

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

ONCE WERE COPS, Ken Bruen, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95

Bruen has set his new thriller on the streets of New York, and it is one of his darkest and his best. When Michael O'Shea, a member of the Guards, Ireland's police force, comes to America on an exchange program, he thinks his dream has come true. Shay, as Michael is known, is paired with an unstable cop named Kebar, and these two unlikely partners become a lethal and effective force in the war against crime. Together they patrol the city while a madman stalks young women. Bruen is absolutely breathtaking in his depiction of brutality.

THE OTHER HAND, Chris Cleave, Sceptre, \$37.00

Cleave is the author of one of my favorite books from a few years ago, *Incendiary*. As in that book, Cleave uses the voices of women - one a refugee from Africa and the other a middle-class woman from London - to tell a remarkable story. I think the publisher has done neither the author nor the reader any favor by withholding the plot line, explaining in the flap copy that to say anything about the plot is to spoil it and asking the reader not to reveal what happens. This ploy raised my expectations way above the point they should have been, and resulted in a let-down. The story is well told and can stand being explained, so here are the bare bones: a young refugee, after being detained in the U.K., is released and, like her fellow detainees, finds herself stranded in England with no papers and no money. The only thing she has is the address of a couple who live in the suburbs. Little Bee (for that is the name of the refugee and, I believe, of the U.S. edition which will be released in a few months) and the couple obviously have some kind of history, and it is this that slowly unfolds. Cleave tells the story of illegal immigrants in a compassionate way that hides none of the horrors of being between a rock (one's country of birth) and a hard place (the new world one hopes to live in).

COLD IN HAND, John Harvey, Harcourt. \$26.00

Not for nothing is Harvey the winner of the Cartier Diamond Dagger Award for lifetime achievement. I was delighted to see Charlie Resnick, who was retired from Harvey's repertoire, back in action. He is, as the story opens, about to retire when a dispute between rival gangs leaves a teenage girl dead. In the middle of this melee is Detective Lynn Kellogg, with whom Charlie now lives (if you know this series, then you know how much younger than Charlie is Lynn. Oh, please, don't get me started). I believe that Resnick is Harvey's most inspired creation, though all may not agree with me, and it is delightful to have him back.

THE DARKER SIDE, Cody McFadyen, Bantam. \$24.00

FBI Agent Smoky Barrett is asked to meet with a grieving mother whose child is murdered on a commercial airliner at thirty-thousand feet. What begins as a baffling case of why and how soon turns into a hunt for a very dangerous serial killer who wants to get caught, but only if Smoky and her group can unravel the clues he is leaving behind. Meanwhile, the body count is rising. Smoky Barrett is really damaged. She, as the narrator of this thriller, refers to her horrific history chasing down serial killers, and it isn't really necessary to go back. But knowing Smoky's story adds a frisson to this very dark tale. That story is told in McFadyen's first book, *Shadow Man*.

THE BEST AMERICAN MYSTERY STORIES, 2008, Otto Penzler, Series Editor, George Pelecanos, Editor. \$28.00 hardcover. \$14.00 paperback.

It is that time of year and I can't possibly leave this section without a "shout-out," as Sarah Palin might say, to Otto Penzler and his consistently excellent series of the best crime stories of the year. The contributors include: **James Lee Burke, Michael Connelly, Alice Munro, Scott Phillips, S.J. Rozan, Elizabeth Strout, and Scott Wolven.**

ON MY RADAR**SCARPETTA, Patricia Cornwell, Putnam. \$26.95**

Kay Scarpetta accepts an assignment in New York City. The NYPD has asked her to examine an injured man on Bellevue Hospital's psychiatric prison ward. The patient has specifically asked for her. And the tale he has to tell is amazing. But is it true? Can't resist a Kay Scarpetta novel even though it does take me a while to get around to reading them.

THE UNPOSSESSED CITY, Jon Fasman, Penguin Press. \$24.95

Jim Vilatzer, forced to flee this country after running up gambling debts, uses his Russian-language skills to get a job in Moscow finding and interviewing survivors of the Gulag. His success at this brings him to the attention of Russian's Interior Ministry and the CIA, and Jim becomes an unwitting cog in a scheme to spirit Soviet scientists and their deadly secrets out of Russia and into the hands of the highest bidder. Fasman, who scored a hit with his first novel, *The Geographer's Library*, might just have another hit on his hands.

THE GIVEN DAY, Dennis Lehane, Wm. Morrow. \$27.95

Lehane is getting plenty of positive press for this historical that centers around a time of political and social unrest in Boston after the First World War. He tells the story of two families – one black and one white – whilst weaving the lives of real characters (Babe Ruth, for example) into his story.

***FLESH HOUSE*, Stuart MacBride, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

When body parts show up in Aberdeen's harbor, they jump start Scotland's largest manhunt in 20 years. MacBride has been putting out dark thrillers set in his native Aberdeen for a few years now, and he certainly has his American devotees. He has won several mystery awards and should be on the must-read lists of all Ian Rankin fans as well as those of us who love brutal stories, even when they are not set in Scotland! The U.K. Edition is the true first edition.

***ROUGH WEATHER*, Robert B. Parker, Putnam. \$25.95**

A Spenser novel. Look, I gave up getting really excited about Parker's novels during the Cold War, but I know they are addictive!

***TRUE CRIME: AN AMERICAN ANTHOLOGY*, Harold Schechter, Ed., Library of America. \$40.00**

Here's a must for all true-crime devotees: a comprehensive look at some of the most notorious criminal cases in American history including the Snyder-Gray murder that inspired *Double Indemnity*, the Lindbergh kidnapping, the Black Dahlia, the crime of Leopold and Loeb, and the murders by the Manson Family. Also included are the true crime writings of Mark Twain, James Ellroy, Dominick Dunne, etc. A grand book to curl up with on a cold winter's night!

***THE GOLIATH BONE*, Mickey Spillane and Max Allan Collins, Harcourt. \$35.00**

This final Mike Hammer novel was given to Collins to complete just before Spillane's death.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***THE REPLACEMENT CHILD*, Christine Barber, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95**

Editor Lucy Newroe answers the phone in Santa Fe's Capital Tribune newsroom. The caller is the Scanner Lady, a tipster whose hobby is to phone with tips from her police scanner. She tells Lucy that she overheard two cops discussing a dead body, but while Lucy is checking out the tip, she discovers that the Scanner Lady has been killed.

***A CURE FOR NIGHT*, Justin Peacock, Doubleday. \$24.95**

A Brooklyn public defender is asked to help on a high profile case when a white college student is gunned down in the projects.

NEWS FROM THE U.K.

***A SIMPLE ACT OF VIOLENCE*, Roger Jon Ellory, Orion.**

A serial killer is on the loose in Washington during the mid-term elections. Detective Robert Miller investigates.

***DANTE'S NUMBERS*, David Hewson, Macmillan.**

The death mask of the poet Dante is to be exhibited at the premiere of the controversial film "Inferno," but at the unveiling, this priceless artifact is replaced by the death mask of the film's star. A Nic Costa mystery.

***CLIFFHANGER*, T.J. Middleton, Picador.**

Al Greenwood lives by the sea and leads a fairly quiet life except for one problem: Al wants his wife Audrey gone.

***DOORS OPEN*, Ian Rankin, Orion.**

A new direction for Rankin. Mike Mackenzie wants to commit the perfect crime and he has his mind set on robbing the National Gallery of Scotland. But how do you rob the place and persuade the world that no crime was ever committed?

***REQUIEM*, Robyn Young, Hodder & Stoughton.**

The final volume in the series featuring Templar Knight Will Campbell.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Bannister, Jo, *Closer Still*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Detective Brodie Farrell investigates a murder and discovers that death never takes a holiday!

Barone, Joe, *Roy Rogers and the Body in the Record Room*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A mental patient who thinks he is the cowboy hero Roy Rogers takes on a cold case when he finds a body in the hospital records room.

Beaton, M.C. *A Spoonful of Poison*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Agatha Raisin steps in when several offerings in the jam-tasting booth at a local fete turn out to be poisoned.

Bebris, Carrie, *The Matters at Mansfield*, Forge. \$22.95. Mr. and Mrs. Darcy return to find themselves in a Regency bedroom romp! By the author of *North by Northanger*.

Billingham, Mark, *In the Dark*, HarperCollins. \$25.95. This is Billingham's first stand-alone and it is just as dark as his series!

Carlson, Steve, *Final Exposure*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. David Collier, an ex-lawyer, must solve his wife's bizarre murder.

Cox, Michael, *The Glass of Time*, Norton. \$24.95. Set in 1876, this is a follow-up to Cox's best seller, *The Meaning of Night*.

Curzon, Clare, *Payback*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Superintendent Mike Yeadings of the Thames Valley CID must solve a murder in which the victim is mistaken for his half brother.

Donoghue, Emma, *The Sealed Letter*, Harcourt. \$26.00. A Victorian thriller featuring a feminist heroine with a very complex personal life.

Estleman, Loren D., *The Branch and the Scaffold*, Forge. \$24.95. A western adventure featuring the hanging judge, Isaac C. Parker.

Greer, Robert, *Blackbird Farewell*, North Atlantic. \$25.95. The murder of an NBA draft forces his friend to conduct his own murder investigation.

Hannah, Sophie, *Little Face*, Penguin. \$25.00. A mother is convinced that her baby has been replaced by an identical newborn. The U.K. edition precedes the U.S.

Johansen, Iris, *Dark Summer*, St. Martin's Press. \$26.95. When a man arrives at the clinic of veterinarian Devon Brady with a wounded black lab, the doctor has no idea that her world is about to be turned upside down with innocent lives, both human and animal, at stake.

Johnson, Diane, *Lulu in Marrakech*, Dutton. \$25.95. Lulu Sawyer arrives in Morocco hoping to rekindle a romance with a worldly Englishman: it's the perfect cover for her assignment with the CIA – tracing the flow of money from rich donors to radical Islamic groups.

Magnan, Pierre, *The Messengers of Death*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Commissaire LeViolette comes out of retirement to solve one of the most bizarre crimes imaginable.

Mayor, Archer, *The Catch*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Joe Gunther investigates the shooting of a deputy sheriff during a routine traffic stop.

Mueller, Marcia, *Burn Out*, Grand Central. \$24.99. Sharon McCone is drawn into a dysfunctional and dangerous family.

Perry, Anne, *A Christmas Grace*, Ballantine. \$18.00. Perry continues her Christmas mystery series. This one features Thomas Pitt's sister-in-law.

Pronzini, Bill, *The Other Side of Silence*, Bloomsbury. \$24.00. A white knuckle thriller from the MWA Grand Master.

Sharp, Zoe, *Third Strike*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. In the follow-up to *Second Shot*, Charlie Fox must save the life of her own father.

Tapply, William G., *Hell Bent*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Brady Coyne finds his past coming back to haunt him when his ex-girlfriend asks him to represent her brother.

Thornton, Betsy, *A Song For You*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. When workers dig up a body on the lawn of new residents in Dudley, Arizona, the police recognize the corpse as that of a musician who had played around town for several years.

Wimberley, Darryl, *Kaleidoscope*, Toby Press. \$24.95. An unwitting 1920s gangster finds himself in the bizarre underworld of carnies.

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