriguing premise for the students or is there something more sinister going on?

THE EYE OF JADE, Diane Wei Liang, Simon & Schuster, \$24.00

Introduces a female detective, Mei Wang, who works in today's Beijing. Her search for a missing artifact leads her to discover some dishonorable secrets of her nation's culture – and her family's past. The UK edition is the true first.

OSCAR SEASON, Mary McNamara, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00

When a leading comic actor is discovered dead in the swimming pool of Hollywood's most fashionable hotel, the hotel's PR Director, Juliette Greson, finds herself enmeshed in an expanding murder mystery that involves Hollywood's biggest players.

BOUND BY BLOOD, Rick Nelson, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95.

Jack Brenner, a New Orleans homicide detective, hopes to repair his faltering marriage while his daughters are away at summer camp. Then he receives word that Emmet Lloyd Graves, a man on death row, has some information about his cousin David's unsolved murder. David was one of two civil rights workers killed in the summer of 1972.

ICE TRAP, Kitty Sewell, Touchstone. \$24.95

A British surgeon's life is blown apart when he learns that he fathered a child \ in a remote part of Canada where he once lived and worked. He knows it cannot be true, but DNA tests don't lie. To save his marriage and his career and to make sense of the

impossible, he must travel to the icy North and confront demons he thought he'd left behind.

STANDING STILL, Kelly Simmons, Atria Books. \$23.00

An intruder breaks into Claire's home and attempts to abduct her daughter. Claire asks that the kidnapper take her instead. For the next week, Claire is tied to a bed in a strange hotel. Forced to lie still, Claire, who suffers from acute panic disorder, must confront her shadowy past and the dark corners of a life previously left unconsidered.

CRIMINAL PARADISE, Steven M. Thomas, Ballantine. \$24.95

Robert Rivers is a small time thief in Southern California. But when he finds a photograph of a young girl in the safe he is robbing, he discovers that there are strange things going on in Orange County, deeds that make his own look like child's play.

PAVEL & I, Dan Vyleta, Bloomsbury. \$24.95

In the winter of 1946-47 in Berlin, Pavel Richter, a decommissioned GI, finds himself at odds with a rogue colonel in the British Armed Forces and a Soviet general, when an American friend deposits a dead Russian spy in his apartment.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

THE SOUL THIEF, Charles Baxter, Pantheon. \$20.00

In Nathaniel Mason's first few months as a graduate student in upstate New York, he is drawn into a circle of people who seem just beyond his grasp, including Jerome who seems to have appropriated parts of Nathaniel's past that Nathaniel cannot remember having told him. Thirty years later, after Nathaniel has recovered from a total breakdown, Jerome turns up again to suggest that Nathaniel's identity may not in fact be his own. Baxter is the author of *The Feast of Love* and *Saul and Patsy*.

HIS ILLEGAL SELF, Peter Carey, Knopf. \$25.00

Che is a precocious seven-year-old raised by his New York grandmother. But he yearns for his famous parents – radical activists at Harvard in the late sixties, and now, in 1972, among the FBI's most wanted. Che longs for them to come for him and one afternoon, it seems that they have and soon Che is on the run too. Finally arriving in Australia, Che must confront his life and finds that nothing is as it seems. If all he suspects about his parents is true, what should he do?

NEWS FROM THE UK

LAST POST, Robert Barnard. Allison & Busby.

Barnard does what he does best: explores family dynamics and society's prejudices within the context of an intriguing mystery.

SACRIFICE, S.J. Bolton. Bantam Press.

A first mystery introducing consultant surgeon Tora Hamilton. Part forensic-thriller, part medical-thriller.

THE POINT OF RESCUE, Sophie Hannah. Hodder & Stoughton.

The third psychological suspense novel from a writer who is creating some excitement across the pond!

RITUAL, Mo Hayder. Bantam Press.

Hayder brings back D.I. Jack Caffery who is now in the Major Crime Investigation Unit in Bristol after leaving behind his messy life in London (detailed in *Birdman* and *The Treatment*). Unattached matching hands are discovered days apart, and all indications are that the victim was alive when they were removed.

LIGHT READING, Aliya Whiteley. Macmillan New Writing.

Two women are determined to find out the truth about the supposed suicide of one-time TV star Crystal Tynee in a small seaside town. What they discover is a town that hides more than one hideous secret.

STRATTON'S WAR, Laura Wilson. Orion.

London, 1940. When the body of silent-screen star Mabel Morgan is found impaled on railings in Fitzrovia, the coroner rules her death a suicide. But D.I. Ted Stratton of the CID is not convinced.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Atherton, Nancy, *Aunt Dimity, Vampire Hunter*, Viking. \$22.95. Aunt Dimity is on the trail of, well, a vampire.

Baer, Will Christopher, *Godspeed*, MacAdam Cage. \$24.00. Purgatory is the setting for this thriller that combines dark fantasy with noir.

Barron, Stephanie, *A Flaw in the Blood*, Bantam. \$24.00. In Windsor Castle in 1851, Prince Albert, the Queen's Consort, is dying of typhoid fever. Victoria summons Patrick Fitzgerald, barrister, but within hours his ward is nearly murdered, his chambers are ransacked, and a young girl lies dead.

Bass, Jefferson, *The Devil's Bones*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Forensic anthropologist Bill Brockton investigates improper body disposal at a crematorium little knowing that he is entering a deadly game of cat and mouse.

Beaton, M.C., *Death of a Gentle Lady*, Grand Central Publishing. \$23.99. Hamish Macbeth investigates the death of a woman who may not have been as sweet as she appeared.

Bernhardt, William, *Capitol Conspiracy*, Ballantine. \$25.95. Idealistic junior senator Ben Kincaid finds himself in the thick of a terrorist killing campaign of key government officials.

- Born, James O., *Burn Zone***, Putnam. \$25.95. ATF agent Alex Duarte is in New Orleans to check out a mysterious Panamanian who likes to trade guns illegally.
- Cain, Tom, *The Accident Man***, Viking. \$24.95. I reviewed this first novel a couple of issues back when the UK edition was published. But if you haven't read this superb thriller, rush out and get it now. Anything can be made to look like an accident, right? Even the car crash that killed Princess Diana!
- Charyn, Jerome, *Johnny One-Eye***, W.W. Norton. \$25.95. The American Revolution is reimagined here with a one-eyed spy, a heroic whorehouse madam, and a cunning George Washington.
- Crider, Bill, *Of All Sad Words***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Sheriff Dan Rhodes investigates a crime wave that seems to be rolling through Blacklin County, Texas.
- Daheim, Mary, *The Alpine Traitor***, Ballantine. \$23.95. Emma Lord investigates murder in the town of Alpine, Washington – the twentieth in this series set in that town which, between murders, is idyllic.
- Doherty, P.C., *The Poisoner of Ptah***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A murder in the reign of Pharaoh Hatusu featuring Judge Amerotke as the crime-solver.
- Emerson, Earl, *Primal Threat***, Ballantine. \$24.95. Thomas Black returns in this tale of mountain bikers in over their heads.
- Ferrigno, Robert, *Sins of the Assassin***, Scribner. \$24.95. Rakkim Epps battles radical fundamentalists in America, which is now a blood-soaked dystopia. This is the second volume in the trilogy that began with *Prayers for the Assassin*.
- Fioretos, Aris, *The Truth About Sascha Knisch***, Overlook Press. \$25.95. Set in Berlin in 1928, Knisch is a person with special sexual habits. When the woman who indulges these habits is found dead, Knisch is charged with murder. As he tries to clear his name, he discovers a scientific conspiracy at the Foundation for Sexual Research!
- Ford, G.M. *Nameless Nights***, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95. A stand alone about an amnesiac accident victim with facial reconstruction who finds himself at the center of a conspiracy he can't understand.
- Freeman, Brian, *Stalked***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Lieutenant Jonathan Stride knows his partner Maggie Bei is in trouble when she reports a deadly crime on a bitter winter night. She's obviously hiding a terrible secret and her silence only feeds suspicion. Freeman's third novel featuring Stride and Serena Dial.
- Grisham, John, *The Appeal***, Doubleday. 27.95. A ruthless chemical company CEO weaves a web of conspiracy to purchase a seat on the Supreme Court.
- Harvey, John, *Gone to Ground***, Harcourt. \$25.00. Will Grayson and Helen Walker discover a wealthy family's decadent secrets in the US edition of this stand alone.
- Hensley, Joe L., *Snowbird's Blood***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Cannert is a man coping with terminal cancer. When he is well enough to get out of the hospital, he must spend his last days looking for Martha, his wife who has disappeared without a trace.
- Hockensmith, Steve, *The Black Dove***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Big Red and Old Red Amlingmeyer do some 'detectifying' in San Francisco in 1893 with an eye towards a real detective job.
- Holt, Anne, *What Never Happens***, Grand Central Publishing. \$24.99. A serial killer is murdering celebrities in Oslo. Police commissioner Adam Stubo and former FBI profiler Johanna Vik investigate.

Hyland, Adrian, *Moonlight Downs*, Soho Press. \$24.00. Introduces a new sleuth – Australia’s part-Aboriginal Emily Tempest – a woman torn between her native world and that of the “whitefellers.”

Kidd, Chip, *The Learners*, Scribner. \$25.00. Advertising, electro-shock torture, potato chips, murder, powdered milk, suicide, shoes with buckles, crippling despair, and giant dogs. And the Holocaust. From the author of *The Cheese Monkeys*.

Macpherson, Rett, *The Blood Ballad*, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95. Gunshots send genealogist Torie O’Shea stumbling through the woods and over a dead body with ties to her family.

Meaney, John, *Bone Song*, Bantam. \$24.00. Set in the future bone-fueled city of Tristopolis, Lieutenant Donal Riordan must keep the Diva, Maria deLivnova, safe after four famous performers have been murdered in recent months.

Mina, Denise, *Slip of the Knife*, Little Brown. \$24.99. Paddy Meehan investigates when an old boyfriend is murdered and she discovers he has left her his house and a suitcase full of notes.

Palmer, Michael, *The First Patient*, St. Martin’s Press. \$25.95. Gabe Singleton, a country doctor, is tapped to be physician to the president of the United States after the prez’s previous physician disappears. But it is not until Gabe is in the White House that he realizes that there is evidence that the president is going insane.

Parker, Robert B., *Stranger in Paradise*, Putnam. \$25.95. Police Chief Jesse Stone is asked by an old adversary to keep out of his way while he takes a young girl away from her mother, who is mixed up with a Latino gang, and bring her back to her father.

Patterson, James, *7th Heaven*, Little Brown. \$27.99. The Women’s Murder Club is back in action chasing a killer with a taste for fire.

Pickens, Cathy, *Hush My Mouth*, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95. A Southern Fried mystery featuring Avery Andrews who is trying to settle into her life as a small-town lawyer.

Rees, Matt Beynon, *A Grave in Gaza*, Soho Press. \$24.00. As he tries to save two men’s lives, Omar Yussef confronts corruption and violence amidst Gaza’s warring factions and gangs.

Robb, J.D., *Strangers in Death*, Putnam. \$25.95. Featuring Lieutenant Eve Dallas who, in 2060 New York, is investigating the murder of a prominent businessman, strangled in his Park Avenue apartment.

Smith, April, *Judas Horse*, Knopf. \$23.95. FBI Special Agent Ana Grey is back (at last) going undercover to infiltrate the core of a domestic terrorist cell.

Sokoloff, Alexandra, *The Price*, St. Martin’s Press. \$23.95. Will Sullivan dreams of becoming the next governor of Massachusetts, but when his daughter, Sydney, is discovered to have a malignant tumor growing in her stomach, he and his wife resolve to do anything to save her life. That means taking her to Briarwood Medical Center. But nothing there is as it seems. Some patients on the brink of death are thriving, while others are withering away. Will begins to find himself losing his grip on reality.

Stabenow, Dana, *Prepared for Rage*, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$24.95. A renegade terrorist targets the most visible symbol of American prestige and power one morning in Florida as NASA prepares to launch the Space Shuttle. A thriller from the creator of Kate Shugak.

Way, Camilla, *The Dead of Summer*, Harcourt. \$23.00. The story of a series of child murders and the girl who survived.

White, Jenny, *The Abyssinian Proof*, W.W. Norton. \$23.95. Magistrate Kamil Pasha gets involved in a conspiracy to steal an ancient reliquary whose secret could change the world. Set in nineteenth-century Istanbul.

Willig, Lauren, *The Seduction of the Crimson Rose*, Dutton. \$24.95. The Pink Carnation is back in his fourth adventure, and once again he is up against the dreaded French spy, the Black Tulip.

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 and www.myspace.com/sallyowen