

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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### EDGAR NOMINEES

You probably know the nominees by now.

But I want to put in my ten cents about the exclusion from the nominees of *The Tin Roof Blowdown* by **James Lee Burke**. Many of you know that Mr. B. is one of my all time favorite authors, and I am not alone in thinking that his latest book, set against the background of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita as they hit the Gulf Coast, is possibly his best. JLB is a native of Louisiana and his love of New Orleans and his anger at what happened to that city and its environs is palpable. And while he's wrenching your heart out, he is also telling a great story, a wonderful mystery.

JLB has received many nominations and several Edgar Awards and I am wondering why not this book! I suspect it may be because of the number of nominations and awards that he has received, and the question that keeps rolling around my mind is – do we keep nominating an outstanding author, or do we give somebody else a chance? Then another question: what do we mean when we say Best Mystery Novel of the Year?

### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***PRIEST*, Ken Bruen, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

***CROSS*, Ken Bruen, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

When you are as addicted to Ken Bruen as I am, not too many weeks can pass before picking up another of his biting takes on the police, alcoholism, and the effect of the Roman Catholic Church on the Irish soul. These two books were published a year apart. The Edgar nomination of *Priest* prompted me to read it, and I read straight through to the end of *Cross*. When Father Joyce is decapitated in a Galway confessional, Jack Taylor becomes involved. Taylor is fighting his personal demons, as usual, and dealing with a horrendous loss. But there's a young man who wants to learn the ropes and Taylor is feeling paternal so things are beginning to look very slightly up. In *Cross*, Taylor is once again in the slough of despond, but now somebody has crucified a young boy.

***GAS CITY*, Loren D. Estleman. Forge. \$24.95**

This was one of the most surprising reads I've had for a long time. Not because I don't know who Loren D. Estleman is – indeed I have many of his books on my shelf, unread

– but because I didn't realize just how good he is. Best known for his Amos Walker mysteries set in Detroit, Estleman has written a stand alone here that is extraordinary. Set in a Midwestern blue-collar city (like Detroit), *Gas City* tells of the power struggle between Police Chief Russell whose wife has just died and the mob boss who has for years been Russell's benefactor. This struggle is set against a city made antsy by a serial killer's rampage. What a very pleasant surprise this was.

***THE DARK TIDE*, Andrew Gross. Wm. Morrow. \$25.95**

Summer is here early, or at least my beach reading is. Not a criticism, just an observation. James Patterson's one-time writing partner has given us a thriller which, literally, starts with a bang in New York's Grand Central Station. A bomb demolishes the train car in which Charles Friedman is riding. His wife, Karen, hopes that he may have survived though, with many bodies unidentified, she is beginning to think that her husband of eighteen years is dead. Months later, Karen discovers that Charles's business dealings are in question. There are hedge fund losses, international scams, conspiracies, and murder. A page-turner!

***PARTY OF ONE: THE LONERS' MANIFESTO*, Anneli Rufus. Marlowe. \$15.95**

This book is in no way a mystery. It's not even fiction. And it's five years old. However, I had to pick it up when I came across it because it had my name all over it (Loner!), and I couldn't resist. We loners have had a bad rap lately. We've been called everything from standoffish to serial killer. We never leap to the phone when it rings and groups bore us or scare us to death. But loners are just like everybody else except we don't have a high tolerance for the non-essentials. We need our time alone to recharge and many of us need it to create. Isaac Newton was a loner, as was Michelangelo. As are Anne Rice and Haruki Murakami. So if, when you're invited to a party, you see it less as an opportunity to meet people and more as an ordeal where you're convinced you'll be trapped in a corner by a bore, with bad breath, this delightful, eccentric, and surprisingly in depth look at the loner may be for you.

## ON MY READING LIST

***THE SOMNAMBULIST*, Jonathan Barnes, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

This first novel (published in the UK last year) is set in Victorian England and introduces Edward Moon, a conjurer who was the toast of society, but whose tricks no longer inspire the awe they once did. When an actor meets his end in a bizarre and terrible fashion, the baffled police turn to Edward Moon who has in the past been able to unravel perplexing puzzles for them. And Moon welcomes the assignment. In fact he leads the police to the murderer quickly. Perhaps too quickly.

***THE FOURTH MAN*, K.O. Dahl, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95**

In the course of a routine police raid, Detective Inspector Frank Frolich of the Oslo Police saves Elizabeth Faremo from getting inadvertently caught in a crossfire. They meet again and become lovers, but by the time Frohlich learns who she is, it is already too late and he soon finds himself a prime murder suspect under the watch of his colleagues. This marks the US debut of one of Norway's premier crime writers, and this classic crime noir in a modern setting is getting all kinds of raves.

***THE AMATEUR SPY*, Dan Fesperman, Knopf. \$23.95**

Burned out by years of humanitarian aid work, Freeman and Mila Lockhart retreat to a tranquil Greek island. But on the first night they are surprised by three intruders who seem to know everything about Freeman – including a terrible secret he has kept from Mila, which they use to recruit him to spy on an old Palestinian friend in Jordan. Meanwhile, a prosperous Arab-American couple, Abba and Aliyah Rahim, are grieving the death of their daughter. Aliyah fears her husband is leaning toward radicalism and, she too, will find herself in Jordan where her path will cross Freeman's. Post 9/11 intrigue from Fesperman, who is becoming the new master of the thriller.

***THE BETTER ANGELS*, Charles McCarry, Overlook Press. \$25.95**

When this was published almost thirty years ago, one reviewer lamented that the premise – that terrorists would use passenger-filled airliners as tools of terror – was so incredible as to be an obstacle to the reader's suspension of disbelief. Just one of the novel's facets that would prove to be prophetic. It is an election year and the principal threat to the country comes from Islamic terrorists who are impossible to track down and who are desperate to acquire nuclear bombs to use against Israel or American cities. A timely reprint!

***THE BIBLE OF CLAY*, Julia Navarro, Bantam. \$24.00**

Beginning in the tense months that preceded the current war in Iraq, moving back to ancient Mesopotamia, and forward to the atrocities of the last century, Navarro follows an upstart archaeologist and a murderous group of conspirators as they vie for a treasure that will rewrite history – an explosive account of the world's creation recorded millennia ago by a humble scribe. Navarro wrote *The Brotherhood of the Holy Shroud*, a thriller that seemed to get lost among the Da Vinci Code clones of the past couple of years.

***THE SECRET ADVENTURES OF CHARLOTTE BRONTE*, Laura Joh Rowland, Overlook Press. \$24.95**

Well, doesn't this look interesting? Rowland, whose San Ichiro novels are set in ancient Japan, now turns her attention to Victorian England. Upon learning that she has been falsely accused of plagiarism, the normally mild-mannered Charlotte Bronte sets off for London to clear her name. But when she witnesses a murder, she finds herself embroiled in a mystery that threatens not only her own safety but also that of her country. With the help of her sisters, Emily and Anne, Charlotte travels from the Yorkshire moors to London to the opium-clouded ports of Canton in China. A romp through Victorian history!

**DEAD TIME, Stephen White, Dutton. \$25.95**

Psychologist Alan Gregory is struggling to deal with a newly adopted son and a shaky marriage. But then his ex-wife, Meredith, reappears and asks him to help her locate the missing surrogate mother of her soon-to-be-born child. This is White's sixteenth novel and I've never become devoted to the series because I've always assumed I have to read all the novels, in order, to make sense of Gregory's life. I'm assured I can read all of them as stand alones and I might just do that after *Kill Me*, which I thought was one of the best books of the year when it was published in 2006.

**LOVE AND NIGHT, Cornell Woolrich, Dennis McMillan. \$35.00**

This isn't just on my reading list – it's on my collecting list! McMillan Publications has received permission from the Woolrich estate to re-publish the works of this brilliant and troubled author. This first volume in the series contains 15 stories first published between 1926 and 1939 and never reprinted since. These are not the crime stories for which Woolrich became so well known (*The Bride Wore Black*, *Rear Window*, etc.) but for completists, that makes this volume a must. Introduction by Woolrich scholar, Francis M. Nevins. Collect them all!

## FIRST MYSTERIES

**THE KILLER'S WIFE, Bill Floyd, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

Six years after her ex-husband is sentenced to death for a series of gruesome murders, Leigh Wren finds herself being stalked by the father of one of her ex's victims. Then a new killer emerges whose methods are very similar to those of the man who is on death row thousands of miles away. Leigh begins to investigate, but when the identity of the new killer is finally exposed, the truth turns out to be as twisted as it is devastating.

## NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

**THE RAIN BEFORE IT FALLS, Jonathan Coe, Knopf. \$23.95**

The story of three generations of women from WWII London to France at the new millennium. A stand alone from the author of *The Rotters Club*. The UK edition is the true first.

**LUSH LIFE, Richard Price, Farrar, Straus & Giroux. \$26.00**

By the time you read this, I expect this book to be in its *n*th printing after a rave review on the front page of the NY Times Sunday Book Review! Price, who does write mysteries, has written a novel that rips any veneer that New York had left, right off - so crime must play an important part of the story, surely.

**OUR STORY BEGINS, Tobias Wolff, Knopf. \$26.95**

New and selected stories from one of the best. A retired marine enrolls in college while her son trains for Iraq; a teacher is abducted by a student's father; a lawyer takes a very difficult deposition; and an American in Rome indulges the gypsy who has just picked his pocket.

**NEWS FROM THE UK****A PRISONER OF BIRTH, Jeffrey Archer. Macmillan**

Danny Cartwright and Spencer Craig couldn't be more different. But one evening their paths cross in a wine bar where one of them will be arrested for murder while the other is the prosecution's chief witness.

**BLOOD AT THE BOOKIES, Simon Brett. Macmillan**

A Feathering mystery featuring the redoubtable Jude.

**RUSO AND THE DEMENTED DOCTOR, Ruth Downie. Michael Joseph**

Ruso investigates murder in Britain, the frontier of the Roman Empire. A Medicus Investigation.

**UNTIL ITS OVER, Nicci French. Michael Joseph**

The latest psychological thriller from the author of *Losing You*.

**A CURE FOR ALL DISEASES, Reginald Hill. HarperCollins**

The latest Dalziel and Pascoe thriller.

**THE MIRACLE AT SPEEDY MOTORS, Alexander McCall Smith. Little Brown.**

A No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency mystery.

**CHILD 44, Tom Rob Smith, Simon and Schuster**

In Communist Russia, Leo has always toed the party line, but when he witnesses the torture of a man he knows to be innocent, he begins to question his loyalty to the regime. Then he's asked to investigate his own wife. And still the killing of children continues! Getting a great deal of attention on both sides of the Atlantic. Keep an eye on this one.

**BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

**Adler, Warren, *Funny Boys*, The Overlook Press. \$24.95.** A hilarious and thrilling romp through 1920s New York gangster land by the author of *The War of the Roses*.

**Archer, Jeffrey, *Prisoner of Birth*, St. Martin's Press. \$27.95.** Danny Cartwright is sentenced to twenty-two years in jail for a murder he didn't commit and spends his time plotting to escape and revenge himself on the barrister who put him away.

**Atkins, Ace, *Wicked City***, Putnam. \$24.95. When crime-fighting attorney Albert Patterson is gunned down in Phenix City, Alabama, in 1954, the town pauses for a moment and then starts up again. But a small group of men meet and decide they have had enough and over the next several months lives change and people die.

**Becka, Elizabeth, *Unknown Means***, Hyperion. \$22.95. The second Evelyn James thriller from real-life investigator Becka.

**Bowen, Rhys, *Tell Me, Pretty Maiden***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. PI Molly Murphy investigates the life of a young woman found lying in the snow near Central Park who has lost her ability to speak.

**Brightwell, Gerri, *The Dark Lantern***, Crown. \$24.95. Life inside a Victorian home is turned upside down when two women's dark secrets are revealed.

**Clark, Mary Higgins, *Where Are You Now***, Simon & Schuster. \$25.95. Lawyer Carolyn MacKenzie is driven to solve the mystery of older brother's sudden disappearance ten years ago. What she discovers leads her into the world of people who choose to disappear from their own lives.

**Downie, Ruth, *Terra Incognita***, Bloomsbury. \$23.95. Army doctor Gaius Petrius Ruso sets off for the uncivilized borders of Roman Britain, where he runs into murder and ghosts.

**Fielding, Joy, *Charley's Web***, Atria Books. \$24.95. An ambitious writer endangers her family when she tries to enter the mind of a killer.

**Hunt, James Patrick, *Goodbye Sister Disco***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. George Hastings, St. Louis police detective, is back on the case when the daughter of a wealthy businessman is kidnapped and her boyfriend killed.

**Johnson, Craig, *Another Man's Moccasins***, Viking. \$23.95. Walt Longmire unravels a mystery that connects two murders over forty years – and brings back haunting memories of Vietnam.

**Kellerman, Jonathan, *Compulsion***, Ballantine Books. \$26.95. Alex Delaware helps track a quicksilver killer whose brilliant disguises, including one as a woman, are baffling the LAPD.

**Latour, Jose, *Hidden In Havana***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A complex, hard-boiled novel of betrayal, deceit, and cunning which takes place in a Cuba tourists rarely see.

**Lutz, Lisa, *Curse of the Spellmans***, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00. Second in the series featuring Izzy Spellman, ace female detective.

**Martinez, Michelle, *Notorious***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. A car bomb makes short work of a controversial rap star in the latest Melanie Vargas thriller.

**May, Peter, *The Killing Room***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. When the mutilated bodies of eighteen women are discovered in a mass grave in Shanghai, detective Li Yan travels there to investigate. Meanwhile, American pathologist Margaret Campbell arrives to discover that her relationship with Li is threatened by another woman.

**Meaney, John, *Bone Song***, Bantam. \$24.00. An honest copy in a city of the dead must face his own dark impulses. A futuristic noir.

**Meyer, Deon, *Devil's Peak***, Little Brown. \$24.99. Revenge, forgiveness, and the race to catch a trained killer. Set in South Africa.

**Penny, Louise, *The Cruellest Month***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Chief Inspector Armand Garache investigates when an impromptu séance at the local haunted house turns deadly at Easter time.

**Perry, Anne, *Buckingham Palace Gardens***, Ballantine Books. \$25.95. When Queen Victoria's son, Edward, Prince of Wales, awakes the morning after another night of debauchery, he discovers the corpse of one of his female escorts in the bed beside him. Thomas Pitt of Special Branch is called in to solve the puzzle discreetly.

**Picoult, Jodi, *Change of Heart***, Atria Books. \$26.95. A mother loses her child and a criminal is offered one last chance for salvation in the latest from Picoult.

**Rice, Christopher, *Blind Fall***, Scribner. \$26.00. Iraq war vet John Houck nearly got his captain killed. Now he wants to redeem himself, but when he shows up unannounced on his captain's doorstep, he discovers a horrific murder scene.

**Robinson, Peter, *Friend of the Devil***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. DCI Alan Banks takes on 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.

**Saums, Mary, *Mighty Old Bones***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. The continuing adventures of Mrs. Thistle and Mrs. Twigg, two unlikely sleuths from Alabama.

**Sheehan, James, *The Law of Second Chances***, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Benny Avrielle is about to hit the big time. If he can carry out the robbery of a man who is visiting his mistress with \$10,000 in his pocket, he'll get a share of the profits. But when the mark dies, Benny is arrested and sentenced to death.

**Stone, David, *The Orpheus Deception***, Putnam. \$25.95. CIA cleaner Micah Dalton returns when an assassination attempt on the streets of Venice put him on a collision course with a Serbian warlord.

**White, Randy Wayne, *Black Widow***, Putnam. \$24.95. Doc Ford's god-daughter, Shanay, threw a pretty wild bachelorette party. Unfortunately, somebody taped it and is blackmailing Shanay who begs Doc for help.

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