

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

July 2008

Vol. 6, No. 8

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

SWAN PEAK, James Lee Burke, Simon & Schuster. \$26.00

I didn't think Burke would be able to top his last book, *Tin Roof Blowdown*, set as it was in New Orleans during the full fury of Hurricane Katrina. But he has managed to do just that. By moving Dave Robicheaux and Clete Purcell to Montana where they are on a fishing vacation, Burke has wisely put his beloved NO in the background along with his rage and grief. And he's written a doozy of a mystery. I would have been hard put to tell you the plot of some early Dave Robicheaux mysteries, but this one is clear, precise, and peopled with extraordinary characters, some of whom I just can't get out of my head.

THE LEGAL LIMIT, Martin Clark, Knopf. \$24.95

Clark doesn't write often enough possibly because he's busy being a circuit-court judge in Virginia. But when he does, attention must be paid. Clark has been described as a drinking-man's John Grisham and one can certainly see why in this extraordinary legal drama. Brothers Gates and Mason Hunt are survivors of abusive childhoods. Mason escaped by going to law school, but Gates, who often protected his younger brother, is a compulsive felon. When Gates is imprisoned he asks Mason to use his legal influence to spring him. Actually, he does more than ask him. Gates and Mason share a secret which they swore they'd take to the grave, but Gates uses this secret as leverage to secure Mason's cooperation. Is fraternal loyalty more important than personal integrity? Clark explores this and other moral dilemmas in this finely written story.

THE DIRTY SECRETS CLUB, Meg Gardiner, Dutton. \$24.95

Several months ago Stephen King raved in his column in *Entertainment Weekly* (yes! I do read it!) about a British author named Meg Gardiner. He said she was going to be the next suspense superstar. Only problem was, her books weren't available in the US. Beginning with *The Dirty Secrets Club*—which is being published simultaneously here and in the UK, and thanks, I suspect, to Mr. King—they now will be. A fashion designer burns to death clutching the body of his murdered lover; a football superstar jumps from the Golden Gate Bridge; a U.S. attorney drives her BMW off a highway overpass, killing herself and three others. This string of murder/suicides has San Francisco abuzz and the SFPD rattled. Forensic psychiatrist Jo Becket is called in to perform psychological autopsies and she makes a shocking discovery: all the suicides belonged to *The Dirty Secrets Club*, a group with nothing but money and something to hide. This is a page-turning read; the first big beach book of the summer!

WHAT WAS LOST, Catherine O’Flynn, Holt. \$14.00

This paperback original was published in the UK last year to great acclaim. It won the coveted Costa Prize for First Novel and was short-listed for the Guardian First Book Award and long-listed for both the Booker and the Orange Prizes. Impressed? I was, so couldn’t wait to read this. The story is set in the 1980s when young Kate Meaney, an aspiring junior detective, keeps a “top secret” notebook. She and her toy monkey are especially intrigued by the “suspects” at the newly opened Green Oaks shopping mall. Then Kate disappears. Twenty years later, Lisa, who works at the mall, and a security guard, Kurt, become fascinated by the image of a little girl glimpsed on the mall’s security cameras. The premise is intriguing but I found both the writing and the denouement disappointing. When that happens and the book has received so much positive ink, I tend to think it must be me. I missed something or just don’t understand. But when readers miss the point, it’s not usually their fault, so I’m saying *caveat emptor*, especially if you’re thinking of investing in the very expensive UK first editions.

ILLEGAL ACTION, Stella Rimington, Knopf. \$23.95

This is Rimington’s third thriller featuring MI5 officer Liz Carlyle. Liz has been transferred to counter-espionage, once the most important part of MI5 operations, but now less glamorous since anti-terrorism gained priority. What Liz discovers, though, is that there are still plenty of spies, only now they spy on the international financial community and on the wealthy Russian oligarchs who make England home. One of these, Nikita Brunovsky, is an increasingly vocal opponent of Vladimir Putin and Liz uncovers a plot to silence him. There are no clues as to how the assassination might be carried out and Liz alone is responsible for averting disaster. Stella Rimington was the first woman Director General of MI5 and I’ll bet she was good at her job! This novel is workmanlike and authentic, but the writing fails to soar.

ON MY READING LIST**HIT AND RUN, Lawrence Sanders, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Keller’s got one last hit planned and then he’s calling it quits. He’s waiting to get the go-ahead on the job when someone frames him for a very public murder. Now he’s got to find a way out of this one! Not Sanders’ most popular series (that would be the one featuring Matt Scudder), but a must for the Sanders fan.

CHASING DARKNESS, Robert Crais. Simon & Schuster. \$26.00

Hired by a defense attorney, Elvis Cole once discovered a videotape that helped clear an innocent man of murder. Three years later, the “innocent man” is found dead holding photographs of the murder victim. The latest in the Elvis Cole and Joe Pike series is bound for the top of the bestseller lists no doubt.

THE LIKENESS, Tana French, Viking. \$24.95.

This is the follow up to the Edgar Award winning novel, *In The Woods*. It is six months later and Detective Cassie Maddox has transferred out of the murder squad. However,

Detective Sam O'Neill calls her to the scene of his new case when a young woman is found stabbed to death in a small town outside Dublin. The dead girl's ID says her name is Lexie Madison—the identity used years ago by Cassie as an undercover detective—and she looks exactly like Cassie. This turns up on my reading list because, despite being in the minority about that award-winning first novel (I thought it was a slog), I have high hopes for this author and I do retain a fondness for Cassie Maddox. The US edition is the true first.

***THE GARDEN OF EVIL*, David Hewson, Delacorte. \$24.00**

Two bodies are found in an artist's studio in Rome. Looming over the corpses is a Caravaggio masterpiece, a violent tableau of beauty and depravity. The discovery sends Detective Nic Costa on a chase through a maze of history, following clues left by a brilliant artist with gruesome tastes. The latest entry in this great series is now available in the US. The UK edition and true first was published earlier in the year.

***REAL WORLD*, Natsuo Kirino, Knopf. \$22.95**

On the outskirts of Tokyo, four teenage girls are cramming for entry into good colleges. When the next-door neighbor of one of them is found murdered, the girls suspect the killer is the neighbor's son, a high-school boy they have nicknamed Worm. But when he disappears, the four girls get caught up in dangers they could never have imagined. Kirino is one of Japan's top novelists. She is difficult to read on all sorts of levels, but it is always worth the effort.

***STILL WATERS*, Nigel McCrery, Pantheon. \$23.95**

This thriller introduces DCI Mark Lapslie, who suffers from synaesthesia, a neurological condition that causes him to "taste" sound. Lapslie is called in when the badly decayed body of a woman is unearthed. The murder appears to be the work of a serial killer and Lapslie's investigation leads him in a direction that could be detrimental to his career, if not his life. In addition, he is constantly flooded with the convolution of the senses that can drive him nearly mad. The author is the creator of the successful TV series *Silent Witness*, and this book is getting great reviews from the UK.

***BOOKS*, Larry McMurtry, Simon & Schuster. \$24.00**

As well as being a Pulitzer Prize winning author, McMurtry has spent his life buying, selling, and collecting rare books. His collection in Archer, Texas, is always included in discussions of great book collections. This memoir is full of anecdotes, characters, gossip, and observations about authors, book people, literature, and himself. A must for me.

***VICTORY OF EAGLES*, Naomi Novik, Del Rey. \$25.00**

This is big news only if you are into this terrific fantasy series set during the Napoleonic wars. As you know, until now the true first editions have been mass-market paperbacks with some titles available as limited or hardcover editions. This, the fifth in the series, is a hardcover first edition. It is the true first. If you are a collector, I know you're

following what I'm saying here. For those of you who are not collectors, you might want to know that Peter Jackson (of Lord of the Rings fame) has optioned this series.

***KILLER VIEW*, Ridley Pearson, Putnam. \$24.95**

Sun Valley sheriff Walt Fleming, introduced in *Killer Weekend*, puts together a search and rescue team when a skier goes missing at Galena Summit. Despite treacherous conditions, the group sets off and, within minutes, something goes horribly wrong. A shot rings out and one of their team is dead. By morning another has disappeared.

***RULES OF DECEPTION*, Christopher Reich. \$24.95**

Dr. Jonathan Ransom is mountain climbing with his wife, Emma, when a blizzard sets in and Emma is killed when she falls into a crevasse. Twenty-four hours later, Jonathan receives an envelope addressed to his wife containing two baggage-claim tickets and, within days, he is the subject of an international manhunt and the target of a master assassin. Reich is a master of the thriller.

***MOSCOW RULES*, Daniel Silva, Putnam. \$26.95**

The death of a journalist leads Gabriel Allon to Moscow. But this is the new Moscow, with its oil wealth and bulletproof Bentleys, where power resides once more behind the walls of the Kremlin and where critics of the ruling class are ruthlessly silenced. A Moscow where there are those plotting to reclaim an empire lost and to challenge the global dominance of the United States. Like Ivan Kharkov, a former KGB colonel, now an arms dealer. He's about to deliver Russia's most sophisticated weapons to al-Qaeda—unless Allon can stop him.

***FRACTURED*, Karin Slaughter, Delacorte. \$25.00**

Slaughter has brought back some of the characters from *Triptych* in her latest thriller. After years in a brutal marriage, Gailyn Campano has learned to accept violence and betrayal. But when she returns home to find an intruder holding her daughter hostage, a ferocious strength emerges and, before she knows it, a man lies dead on her floor (you go girl!). Now it's up to Will Trent, an agent from the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, to pick up the pieces.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***THE SILVER BEAR*, Derek Haas, Pegasus. \$24.00**

Columbus is a young man whose latest assignment is to assassinate presidential candidate Abe Mann. But Columbus realizes that the men behind the assassination attempt have also set him up.

***STALKING SUSAN*, Julie Kramer, Doubleday. \$22.95**

Set in the world of TV ratings, this debut introduces Riley Spartz, an investigative reporter who discovers disturbing information about two homicides. Riley's

investigation reveals that there are more than two murders: someone is targeting women named Susan and killing them on the same day of each year. The deadly anniversary is approaching and Riley must get the information out without creating panic or, more important, interfering with sweeps month. She decides to stage a bold on-air stunt to draw out the murderer.

NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***FINE JUST THE WAY IT IS*, Annie Proulx, Scribner. \$25.00**

This is the third collection of Proulx' Wyoming Stories, her most famous of which is *Brokeback Mountain*. Proulx writes about the people who inhabit pioneer country—some of whom are billionaires or escapists and some of whom just think the rest of the country has it wrong. A must read from the award-winning Proulx.

***SO LONG AT THE FAIR*, Christina Schwarz, Doubleday. \$24.95**

The author of *Drowning Ruth* explores the lure of new attraction, the pull of long-established love, and the lengths people will go to satisfy their deepest desires. In 1963, a plot for revenge destroyed a career, a friendship, and a family. Thirty years later, that event reverberates as, over the course of one day, several people struggle with their relationships and discover what they will do in the name of love.

***THE GUERNSEY LITERARY AND POTATO PEEL PIE SOCIETY*, Mary Ann Shaffer & Annie Barrows, Dial Press. \$22.00**

In January 1946, London is emerging from the shadow of WWII and writer Juliet Ashton is looking for her next book subject. She receives a letter from a man she's never met, a native of the island of Guernsey, who has come across her name. Juliet is drawn into the eccentric world of The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society—a book club born as a spur-of-the-moment alibi when its members were discovered breaking curfew by the Germans occupying the island. A remarkable correspondence with the Society's members ensues as Juliet learns about the impact the recent occupation has had on their lives.

NEWS FROM THE UK

***SWEETHEART*, Chelsea Cain, Macmillan**

Second in the trilogy featuring serial killer Gretchen Lowell. I'll be reviewing this next month closer to the US publication date. This is the true first edition!

***VICTORIA VANISHES*, Christopher Fowler, Doubleday**

The latest Bryant and May mystery finds our octogenarian detectives trying to solve the murders of women, all of whom lost their lives in London pubs.

THE BELLINI CARD, Jason Goodwin, Faber & Faber

The third in the series featuring Yashim—Ottoman detective and eunuch. Yashim's latest adventure takes him to Istanbul and Venice.

DEADLINE, Simon Kernick, Bantam Press

A woman receives a phone call: her fourteen-year-old daughter has been kidnapped and the ransom sum is half a million pounds in cash. Her husband, whom she married just two years previously, is also missing. Could he be involved in the kidnapping?

REDEMPTION OF ALEXANDER SEATON, Shona MacLean, Quercus

A first mystery by the niece of Alistair MacLean set in the town of Banff, Scotland, in the 1620s.

ASHES TO ASHES, Barbara Nadel, Headline

Set during the London Blitz, undertaker Francis Hancock is caught in a web of murder and abduction.

COUNCIL OF THE CURSED, Peter Tremayne, Headline

The latest Sister Fidelma mystery.

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

THE PATHS OF THE AIR, Alys Clare

(Hawkenlye)

THE TROPHY EXCHANGE, Diane Fanning

(Police Procedural)

ONE NATION, UNDER GOD, Keir Graf

(Thriller)

ROMANCED TO DEATH, Susan Rogers-Cooper

(E.J. Pugh)

MONKEY IN THE MIDDLE, Stephen Solomita

(Hard Boiled)

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Adler, Elizabeth, *One of Those Malibu Nights*, St. Martin's Press, 24.95. Murder, mystery, and movie stars combine in this thriller from Adler.

Aird, Catherine, *Losing Ground*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. When an eighteenth century painting is stolen from an old manor house moments before the entire house is engulfed in flames, Detective Chief Inspector Sloan and Detective Constable Crosby are called in to investigate.

Barry, Sebastian, *The Secret Scripture*, Viking. \$24.95. Set in a mental hospital, patient and doctor try and come to an agreement about the patient's life.

Braver, Gary, *Skin Deep*, Forge. \$24.95. A Boston homicide detective's search for a serial killer leads him to the nightmarish conclusion that he himself may be the killer.

Brundage, Elizabeth, *Somebody Else's Daughter*, Viking. \$24.95. A psychological thriller about the natural and adoptive parents of a young woman and the secrets they hide from her.

Casey, Kathryn, *Singularity*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Sarah Armstrong is a Texas Ranger, one of the very few women, so she has to work twice as hard. When one of Texas' wealthiest businessmen is found murdered along with his alleged mistress, their bodies posed in grotesque ways, she knows this is the deadliest case of her career.

Cavanagh, Thomas B., *Prodigal Son*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Three months after undergoing surgery to remove a brain tumor, retired detective Mike Carrity is having a romance with a member of his cancer support group. After she receives a grim prognosis, she asks him for help tracking down the son she put up for adoption twenty years before.

Cooper, Natasha, *A Poisoned Mind*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$25.95. Barrister Trish Maguire can't understand how her boss, Anthony, can accept a case defending the corrupt World Waste Management company. So when Anthony is involved in a horrific accident, Trish is faced with a painful dilemma: to take over the case or threaten her career by doing what she thinks is right.

Crombie, Deborah, *Where Memories Lie*, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. The fourteenth mystery featuring Scotland Yard detectives Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James.

Darnton, John, *Black and White and Dead All Over*, Knopf. \$24.95. A satirical murder mystery set within a New York City newspaper.

Depoy, Phillip, *The Drifter's Wheel*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Fever Devilin, folklorist, has returned home to the Georgia Appalachians. But oddness follows Fever wherever he goes, and the town of Blue Mountain is no different.

Finch, Charles, *The September Society*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. In 1866 Lady Annabelle visits detective Charles Lenox and tells him her beloved son, George, has vanished from his room at Oxford. When Lenox visits his alma mater to investigate, he discovers a series of bizarre clues.

Fossum, Karin, *Black Seconds*, Harcourt. \$24.00. While one mother fears that her child has been murdered, another mother worries that her son may be a killer. Featuring Konrad Sejer.

Gardner, Lisa, *Say Goodbye*, Bantam. \$25.00. Young women are disappearing, girls no one will notice are gone. But FBI Special Agent Kimberly Quincy has noticed.

Genelin, Michael, *Siren of the Waters*, Soho Press. \$24.00. A female Slovak police commander whose family was ravaged by the Czechoslovakian police force now travels across Europe on the trail of human traffickers.

Ghelfi, Brent, *Volk's Shadow*, Henry Holt. \$25.00. The second thriller featuring Alexei "Volk" Volkovoy, agent of the Russian army and underworld. This time he travels back to Chechnya to settle the score with his nemesis and reclaim his old love.

Gooden, Philip, *The Salisbury Manuscript*, Soho Press. \$24.95. In the year 1873, London lawyer Tom Ansell stumbles upon a violently botched theft of an ancient artifact and becomes suspect number one.

Grabien, Deborah, *Rock & Roll Never Forgets*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Featuring John "JP" Kinkaid, guitarist for the Hall of Fame rock band Blacklight. This is

the first in the series and provides an insider's look at the way rockers live, love, and sleuth, if they have to.

Haines, Carolyn, *Wishbones*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. This southern series heads out west when Sarah Booth Delaney and an old flame land the leads in a steamy Hollywood film and an even hotter mystery.

Handler, David, *The Sour Cherry Surprise*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. On Sour Cherry Lane, a student is throwing wild sex parties, a distinguished history professor has gone missing, his wife is strung out on crystal meth, and Desiree Mitry is having fainting spells since she broke off with film critic Mitch Berger.

Howell, Lis, *The Chorister at the Abbey*, Soho Press. \$24.95. A biblically obsessed serial killer terrorizes members of the Abbey Chorus in northern England.

Johansen, Iris and Roy, *Silent Thunder*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Mother and son team up to produce a thriller about a Russian nuclear submarine purchased by the U.S. for an exhibition. When marine architect Hannah Bryson's brother discovers a message on the sub and is murdered, Hannah must find her brother's killer and becomes a target herself.

Judson, Daniel, *The Water's Edge*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Judson's latest literary thriller is a tense, violent twenty-four-hour tour of the darkest parts of the Hamptons.

Klavan, Andrew, *Empire of Lies*, Harcourt. \$25.00. With a single phone call Jason Harrow's past comes crashing down around him, and he has only a few hours to decipher what are lies and what is the truth to prevent a savage attack on his country.

Konrath, J.A., *Fuzzy Navel*, Hyperion. \$23.95. Things turn sour for Lt. "Jack" Daniels as a group of vigilantes go on a murderous spree.

Oates, Joyce Carol, *My Sister, My Love*, Ecco. \$25.95. Narrated by nineteen-year-old Skylar, this is the story of the decade-old murder of her ice skating champion sister, Bliss, and the subsequent tabloid hell that destroyed her family.

O'Neil, Vincent H., *Exile Trust*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. The Exile town bank is in trouble, and Chief Dannon asks for Frank Cole's help. The bank has lost track of some of its safe deposit customers, and Frank has to contact the missing box-holders before auditors can shut the bank down.

Patterson, James and Michael Ledwidge, *The Dangerous Days of Daniel X*, Little Brown. \$20.00. A man with the ability to manipulate animals and objects with his mind hunts down the assassin who killed his parents.

Pearce, Michael, *Mark of the Pasha*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. The Great War has ended but the Mamur Zapt is faced with new dangers.

Phillips, Christi, *The Devlin Diary*, Pocket Books. \$24.00. In London in 1672, a vicious killer stalks the court of Charles II, inscribing his victim's bodies with mysterious markings. In Cambridge in 2008, a Trinity College history professor is found dead, the torn page of a seventeenth-century diary in his hand. Is there a connection here? You betcha!

Rosenfelt, David, *Don't Tell a Soul*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Rosenfelt's first stand-alone features Tim Wallace, whose wife died in a boating accident and who is the prime suspect for murder. When a man in a bar drunkenly tells Tim that he murdered a woman in New Jersey, his life gets decidedly worse.

Salem, J.J., *Tan Lines*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. As the title suggests, a beach read set in the Hamptons where three women with a summer share get mixed up in scandal, sex, and murder.

Steiner, Peter, *L'Assassin*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. This sequel to *A French Country Murder* features former CIA operative Louis Morgan and his partner-in-crime-solving, Jean Renard, the gendarme of their small Provence village.

Thomas, Will, *The Black Hand*, Touchstone. \$14.00. This paperback original is the latest in the series of historical mysteries featuring Victorian enquiry agent Cyrus Barker and his apprentice Thomas Llewelyn. This time out, they must save London from an invasion of the Sicilian mafia.

Zubro, Mark Richard, *Schooled in Murder*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A contentious staff meeting, a murdered teacher, a school full of suspects. Tom Mason is a suspect and he and his partner, Scott Carpenter, will have to figure out who the killer is.

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