

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

#### **SEASON OF THE SNAKE, Claire Davis, Picador. \$14.00**

This is Davis's first book since the extraordinary *Winter Range*, a book that remains on my top twenty of all time. Nance Able is a scientist who, after the death of her first husband, marries Ned, a school principal. Her life is uneventful: calm at home although less so on the job as she tracks rattlesnakes in the wilderness of Hells Canyon, Idaho. What Nance does not know is that the man she married, though quiet and charming, has a life he hides from her. We know it. We also know that when Nance's younger sister moves to town, Ned's ability to hide who he is and what he does is going to get harder for him to sustain. The horror creeps up on the reader slowly, and this is truly a horrific book. I loved it!

#### **THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TATTOO, Stieg Larsson, Knopf. \$24.95**

I cannot leave this year in books without mentioning this title, which was a mega bestseller in Europe and also gaining many fans in this country. I am not, regrettably, one of them. My regret comes not because my heart dropped when I saw there was a family tree which I was obviously going to refer to often, nor because the beginning of this police procedural is written at such a slow pace it should be marketed to insomniacs. No, the regret comes from throwing it to one side and then being told by more than one reader whose taste I respect, that this is a wonderful story, albeit slow to take off, and that I am an idiot for not sticking with it. And that there are two more books from this author in the works, each better than the last (the author died suddenly and there will be no more). This holiday season I shall be pondering whether to go back and try again or catch up on some Ken Bruen. Oh, no contest! But in fairness to you, I will admit to being an impatient reader; if you're not, give this a try.

#### **HARDLY KNEW HER, Laura Lippman, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95**

This collection of stories by Lippman will only serve to enhance her reputation as one of our most dynamic writers. I particularly enjoyed that most of these stories are told from women's points of view. Mothers, sisters, lovers, wives, prostitutes, and seniors all have their say, and there isn't a weak one among them. I found myself brought up short by the direction some of these tales took, and I'm thinking that Lippman belongs up there with the best of the short story tellers. Very satisfying.

#### **THE KING OF SWORDS, Nick Stone, HarperCollins. \$24.95**

Stone's first book, *Mr. Clarinet*, won all kinds of awards including the Ian Fleming Steel Dagger for Best Thriller of the Year. It was set in Haiti in the mid-nineties and introduced Max Mingus. It was obvious from that book that readers would be taken back to Miami and told the story of

Max and how he came to be in Haiti. And this is that story – a worthy follow-up, or prequel, to Stone’s award-winner. It is 1981 and detective Max Mingus and his partner, Joe, are called out to a death at Miami’s Primate Park. The bizarre murder is made more so by the discovery of a tarot card, the King of Swords, partly digested in the dead man’s stomach. Then the victim’s family is murdered. Max and Joe are soon involved in voodoo and police corruption. This is a sprawling, though tightly plotted, satisfying thriller and I can’t wait for the next installment.

## ON MY RADAR

### ***THE SPANISH GAME*, Charles Cumming, St. Martin’s Press. \$24.95**

Six years go, Alec Milius got out of the spy game. Now living in exile in Madrid, he keeps a constant eye out for the enemies he made, hoping to avoid any future involvement. But when a prominent politician goes missing, the urge returns and Alec finds himself in the midst of another international conspiracy and a brutal power struggle. Cumming is a new name in espionage. He is a former British Secret Service recruit and his first book was *A Spy By Nature*.

### ***THE GATE HOUSE*, Nelson DeMille, Grand Central Publishing. \$27.99**

Ten years after the events chronicled in *The Gold Coast*, DeMille has returned to that Long Island community. And so has John Sutter.

### ***THE PRICE OF BUTCHER’S MEAT*, Reginald Hill. HarperCollins. \$25.95**

How can I tell you that this is a Pascoe and Dalziel mystery without giving away the fact that Dalziel survived the last book? Oops! But we’re delighted, aren’t we? The U.K. edition precedes the U.S. edition.

### ***THE DEVIL’S PUNCHBOWL*, Greg Iles, Scribner. \$26.95**

Murder, racial tension, double-crosses, and illicit sex in Natchez, Mississippi! Iles has brought back Penn Cage, his protagonist from, I think, his best book, *The Quiet Game*.

### ***JUST AFTER SUNSET*, Stephen King, Scribner. \$28.00**

This is King’s first collection of short stories in six years: a husband calls his widowed wife; a couple at a roadside tavern can get together nowhere else; the kiss of a blind girl brings the dying back to life; and a circle of stones in a field is guarded by a No Trespassing sign that should be obeyed – especially just after sunset. Count me in!

### ***GONE TOMORROW*, P.F. Kluge, Overlook Press. \$24.95**

When George Canaris, a writing professor at a small college in Ohio, is killed by a hit-and-run driver, he is the first faculty member in half a century whose death merits an obituary in *The New York Times*. He has a book listed among the one hundred greatest novels of all time, and he had not, at the time of his death, delivered his next book against which he’d been given a very heavy advance. Was the book a myth, a lie, a joke? Mark May, a young English professor, is named as Canaris’ literary executor and begins to search through lives and letters.

***SONGS FOR THE MISSING*, Stewart O’Nan, Viking. \$23.95**

When popular high school student Kim Larsen disappeared from her small Midwestern town, her parents, sister, friends, and boyfriend tried to find her. But as search parties gave way to television appearances, and private investigations yielded personal revelations, one town struggles to maintain hope and live with the unknown. O’Nan never writes anything that is less than extraordinary.

**FIRST MYSTERIES*****THE BOOK OF UNHOLY MISCHIEF*, Elle Newmark, Atria Books. \$26.00**

It is 1498, the dawn of the Renaissance, and Venice is abuzz with rumors about an ancient book thought to hold dangerous secrets. Powerful men will stop at nothing to get it, and those who have it will die to protect it. Luciano, a street orphan, is taken into the kitchen of the doge’s palace to be the chef’s apprentice. There he catches hints of the chef’s past as well as murderous plots brewing behind the scenes. A biblio mystery? A culinary tour? Sounds fascinating.

**NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE*****THE ASCENT OF MONEY*, Niall Ferguson, Penguin Press. \$29.95**

Historian Ferguson looks at the world through a financial lens and reveals that finance is in fact the essential back-story behind all history. The Renaissance looks a little less romantic when looked at as a boom in the market for art and architecture – made possible when Italian bankers adopted Arabic mathematics. The rise of the Dutch republic is reinterpreted as the triumph of the world’s first modern bond market over insolvent Hapsburg absolutism. And the origins of the French Revolution are traced back to a stock market bubble caused by a convicted Scot murderer. This looks like a must for the financial wonk in your life. That could be you, of course.

**NEWS FROM THE U.K.*****SECRET ALCHEMY*, Emma Darwin. **Headline****

The author has taken on one of history’s greatest mysteries: the Princes in the Tower. She takes the reader back to the 15th century and weaves a thrilling tale of the power struggles within the court of Richard III just before the Princes’ imprisonment. As a Ricardian, I am hoping that she comes up with a more plausible explanation of the Princes’ death than Richard as murderer!!!

***MAZE OF CADIZ*, Aly Monroe. **John Murray****

Introduces Peter Cotton, an intelligence officer who is sent to Spain in September 1944 to take a look at the political situation there and finds himself investigating the death of a British agent.

**THE MINUTES OF THE LAZARUS CLUB, Tony Pollard. Michael Joseph**

Set in London in 1858, this historical features the Lazarus Club, which had as members some of the finest minds in Victorian Britain, including Charles Darwin. A young doctor becomes embroiled in the machinations of the club after meeting one of its members, engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

**BOOKS OF THE MONTH**

**Andrews, Donna, *Six Geese A-Slaying***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$22.95. On the first day of Christmas, Andrews gives us one dead Santa and a new Meg Langslow mystery.

**Baldacci, David, *Divine Justice***, Grand Central Publishing. \$26.99. Oliver Stone and the Camel Club return.

**Ballard, Mignon, F., *Hark, The Herald Angel Screamed***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. An Augusta Goodnight mystery which contains, as usual, heavenly recipes!

**Barbieri, Maggie, *Quick Study***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. College English professor Alison Bergeron and NYPD Detective Bobby Crawford team up to solve the murder of a boy whose body is pulled from the Hudson River.

**Bowen, Michael, *Shoot the Lawyer Twice***, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. Rep and Melissa Pennyworth return.

**Brogan, Jan, *Teaser***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Troubled reporter Hallie Ahearn follows a story too far in this mystery set in Providence, Rhode Island.

**Brown, Rita Mae, *Santa Clawed***, Bantam. \$25.00. Sleuthing cats Miss Murphy and Pewter try to save the holidays from someone who has decided to give the gift of murder. Sneaky Pie Brown co-authors this as usual – in case you were wondering!

**Bruns, Don, *Stuff Dreams Are Made Of***, Ocean View. \$24.95. Friends Skip Moore and James Lessor reinvent themselves as traveling revivalists in this follow up to last year's *Stuff to Die For*.

**Carl, JoAnna, *The Chocolate Snowman Murders***, Obsidian. \$19.95. For Lee McKinney Woodyard, the Christmas season is not all sweetness and light for her luxury chocolate business.

**Church, James, *Bamboo and Blood***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Inspector O is assigned to investigate the death of the wife of a North Korean diplomat in Pakistan.

**Clark, Mary Jane, *It Only Takes a Moment***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Eliza Blake, host of KEY News, will stop at nothing to get her daughter back; she has been kidnapped from summer camp.

**Davies, David Stuart, *Without Conscience***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. 1942 finds Rachel Howells in London with Army deserter Harryboy Jenkins. Meanwhile, private detective Johnny Hawke is involved in a case that will bring him in contact with Harryboy.

**De Santis, Pablo, *The Paris Enigma***, HarperCollins. \$24.95. A dozen detectives gathered at the 1889 World's Fair become each other's suspects when one of their number falls off the Eiffel Tower.

**Doss, James D., *Snake Dreams***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Native American sleuth Charlie Moon is about to get hitched, but his aunt and her niece are having visions of a dead woman with her throat slit.

- Ewan, Chris, *The Good Thief's Guide to Paris***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. Second in the series featuring Charlie Howard, mystery writer and professional thief.
- Ferris, Monica, *Thai Die***, Prime Crime. \$23.95. Ferris weaves another needlecraft mystery, if you'll excuse my mixed metaphor.
- Fletcher, Jessica, and Bain, Donald, *Murder She Wrote: A Slaying in Savannah***, Obsidian. \$21.95. Jessica digs up a home-grown mystery down south.
- Flynn, Vince, *Extreme Measures***, Atria. \$27.95. The political winds have changed and the new government is trying to rein in Mitch Rapp.
- Greeley, Andrew M., *The Archbishop of Andalusia***, Forge. \$24.95. Dramatic events conspire to change Archbishop Blackie Ryan's life forever.
- Greene, Richard, Ed., *Graham Greene***, Norton. \$35.00. This autobiography in letters was called the best book of the year by *The Guardian* in the U.K.
- Greenwood, Kerry, *A Question of Death***, Poisoned Pen. \$34.95. This collection of stories, recipes, and illustrations celebrate the 1820s sleuth Phryne Fisher.
- Grippando, James, *Born to Run***, HarperCollins. \$25.95. Legal thriller set in the world of Washington D.C. power politics.
- Harper, Tom, *The Lost Temple***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. For three thousand years, the world's most dangerous treasure has been lost. Now the code that reveals its hiding place is about to be broken.
- Harris, C.S., *Where Serpents Sleep***, Obsidian. \$23.95. In the London of 1812, Sebastian St. Cyr teams with a young woman to find the killer of eight prostitutes.
- Hart, Ellen, *Sweet Poison***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. With the election heating up, restaurateur Jane Lawless must find a murderer before he kills off her father's bid for governor.
- Havill, Steven F., *The Fourth Time is Murder***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$23.95. A Posadas County mystery featuring Undersheriff Estelle Reyes-Guzman.
- Highsmith, Patricia, *The Complete Ripley Novels***, Norton. \$100.00. A beautiful boxed set of the five Ripley novels.
- Jance, J.A., *Cruel Intent***, Touchstone. \$25.95. Ex-anchorwoman Ali Reynolds finds herself in the midst of more than just a house renovation when the project is interrupted by a brutal murder. And the killer may be close to home.
- Jungstedt, Mari, *The Inner Circle***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A group of archeology students uncover an ancient Viking fortification. When one of the women is then found naked, dead, bled out, and hanging from a tree, Inspector Knutas investigates.
- Karp, Larry, *The King of Ragtime***, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. In 1916, Nell Stark must go undercover in Irving Berlin's publishing company to clear the name of murder suspect Scott Joplin.
- Kellerman, Jonathan, *Bones***, Ballantine. \$27.00. Alex Delaware investigates yet another troubling case.
- Koontz, Dean, *Your Heart Belongs To Me***, Bantam. \$27.00. A young man who survives a heart transplant is shocked when a mysterious woman claims the heart is hers.
- Larsen, Ward, *Stealing Trinity***, Oceanview. \$24.95. In the final days of WWII, the Germans make a desperate attempt to retrieve their spy buried deep in the Manhattan Project.
- Lewis, Simon, *Bad Traffic***, Scribner. \$24.00. Inspector Jian, a corrupt Chinese cop from the Siberian border, receives a distress call from his daughter who is supposed to be studying at a

British University. He follows her trail into unfamiliar territory – rural England – and finds himself up against a gang of human traffickers.

**Lippman, Laura, *Butcher's Hill***, Wm. Morrow. \$19.95. This Tess Monaghan thriller is available in hardcover for the first time.

**Lustbader, Eric Van, *First Daughter***, Forge. \$25.95. Edward Carson's daughter is kidnapped just a few weeks before he is to be inaugurated as President of the United States.

**Meyers, Maan, *The Organ Grinder***, Five Star. \$25.95. A "Dutchman" mystery. First in a long time!

**May, Peter, *Blacklight Blue***, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. Scottish forensic scientist Enzo Macleod takes on the cold case of a rent boy's murder.

**Morris, Bob, *A Deadly Silver Sea***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. When gunmen take over the cruise ship Royal Star, Zack Chasteen and his wife, Barbara, must figure out a way to stop the hijackers.

**O'Shaughnessy, Perri, *Show Not Fear***, Pocket Books. \$25.00. This prequel takes us back to Nina Reilly's first case.

**Patterson, James, *Cross Country***, Little Brown, \$27.99. Retired FBI profiler Alex Cross attempt to return to the private sector, but two serial killers on the loose will scuttle those plans.

**Power, Jo-Ann, *Baring Arms***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. The second in the Me and Mr. Jones series.

**Randisi, Robert J., *Hey There (You With The Gun In Your Hand)***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. The latest Rat Pack mystery is set in Las Vegas in 1961 and features Eddie Gianelli, pit boss, the Rat Pack, and cameo appearances by Buddy Hackett and Marilyn Monroe.

**Reese, James, *The Dracula Dossier***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Bram Stoker must solve history's greatest crime when he is suspected of being Jack the Ripper.

**Robb, J.D., *Salvation in Death***, Putnam. \$25.95. In the year 2060, ancient religious rituals provide clues for Eve Dallas.

**Roberts, John Maddox, *SPQR XII: Oracle of the Dead***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Decius Caecilius Metellus, magistrate, must figure out why the priests of Apollo are killed at a pre-Roman cult site before the countryside explodes in violence.

**Rowland, Laura Joh, *The Fire Kimono***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Sano Ichiro, the samurai detective, is given three days by the shogun to solve the causes of a blaze that almost destroyed the city.

**Sefton, Maggie, *Fleece Navidad***, Prime Crime. \$23.95. Yet another Christmas knitting mystery from the author of *Dyer Consequences*. Stop it, you're killing me with these titles!!

**Thurlo, Aimee and David, *Coyote's Wife***, Forge. \$25.00. Ella Cah confronts a vigilante group known as The Fierce Ones.

**Tremayne, Peter, *Dancing With Demons***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. In 7<sup>th</sup> century Ireland, the High King's murder becomes Sister Fidelma's most complex investigation yet.

**Welsh, Irvine, *Crime***, Norton. \$24.95. Scottish detective Ray Lennox is on vacation in Miami with his fiancée after a particularly hideous rape/murder case caused him to suffer a breakdown.

**Westerson, Jeri, *Veil of Lies***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A disgraced knight in 14<sup>th</sup> century London must unravel the truth behind a series of complex interlocking plots.

**Wilson, John Morgan, *Spider Season***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. A Benjamin Justice novel.

**Wittig, Susan Albert, *The Tale of The Briar Bank***, Prime Crime. \$23.95. A blizzard brings a new mystery to Beatrix Potter and her animal friends.

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