

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***THE BLUE RELIGION*, Michael Connelly, Ed., Little Brown. \$24.99
hardcover. \$15.99 paperback**

An excellent short-story collection featuring cops and ex-cops, those men and women in blue who live their lives hunting down, and haunted by, the bad guys. Contributors include James O. Born, Leslie Glass, Edward D. Hoch, Laurie R. King, and Peter Robinson. And because I'm a reviewer and therefore biased, I will tell you that the best stories here come from T. Jefferson Parker, John Harvey, Alafair Burke, and Michael Connelly.

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

Phil Kramer is a private eye who, on the first page of this novel, is shot dead on a deserted street. His wife, Emily, discovers that he emptied their bank account. As she investigates – she was at one time a partner in Phil's firm – she also discovers that she may not have known the man she married at all. Meanwhile, the hired killer who shot down Phil has some questions. He's been ordered to take out Kramer's widow as well, but if the job is that complicated, maybe there might be a bigger payoff. It is always a joy to read Perry. His spare style and plotting sometimes give the impression that weaving a complicated story must be an easy thing. Because it isn't, we marvel at Perry's art even as he unfolds it before us. And this story has an extraordinarily textured villain.

***BLIND RAGE*, Terri Persons, Doubleday. \$24.95**

Troubled young women are committing suicide in the Twin Cities but FBI Agent Bernadette Saint Claire thinks that those women may have had a helping hand. From the teacher whose course on literature and suicide was attended by more than one of the "victims"? Or from the uncooperative psychiatrist who treated one of those women? This is the second novel featuring Agent Saint Claire, whose gifts include seeing into the minds of murderers and communicating with ghosts. But don't let that stop you from reading this very well-written thriller. I've read both in the series and Persons is batting a thousand.

***CHILD 44*, Tom Rob Smith, Grand Central Publishing. \$24.99**

This first novel by Smith – who has not yet reached his thirtieth year – has an extraordinary premise and setting. There is a serial killer loose in Stalin's Russia and Leo

Stepanovich Demidov is investigating. But in Stalin's Russia, serial killers do not exist. They are the products of capitalist decadence and ritual killing doesn't happen in a perfect State. So Leo will be hampered at every bureaucratic stage of his investigation, and he'll have to deal with more than stonewalling if he doesn't toe the party line. That is the briefest of descriptions, but what is so captivating about this novel is the portrait of Russia during the 1950s. Since the author cannot possibly know about that firsthand, it is to his credit that the feel of the book is right on. Anybody who has read *Child 44* will tell you that this is the book of the year. That may not be true but, mystery lover, you have to read it. Because it may be.

SEVERANCE PACKAGE, Duane Swierczynski, St. Martin's Griffin. \$13.95

This book is absolutely unputdownably outrageous! It is Saturday morning and the staff of Knox & Associates have been called in for a breakfast meeting. The boss has laid on doughnuts and mimosas but, he tells his staff, the mimosas are poisoned. They can drink them and die a peaceful death or he will kill them himself. Sounds like somebody got out of the wrong side of bed this morning, right? Three minutes later one employee has drunk a mimosa thinking that this is a test of loyalty – he's dead in minutes – and the boss's assistant has taken a gun out of the doughnut box and put a bullet through the boss's head. Story over? It hasn't even started! Plan to read this in one sitting.

ON MY READING LIST

THE MURDER ROOM, Michael Capuzzo, Gotham Books. \$27.50

These are the true tales of The Vidocq Society, a team of the world's finest investigators, who pledged themselves to bring to justice the coldest killers in the world. Named after the first modern detective, the Parisian Eugene Francois Vidocq, the Napoleonic real-life sleuth who inspired Sherlock Holmes, the Society met monthly in its chambers to solve murder over a gourmet lunch. The three partners traveled far from their Victorian dining room to hunt the ruthless killers of a millionaire's son, a serial killer who carved off faces, and a child killer who enjoyed fifty years of freedom and dark fantasy. I know, this sounds like fiction. It isn't. It just reads like fiction in the hands of Capuzzo who is the author of *Close to Shore*, the story of the shark attacks that inspired Jaws.

BLOOD ALLEY, Tom Coffey, Toby Press. \$24.95

In 1940s New York City, Patrick Grimes, a reporter for the *New York Examiner*, decides to look into the murder of a woman near the East River who turns out to be the daughter of one of Manhattan's wealthiest men. Coffey is a terrific writer who has never received the attention he should, but if you read his first book, *The Serpent Club*, you'll want to read this.

SCARED TO LIVE, Stephen Booth, Bantam. \$25.00

Detective Sergeant Diane Fry and Detective Constable Ben Cooper investigate a house fire that kills a mother and her two children. When an elderly woman living alone in the

same village is murdered, Fry and Cooper find themselves far beyond their native Derbyshire searching for answers. This is a consistently excellent series.

***THE FRONT*, Patricia Cornwell, Putnam. \$22.95**

Cornwell brings back the cast of characters from *At Risk*: Massachusetts state investigator Win Garano, District Attorney Monique Lamont, and Garano's grandmother, whose unpredictable talents you ignore at your own risk.

***DEVIL MAY CARE*, Sebastian Faulks, Doubleday. \$24.95**

We're celebrating the 100th birthday of Ian Fleming and his estate has invited Faulks to write an 007 adventure forty-three years after Fleming wrote his last book. Surely the event of the year! All I can say is: Bond. James Bond. I can also say that this is being published simultaneously in England.

***CARELESS IN RED*, Elizabeth George, HarperCollins. \$27.95**

If you don't know why Thomas Lynley walked away from his job at Scotland Yard, you need to catch up before tackling this mystery, which finds Lynley back on an investigation when he witnesses a young man fall to his death from the cliff-side.

***WRACK AND RUIN*, Don Lee, W.W. Norton. \$23.95**

Lyndon Song leaves New York City to be a brussel-sprout farmer in California. His refusal to sell his land to a golf-course developer results in the appearance of his brother plus a cast of misfits. This sounds nothing like Lee's previous book, *Country of Origin*, for which he won an Edgar Award, but he's such a good writer, I'm going to be reading it.

***PHANTOM PREY*, John Sandford, Putnam. \$26.95**

A widow returns home to her large house in Minneapolis to find blood everywhere and her college-aged daughter missing. Lucas Davenport is the reluctant investigator and he soon finds himself hunting a killer who is targeting Goths in his area.

***THE MONEYPENNY DIARIES*, Kate Westbrook, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95**

It's a bonanza month for all things Bondian, and this is already a huge hit in the UK. Miss Jane Money Penny kept a diary, you know, and if you thought she was just the woman who sat outside M's office and pined for James, well, you're wrong. Miss Money Penny led an extraordinary life, not the least of which was her central role in the run-up to the Cuban Missile Crisis and the threat of nuclear war. Secrecy ruled her life and the price she paid was high. She told nobody. Except her diary.

FIRST MYSTERIES

TELL NO LIES, Julie Compton, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95

Jack Hilliard is about to be elected District Attorney of St. Louis. He has a perfect family and, seemingly, a perfect life, but all is not what it appears to be. He's attracted to one of his colleagues, Jenny Didson, and what should have been a harmless (but guilt-inducing) one-night stand turns into much, much more when Jenny is accused of the murder of one of her clients, and Jack's her only alibi.

A CASE OF EXPLODING MANGOES, Mohammed Hanif, Knopf. \$24.00

This debut imagines the events that led up to the mysterious 1988 plane crash that ended the life of the Pakistani dictator General Mohammad Zia-ul-Haq and its aftermath. At the center of this darkly comic novel is Junior Office Ali Shigri of the Pakistan Air Force, whose plan for revenge involves an ever-changing crew, intrigue, subterfuge, missteps, and the very beginnings of the road that would lead to 9/11.

QUIVER, Peter Leonard, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95

When Kate McCall's husband is killed by her teenage son, Luke, in a hunting accident, the incident sets into motion a series of events culminating in the dramatic, life-and-death confrontation with a gang of killers. Peter Leonard is the son of Elmore Leonard.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

CITY OF THIEVES, David Benioff, Viking. \$24.95

A writer visits his retired grandparents in Florida to document their experience during the siege of Leningrad. His grandmother refuses to talk about it, but his grandfather consents. The result is the captivating story of two young men trying to survive. Benioff is the author of the very wonderful *25th Hour* and is also a screenwriter.

SKELETONS AT THE FEAST, Christ Bohjalian, Shaye Areheart. \$25.00

Inspired by an actual World War II diary, this novel tells the story of a group of people who begin the longest journey of their lives in January 1945. Their attempt to cross the remnants of the Third Reich, from Warsaw to the Rhine, to reach the British and American lines becomes a story of survival, and of death. From the author of *The Double Bind*.

THE DOWNHILL LIE, Carl Hiaasen, Knopf. \$22.00

Ever wondered how to retrieve a sunken golf cart from a snake-infested lake? Or which brand of 6-iron to use for killing rats in your garage? These and other questions that plague the serious golfer are answered, not so seriously, by Hiaasen who returned to the fairways after a thirty-two-year absence. For Father's Day, for golf addicts, and for Hiaasen completists.

SNUFF, Chuck Palahniuk, Doubleday. \$24.95

Palahniuk once again pushes the boundaries of good literary taste with the story of Cassie Wright, porn priestess, who is going to try to cap her legendary career by breaking the world record for serial fornication. On camera. With six hundred men. Why am I telling you this?

NEWS FROM THE UK**OSCAR WILDE AND THE RING OF DEATH, Gyles Brandreth. John Murray**

The second mystery featuring Oscar Wilde as a detective, finds the poet and playwright and his guests playing a game of “murder” in which each guest names the person that they’d like to kill. When the chosen “victims” begin to die, Wilde and his confidants Robert Sherard and Arthur Conan Doyle realize that the murderer is among their party.

THE REAPERS, John Connolly. Hodder & Stoughton

The seventh book in the Charlie Parker series brings Parker’s two friends, Angel and Louis, to the fore. Louis is a Reaper, one of an elite group of killers whose names are only mentioned in whispers. But now Louis and Angel are targets themselves. They will need the help of Charlie Parker – if he can get to them in time.

OUT OF A CLEAR SKY, Sally Hinchcliffe. Macmillan

When her relationship ends, Manda takes refuge in the hobby that her ex introduced her to – bird watching. But when she falls prey to the ever more sinister attentions of another birdwatcher, her own complicated past starts to emerge. A first mystery by an author being compared to Barbara Vine.

PAPER BUTTERFLY, Diane Wei Liang. Picador

The second book in the series set in Beijing and featuring private detective Mei.

FLESH HOUSE, Stuart MacBride. HarperCollins

It is eighteen years since the police caught the Flesher – the serial killer who butchered people all over the UK – and seven years since he was released from prison on a technicality. But when a container full of joints of human meat turns up in Aberdeen Harbor, a manhunt led by Detective Sergeant Logan MacRae kicks off.

HELL’S FIRE, Chris Simms. Orion

When a charred corpse and satanic symbols are found in the smoking ruins of a church, D.I. Jon Spicer and Manchester’s Major Incident Team are called in.

SEVERN HOUSE publications are available in the US. Here is their May list:

NEXT DOOR TO MURDER, Anthea Fraser

(*Rona Parish*)

GAME OVER, Cynthia Harrod-Eagles

(*Bill Slider*)

INSTRUCTIVE SOLUTION, Roderic Jeffries

(*Inspector Alvarez*)

SHIMURA TROUBLE, Sujata Massey

(*Rei Shimura*)

THE GREEN MAN, Kate Sedley

(*Roger the Chapman*)

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Alexander, Lawrence, *Rubicon*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. An idealistic California senator races against time to stop the assassination conspiracy against a major presidential candidate.

Barnard, Robert, *Last Post*, Scribner. \$24.00. Eve McNabb has just buried her mother when she receives a letter from someone named Jean. The letter hints at an illicit passion between the letter writer and Eve's mother – a woman who kept many secrets.

Blundy, Anna, *Vodka Neat, St. Martin's Minotaur*. \$24.95. Featuring foreign correspondent Faith Zanetti. This is the first in the series to be published in this country.

Box, C.J., *Blood Trail*, Putnam. \$24.95. Joe Pickett investigates the death of a hunter who is found strung up, gutted, and flayed, as if he were the elk he had been pursuing.

Crabbe, Richard E., *Hell's Gate*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A riveting historical thriller involving river piracy, gang wars, drug smuggling, and the General Slocum ferry disaster.

Downing, David, *Silesian Station*, Soho Press. \$24.00 To free his girlfriend, a British journalist working for American intelligence must work for the Nazis.

Emery, Anne, *Barrington Street Blues*, ECW Press. \$24.95. Monty Collins investigates the murder of two men – one rich, the other poor – outside a seedy bar in Halifax.

Eriksson, Kjell, *The Demon of Dakar*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A partner in the fancy restaurant, Dakar, has been killed. Everyone who works at the restaurant including the surviving partner is under suspicion. And then more bodies turn up. Third novel featuring detective Ann Lindell.

Estleman, Loren D., *Frames*, Forge. \$23.95. UCLA film archivist Valentino buys an old movie palace and discovers not only a skeleton in the basement but also reels of priceless, long-lost film. To stop the LAPD from taking the film, he has seventy-two hours in which to solve the murder.

Gordon, Alan, *The Moneylender of Toulouse*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. This is the seventh in the Fools' Guild mysteries featuring Thephilos, jester and agent, and set in 1204 A.D.

Housewright, David, *Madman on a Drum*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. McKenzie, former cop and now unlicensed PI, is pulled into the middle of a dangerous situation when the daughter of a childhood friend is kidnapped.

Kellerman, Jonathan, *Compulsion*, Ballantine. \$26.95. A string of murders that have one thing in common – a black luxury car seen at each crime scene in this Alex Delaware thriller.

Kenneally, Chris, *The Remnant*, Pegasus. \$25.00. While the Pope lays dying, a secret ultra-conservative group of Catholic clerics start a bloody campaign to purge the church of liberals who disagree with their plans for a new crusade against Islam.

Koontz, Dean, *Odd Hours*, Bantam. \$27.00. The fourth installment of the saga featuring Odd Thomas.

Page, Katherine Hall, *The Body in the Gallery*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Faith Fairchild knows there must be a connection between a fake Bearden and a Jane Doe corpse found in the local art museum.

Rehder, Ben, *Holy Moly*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A popular televangelist intends to build a massive religious complex in Blanco County – until a dinosaur fossil spoils his plans.

Saylor, Steven, *The Triumph of Caesar*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Pompey is dead, Egypt is under the control of Cleopatra, and Julius Caesar has returned to Rome. Gordianus the "Finder" is all but retired but he cannot refuse a call from Calpurnia, Caesar's wife.

Smith, Anthony Neil, *Yellow Medicine*, Bleak House Books. \$24.95. Deputy Billy Lafitte has been given a second chance at enforcing the law - in rural Minnesota - after being kicked off the force in Gulfport, Mississippi. When Billy agrees to look into the disappearance of some drugs, he finds himself tracking a cell of terrorists.

Unger, Lisa, *Black Out*, Shaye Areheart. \$23.00. Disturbing events - the familiar dark figure on the beach, the mysterious murder of her psychologist - trigger confusing memories for Annie Powers.

Wall, Kathryn R., *The Mercy Oak*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Tempers run hot in the eighth installment of the Bay Tanner series set in South Carolina's Low country.

Wambaugh, Joseph, *Hollywood Crows*, Little Brown. \$26.99. LAPD cops Hollywood Nate and Bix Rumstead get caught up with a bombshell, unaware that it's a set-up.

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