

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

June 2008

Vol. 6, No. 7

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***SACRIFICE*, S.J. Bolton, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

Tora Hamilton, an obstetrician, is an outsider on the Shetland Islands where her husband grew up and where they have returned to live. While digging on their property, Tora finds a human body which appears to be a centuries-old bog body, not uncommon in those parts. But Tora becomes obsessed with finding out what happened when she discovers that the woman was killed within a few days of bearing a child and that her heart had been cut out. What she discovers is a pattern going back years of missing women, abandoned children, and deep secrets. When I first started this, I was very close to putting it down (it starts slowly), but kept on because of the quality of the writing. Am I glad I did! This first novel, first published in the UK, should be savored.

***THE REAPERS*, John Connolly, Atria Books. \$26.00**

The Reapers are a group of elite killers, the best in the business of assassination. Louis, the confidante of private detective Charlie Parker, is one of them. But someone is hunting Louis, targeting his home, his businesses, and his partner Angel. The killer of killers, the most feared of The Reapers has a personal vendetta against Louis and it's going to end badly – for a lot of people. I'm delighted that Connolly has focused on two of the most fascinating characters in his Charlie Parker series and fleshed them out. The result is one of the best books in the series, murder and mayhem, beautifully rendered by one of the best writers at work today.

***MASTER OF THE DELTA*, Thomas H. Cook, Harcourt. 24.00**

Jack Branch, a teacher, returns to his father's Delta estate in Mississippi in 1954 to teach at the local high school. His class is on historical evil, and Jack learns that one of his students, Eddie, is the son of the Coed Killer, a notorious local murderer. When he makes an incorrect assumption about Eddie, Jack tries to atone by mentoring the boy and encouraging him to examine his father's crime. Eddie's investigation leads him to Jack's own father, and Jack begins to question Eddie's motives – and his own. Cook is an extraordinary writer and what he has done here is create a character who is very difficult to like. Jack's intentions, at first noble, soon reveal a man who is all too human. I found him sympathetic if not likeable, and I must give Cook's writing credit for that.

***A QUIET BELIEF IN ANGELS*, R.J. Ellory, Orion Paperbacks.**

This story, spanning years, tells of Joseph Vaughan who grows up in the small town of Augusta Falls, Georgia, where we first meet him as a twelve-year old in 1939. There is a murder of a girl in the town that year. And there will be murders in the area over the next

decade. Joseph and his friends try to protect their young female friends by forming a group of “guardian angels” but they never manage to save a life. The years pass and Joseph moves to New York and becomes a writer. And still the murders follow him. This is an epic story of one man’s life blighted by a series of violent deaths that do not end until Joseph takes action. The story is haunting and the writing is wonderful. Ellory has written before, but I believe he has not been published in the US. This book is only available as an import.

***THE MURDER NOTEBOOK*, Jonathan Santlofer, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

NYPD sketch artist Nate Rodriguez returns in another page-turning crime novel which uses the author’s own art to tell his character’s story. Nate has a vision in his head that he just can’t shake. He draws it, but it still won’t quite make sense. But Nate is also fascinated by a series of murders followed by suicides which are taking place in New York. Nate feels compelled to unofficially look into these cases which, on the surface, seem to have no connection. But as Nate digs deeper, a common thread appears. The story here is fascinating and the art that accompanies it makes for a unique experience. I can think of no reason why this series should not appear on best seller lists.

ON MY READING LIST

***THE DECEIVED*, Brett Battles, Delacorte Press. \$24.00**

Jonathan Quinn, professional “cleaner” ties up all the loose ends. But when he discovers he’s been hired to vanish all traces of one of his best friends, a former CIA agent, his job hits close to home. Battles’ first novel was *The Cleaner*.

***NOTHING TO LOSE*, Lee Child, Delacorte Press. \$27.00**

Jack Reacher’s latest adventure finds him in the towns of Despair in Colorado. He’s going to have to take on the whole town because they not only want him gone, they also want him dead. Reacher is beginning to see the connection between this town and a war that’s killing Americans thousands of miles away. Collectors note that the UK edition preceded this.

***THE BROKEN WINDOW*, Jeffery Deaver, Simon & Schuster. \$26.95**

Lincoln Rhyme and his partner Amelia Sachs face the mysterious “522” who commits vicious crimes and then plants ironclad evidence to implicate innocent men – including Rhyme’s own cousin.

***THE SPIES OF WARSAW*, Alan Furst, Random House. \$25.00**

There are twenty-one spies in Warsaw in 1937 as the world readies for war. At the French embassy, a new military attaché has arrived and he will be drawn into a world of abduction, betrayal and intrigue, even as he conducts a passionate love affair with a Parisian woman, a lawyer for the League of Nations. Furst is an elegant writer whose books, when read together, give us a history of Europe on the brink of disaster.

DEAD SILVER, Neil McMahon, HarperCollins. \$24.95

Hugh Davoren and Madbird are thrown into the middle of an unsolved double homicide when the daughter of a deceased professor discovers a cache of photographs and a silver earring in her father's home. Set in Montana, this is a follow-up to *Lone Creek*, the author's breakout novel which should be read by everybody who enjoys a well-written mystery.

RESOLUTION, Robert B. Parker, Putnam. \$25.95

This is Parker's follow-up to *Appaloosa*. It looks as if this may be a series set in the Old West and featuring Everett Hitch, so let's pay some attention here. *Appaloosa* is going to be a movie starring Viggo Mortensen, Renee Zellweger, and Ed Harris.

NOT IN THE FLESH, Ruth Rendell, Crown. \$25.95

When a truffle-hunting dog unearths a human hand, Chief Inspector Wexford tries to piece together events that took place eleven years earlier. He must interrogate everyone who lives nearby to see if they can turn up a match for the dead man among the 85 people in this part of England who have disappeared during the past decade plus. Then another body is found.

THE STORY OF EDGAR SAWTELLE, David Wroblewski, Ecco. \$25.95

The premise of this thriller pays homage to the story of Shakespeare's *Hamlet* as the title character tries to prove that his uncle murdered his father in order to take over the family farm and gain his mother's affections. A first mystery which is already getting very positive reviews. Collectors should be paying attention here.

THE WALKING DEAD, Gerald Seymour, Overlook Press. \$24.95

A young man starts a journey from a dusty village in Saudi Arabia. If his mission succeeds, he will go to his god a martyr – and many innocents will die with him. Seymour's latest thriller is about the world in which we live and the choices we are forced to make, and their consequences.

THE DAWN PATROL, Don Winslow, Knopf. \$23.95

Boone Daniels, a private eye who lives to surf, is obsessed with an unsolved case of a young girl who was abducted while he was with the San Diego police. He blames himself for not being able to save her. When he takes on a case involving an insurance scam, Boone finds himself looking at a chance to make amends. Winslow is a much underrated writer.

FIRST MYSTERIES

FINAL THEORY, Mark Alpert, Touchstone. \$24.00

David Swift, a professor at Columbia University, is called to the bedside of his dying mentor, a physicist who has been brutally attacked. "Einheitliche Feldtheorie," whispers

the old man. Only scientists and Germans understand what that mean: The Theory of Everything – Einstein’s proposed theory of a set of equations that combines the physics of galaxies and the laws of atoms. But Einstein died without discovering the theory. Or did he? The author folds science, history, and politics into this thriller.

***THE 351 BOOKS OF IRMA ARCURI*, David Bajo, Viking. \$25.95**

Through two marriages and countless travels, mathematician Philip Mazyrk has carried on a love affair with Irma Arcuri. Now Irma has disappeared and left Philip her library of 351 books. Buried in the text of this library are the secrets of Irma’s disappearance. Philip, who sees equations in every facet of life, reads the novels and begins to realize that he too is trapped in a narrative.

***CEZANNE’S QUARRY*, Barbara Pope, Pegasus. \$25.00**

A young woman is found murdered and the clues all point to her spurned lover, Paul Cézanne.

***ESCAPE FROM AMSTERDAM*, Barrie Sherwood, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95**

Aozora is deep in debt, but when his aunt dies, she leaves him and his sister, Mai, a priceless inheritance. Only trouble is, Mai has disappeared and he can’t get the cash without her. Aozora’s search for his missing sister takes him to the deep south of Japan and to Amsterdam.

***IN THE HEAT*, Ian Vasquez, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$23.95**

Miles Young, a boxer turned sometime investigator, who lives in the tiny Central American nation of Belize, is approached to fight one last big one. He is also approached by a woman who wants Miles to find her daughter who has run away with a no-good boyfriend just days before her eighteenth birthday.

***THE BLOOD DETECTIVE*, Dan Waddell, St. Martin’s Minotaur. \$24.95**

The mutilated body of a man is found in a London graveyard, but the police investigation yields no results. A closer look at the corpse shows a string of carved letters and numbers referring to a file in city archives containing birth and death certificates. Genealogist Nigel Barnes is put on the case, but he must work frantically as one victim after another is found – all with different index numbers. Barnes must search the archives of the past to find out how the victims and the corresponding files are connected.

***THE HOUSE AT MIDNIGHT*, Lucie Whitehouse, Ballantine. \$25.00**

After the suicide of his uncle, Lucas Heathfield inherits Stoneborough Manor in Oxfordshire. His friend, Joanna, imagines it as a place where their close group of friends can escape London and rekindle the comradeship of their college days. But from the beginning, the house exerts a strange influence on the friends, especially Lucas who becomes obsessed with his uncle’s death and the house’s past, a past that hints at disturbing parallels with the generation who now inhabit it. This was first published in the UK earlier this year.

***EIGHT IN THE BOX*, Raffi Yessayan, Ballantine. \$25.00**

They call him the Blood Bath Killer. He has murdered two Boston women by sneaking into their homes, filling the bathtub with their blood, and making off with their bodies. Detective Angel Alves is out to stop him, but the bodies continue to disappear and the case becomes more personal when a victim turns out to be a childhood friend of Alves.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE***THE DISORDER OF LONGING*, Natasha Bauman, Putnam. \$24.95**

A first novel, this historical is set in 1890s Boston where Ada Caswell is not a good wife. She longs for her days at the university, drinks with her housekeepers, sneaks out for midnight horseback rides along the Charles River, and gives feminist books to her lady's maid. Her husband, Edward, pursues rare orchids and his wife's refusal to conform brings out the darkest side of his personality. When he brings home a crate of orchids, Ada has no idea how they will change her life, but soon she's heading to Brazil for a life of adventure, pleasure and danger. This is being compared to **Michel Faber's** *The Crimson Petal and the White*.

***THE OTHER*, David Guterson, Knopf. \$24.95**

Two boyhood friends take different paths in adulthood. Neil is a devoted schoolteacher and family man while John William moves into the woods, convinced that this is the only way to live without hypocrisy. When John asks Neil to help him disappear completely, Neil is drawn into a web of secrets, deceit, and tragedy.

NEWS FROM THE UK***SANCTUARY*, Ken Bruen. Bantam Press**

Jack Taylor receives a letter containing a list – two guards, one nun, one judge. Taylor ignores it until a guard and a judge die under mysterious circumstance.

***PROPHECY OF DEATH*, Michael Jecks. Headline**

Historical mystery set in England in 1325.

***ROAR OF THE BUTTERFLIES*, Reginald Hill. HarperCollins**

The return of Joe Sixsmith, private eye.

***MURDER FARM*, Andrea Marie Schenkel. Quercus**

A family has been murdered with a pickaxe. The author weaves testament from the villagers, an oblique view of the murderer, and occasional third-person narrative pieces. Officially the crime is unsolved – the narrator leaves the village unaware of the truth, only the reader can reach a conclusion! This first mystery won prizes when it was first published in Germany and is receiving lots of attention in the UK.

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

DEATH IS DISPOSABLE, Evan Marshall

(Anna Winthrop)

DEADLY VERDICT, Andrew Neiderman

(Thriller)

ASSASSIN'S RAGE, Charles O'Brien

(Historical)

THE SUFFOCATING SEA, Pauline Rowson

(DI Andy Horton)

BREAKING POINT, Frank Smith

(DCI Neil Paget)

DIFFERENT KIND OF JUSTICE, Linda Sole

(Sara Beaufort)

A DYING FALL, Sally Spencer

(DCI Charlie Woodend)

WATCHES OF THE NIGHT, Sally Wright

(Ben Reese)

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Abbott, Jeff, *Collision*, Dutton. \$24.95. The story of two men – one a successful corporate consultant who is mourning the murder of his new bride; the other, a former CIA agent known as “Pilgrim” whose current assignment is so treacherous he doesn’t trust even his own boss. When these two men are thrown together, they realize they’ve been framed in an elaborate setup.

Buchanan, Edna, *Legally Dead*, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00. This new series introduces former U.S. Marshal Michael Venturi who quits the witness protection program to become a freelance identity wizard. Venturi helps individuals fake their deaths in order to get a new start. But his clients are turning up dead – really dead.

Carson, Paul, *Ambush*, St. Martin’s Press. \$24.95. Scott Nolan is a doctor and a persuasive campaigner against drug abuse. But when a team of contract killers ambush Ireland’s anti-drug minister and Nolan loses his wife in the attack, his life changes forever.

Cook, Marshall, *Obsessions*, Bleak House. \$24.95. Monona Quinn and her husband are relaxing in the north woods of Wisconsin where Mo is enrolled in a writing workshop. Pompous writer Fletcher Downs was supposed to teach a classroom full of hopefuls how to write a mystery – but surely he hadn’t intended to teach by example. Who killed Fletcher and will the murderer strike again?

Craig, Philip R., *Vineyard Chill*, Scribner. \$24.00. The final installment of the Martha’s Vineyard series.

Deutermann, P.T., *The Moonpool*, St. Martin’s Press. \$24.95. A nuclear power plant comes under attack and ex-cop Cam Richter must race against time to defuse an inside threat which uses the plant’s own systems to begin an unstoppable sequence.

- Evanovich, Janet, *Fearless Fourteen***, St. Martin's Press. \$27.95. Bounty hunter Stephanie Plum is at it again, along with her usual sidekicks.
- Fister, Barbara, *In the Wind***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. From the streets of Chicago to rural Minnesota, former detective Anni Koskinen is caught in the middle when the dark secrets of two turbulent times – the radical Vietnam era and post-9/11 surveillance society – come together.
- Goldstein, Paul, *A Patent Lie***, Doubleday. \$24.95. Michael Seeley, the lawyer introduced in *Errors and Omissions*, is now a sole practitioner in Buffalo. He's persuaded by his estranged brother to take on a suit for patent infringement on an HIV vaccine and discovers that the financial stakes are so high that murder is used as a hardball legal tactic.
- Granger, Ann, *A Mortal Curiosity***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$ 24.95. Lizze Martin is sent to the South of England where she has been hired as an attendant to a young woman, only to find herself embroiled in a case of murder and madness. Set in 1864.
- Hickman, Katie, *The Aviary Gate***, Walker. \$25.95. A 17th century concubine-in-training in Constantinople is involved in palace intrigues.
- Howard, Linda, *Death Angel***, Ballantine. \$26.00. This paranormal novel features Drea, a double-crosser who is eventually murdered by her lover, a ruthless crime lord. But Drea isn't dead for long. She returns a changed woman and joins forces with the FBI to bring down the ones who marked her for death.
- Johnson, Craig, *Another Man's Moccasins***, Viking. \$24.95. Sheriff Walt Longmire unravels a mystery that connects two murders across forty years.
- Kelby, N.M., *Murder at the Bad Girl's Bar and Grill***, Shaye Areheart. \$23.00. A gated community discovers there are no rules in the association's handbook for the bodies that begin to pile up. Jimmy Ray investigates.
- Knight, Bernard, *The Manor of Death***, Trafalgar Square. \$24.95. County coroner Sir John de Wolfe encounters a harbor town whose entire population seems to be complicit in murder.
- Kray, Roberta, *The Lost***, Soho Press. \$24.95. Hard hitting British hard-boiled by the wife of one of the notorious Kray twins.
- Land, Jon, *The Seven Sins***, Forge. \$24.95. To save himself from an old enemy, a rich Vegas casino owner will have to tear open his own dark history.
- Levine, Laura, *Killing Bridezilla***, Kensington. \$22.00. Writer-for-hire Jaine Austen faces her latest witty mystery.
- Lynn, Jackie, *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. The latest addition to the spiritual detective series featuring Rose Franklin.
- Martini, Steve, *Shadow of Power***, Wm. Morrow. \$26.95. Legal thriller featuring Paul Madriani.
- Morris, R.N., *A Vengeful Longing***, Penguin Press. \$24.95. Porfiry Petrovich returns in the second in the series set in nineteenth-century St. Petersburg.
- Nabb, Magdalen, *Vita Nuova***, Soho Press. \$24.00. Nabb's final book finds Marshal Guarnaccia investigating the murder of a student.
- Nesser, Hakan, *Mind's Eye***, Pantheon. \$22.95. This is the first book in the Inspector Van Veeteren series. Two of Nesser's later books have already been published here.

Palumbo, Dennis, *From Crime to Crime*, Tall Fellow Press. \$24.95. A suspenseful collection of mind-twisting mini mysteries.

Patterson, James, with Howard Roughan, *Sail*, Little Brown. \$27.99. When catastrophe hits a family sailing vacation, survival may be the least of their concerns.

Pronzini, Bill, *Fever*, Forge. \$24.95. *Nameless* uncovers a vicious racket preying on gambling addicts.

Richmond, Michelle, *No One You Know*, Delacorte Press. \$23.00. Twenty years ago, Ellie's sister, a top math student at Stanford, was murdered in a case that was never solved. Now in a chance meeting with the man accused of the crime, Ellie comes into possession of her sister's secret notebook which is filled with mathematical equations.

Schorr, Mark, *The Fixation*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Set in Portland, Oregon, Brian Hanson, a counselor and Vietnam vet helps patients fight their demons while struggling to contain his own.

Sims, Elizabeth, *The Actress*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. This new series introduces struggling actress Rita Farmer who is asked by a celebrity lawyer to coach his client, a woman accused of murdering her child, to appear more human in front of a jury.

Spencer-Fleming, Julia, *I Shall Not Want*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. This latest installment of the series featuring Clare Fergusson and Russ van Alstyne has murder, yes! but it also deals with the death of Russ's wife. Will Russ and Clare, an Episcopal priest, be able to overcome their guilt and grief and finally become lovers? Inquiring minds will want to know!

Thurlo, Aimee and David, *The Prodigal Nun*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A mysterious newcomer becomes Sister Agatha's biggest nightmare – and the monastery's most deadly threat.

Upson, Nicola, *An Expert in Murder*, HarperCollins. \$24.95. In the world of 1930s British theater, revered mystery writer Josephine Tey must turn amateur sleuth. Published first in the UK.

Willett, Jincy, *The Writing Class*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Amy Gallup teaches a writing class at the university extension. Her latest class is odd and Amy soon realizes that one of her students is a very sick puppy. When a student is murdered, everyone becomes a suspect.

Wishart, David, *Illegally Dead*, Trafalgar Square. \$24.95. Marcus Corvinus wonders why someone would bother poisoning a terminally ill man. Historical.

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