

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

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WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***BEAT THE REAPER*, Josh Bazell, Little Brown. \$24.99**

This first novel introduces Peter Brown, a Manhattan emergency room doctor with a past. Who knew that the Witness Protection Program put ex-mob members through medical school? But that's what happened to Brown, not that it's going to help him on this particular day. When he's recognized by a patient, Brown's past comes back to haunt him. You'd think a former hit man for the mob, especially one who's a doctor, could take care of this easily but, first, do no harm! This thriller is a one-sitting roller coaster ride. Very well done and lots of fun.

***SAFER*, Sean Doolittle, Delacorte Press. \$24.00**

A young couple moves into a small community and are hosting a faculty cocktail party when the Clark Falls Police Department come calling and arrest husband Paul for the sexual exploitation of a minor. Paul is outraged. He tells the police, and the reader, that this is a ridiculous charge. Yet there appears to be evidence. The story takes us back and forth in time as we discover that this idyllic community is not what it appears to be. And Paul isn't the pure-as-the-driven-snow husband he would have us believe he is. I'm embarrassed to say that this is the first book by Doolittle that I have read. Maybe because his books have been paperback originals and they just haven't reached me. I need to catch up with this stylish writer.

***NEVER TELL A LIE*, Hallie Ephron, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95**

Ephron tries her hand with a stand-alone psychological thriller here and she may have just found her voice. David and Ivy were high-school sweethearts – they've been together forever. As the story opens they are fixing up their Victorian house in preparation for the birth of their first child. They hold a yard sale which is attended by Melinda who knew the couple from high school but who is not well known to them. So Ivy is taken by surprise when Melinda reminisces about their days at school and hints at a relationship between herself and David. Ivy is unnerved by Melinda's behavior but this strange encounter is only the beginning of a nightmare. Ephron has kept the suspense quotient high which had me turning the pages at a furious pace.

***SPADE & ARCHER*, Joe Gores, Knopf. \$24.00**

It takes a lot of nerve for a writer to revisit Hammett's classic, *The Maltese Falcon*. But if anybody can do it, it is Gores, a former PI and Hammett aficionado. This much we know from Hammett: Miles Archer, Sam Spade's deceased partner, was not a nice man; Sam is sleeping with Miles' wife Iva; and Effie, Sam's secretary, seems to be the one innocent in his life. But how did Sam become the Sam we know? It is 1921 and Sam sets up his own agency in San Francisco and takes on Miles Archer as a partner, even though Archer stole his girl when Sam was off fighting World War I. Gores takes us through the years as Sam deals with booze

runners, gold smugglers, and murderers and, while he's not Hammett, he almost could be. Every Hammett fan, every mystery fan should get their hands on this one.

MY FAVORITE BOOKS OF 2008

***When Will There Be Good News* – Kate Atkinson**

Her third mystery featuring Jackson Brodie. Once again Atkinson weaves seemingly unconnected threads together to create a superb story. How does she do that?

***Once Were Cops* – Ken Bruen**

A new cop and a new location. Michael Shea is from Ireland. Now he's a member of the NYPD. Brutal! And arguably Bruen's best yet.

***Swan Peak* – James Lee Burke**

Burke also surpassed himself in 2008. This Dave Robicheaux mystery is set in Montana where Dave and Clete Purcell are on a fishing trip that turns deadly.

***Trigger City* – Sean Chercover**

Like so many good things coming out of Chicago, this author has followed up his Shamus award winning debut, *Big City Bad Blood*, with a sequel that is even better.

***The Reapers* – John Connolly**

I'm beginning to repeat myself here! Connolly turns his attention to Charlie Parker's sidekicks, Louis and Angel and writes the best in the series.

***A Quiet Belief in Angels* – R.J. Ellory**

What a delicious surprise this was. An epic story of murder that spans years. Literate and heart-pounding.

***The Monsters of Templeton* – Lauren Groff**

This first novel begins with a dead monster being pulled out of a lake. That would normally be a turn-off for me. Instead it began one of the most charming, feel-good, well-written books of the year.

***The Tenderness of Wolves* – Stef Penney**

Another first novel set in the snows of Canada in the 19th century. A group of townfolk set out to find a missing young man who might also be a murderer. This won the Costa Prize in the U.K. and no wonder.

***Wildfire Season* – Andrew Pyper**

If I had to pick only one book as my favorite, this would be it. Set in Canada, this, for me, was almost the perfect story told in a perfect way. If you've read my blog you know that the realization that I had this treasure in my hand caused me to do something quite out of character on the NYC subway! Hmmm.

Party of One – Anneli Rufus

The only non-fiction book that makes my list (not that I read that many). The author ruminates on the “loner” in our overcrowded world and banishes forever the negative connotations attached to that word. A personal book for me.

King of Swords – Nick Stone

The second Max Mingus mystery. And a worthy successor to the award-winning *Mr. Clarinet*.

ON MY RADAR

There are two tribute anthologies to Edgar Allan Poe due out this month:

***IN THE SHADOW OF THE MASTER*, Michael Connelly, Editor. Wm. Morrow. \$25.99**

***ON A RAVEN’S WING*, Stuart Kaminsky, Editor. Harper. \$14.95**

Another look at his work. This time from the point of view of current mystery writers who have contributed essays about the effect he has had on their own work.

***THE MYSTIC ARTS OF ERASING ALL SIGNS OF DEATH*, Charlie Huston, Ballantine. \$25.00**

Huston has been off my radar for far too long. Time to catch up! This tells the story of Web who works for the Clean Team. After cleaning up the brains of a suicide, he is approached by the daughter of that suicide who has another mess she needs to clean up. Reluctantly Web agrees. Huston writes very dark stuff.

***BONE BY BONE*, Carol O’Connell, Putnam. \$24.95.**

In the northern California town of Coventry, two teenage brothers go into the woods but only one comes back. No one knows what happened to Josh, the younger brother. Twenty years later, Oren, the older brother and ex-investigator for the Army CID, returns to Coventry for the first time in many years. His first morning back a human jawbone, the teeth still intact, is thrown on the front porch. Not the first such object, Oren’s father tells him. It seems that Josh is coming home ...bone by bone. A stand alone from the author of the Mallory series.

***RUNNER*, Thomas Perry, Houghton Mifflin. \$26.00**

Perry returns to his popular series featuring Jane Whitefield. This is one of my favorite series, and I’m delighted that Perry has given in to the pressure of bringing this character back. He said recently that because of the plot line in the last couple of books in the series, it seemed the right time to retire Jane, and also, finding ingenious ways to “disappear” people became very difficult after 9/11. But time has passed....

***RIFLING PARADISE*, Jem Poster, The Overlook Press. \$25.95**

Charles Redbourne, a minor English landowner, heads for Australia where he plans to make his mark as a naturalist. On an expedition in search of scientific specimens in the Blue Mountains,

events take a terrifying turn. This thriller, which conveys the unspoken codes of Victorian society, has been called creepy and gripping by the press in the U.K.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***FIDALI'S WAY*, George Mastras, Scribner. \$25.00**

American Nick Sunder is backpacking through Central Asia in the company of a French woman. When she is found murdered, Nick is arrested and tortured by the Pakistani police. He escapes into the mountains of Kashmir, a zone of bloody conflict between the Indian military and the Kashmiri separatists. Nick, it would appear, has traded one danger for many more.

***DAEMON*, Daniel Suarez, Dutton. \$25.95**

Technology controls almost everything in the world today and Matthew Sobol, a legendary computer game designer, was a part of that. When he dies and his obituary is posted online, a previously dormant daemon activates, initiating a chain of events intended to unravel the fabric of our hyperefficient interconnected world. An unlikely alliance must try and decipher Sobol's intricate plans, or learn to live in a society in which we are no longer in control. This was self-published a couple of years ago and became an immediate underground hit.

***LIVING THE VIDA LOLA*, Misa Ramirez, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95**

Dolores "Lola" Cruz works as an underling at Camacho and Associates, a private investigation firm in Sacramento. After a year and a half on the job Lola is given her first big case: a woman's disappearance. Lola's investigation is hampered by the reappearance of her long-time crush and her meddling family.

NON-MYSTERIES OF NOTE

***HAUNTED HEART*, Lisa Rogak, St. Martin's Press. \$25.95**

This unauthorized biography of Stephen King takes you to a place where you might not want to go: the mind that created some of the darkest and disturbing fiction of the last thirty years. Rogak speculates that King's troubled background and lifelong fears inspired the work that makes him one of the most influential and revered authors of our time.

NEWS FROM THE U.K.

***AND THEN THERE WAS ONE*, Gilbert Adair. Faber**

A writer is murdered in a small town in Switzerland during its annual Sherlock Holmes festival. Amateur sleuth Avadne Mount investigates

SKIN AND BONES, Tom Bale. Preface

A deranged young man goes on a rampage in a small Sussex town before taking his own life. One of the victims who survives says there was another man involved, but nobody is listening to her.

THE KILLINGS ON JUBILEE TERRACE, Robert Barnard. Allison & Busby

Orphans Kate and Andrew Dunbar look for a way out from the influence of their strict aunt and preying uncle.

THE CORONER, M.R. Hall. Macmillan

Small-town lawyer Jennie Cooper is appointed Severn Vale District Coroner. The office of her predecessor contains some neglected files and Jenny goes on a crusade that threatens not only her career but also her sanity.

THE GIRL WHO PLAYED WITH FIRE, Stieg Larsson. Maclehose Press

The second of three books by the late Larsson focuses on the young Lisbeth Salander.

LIVE FIRE, Stephen Leather. Hodder & Stoughton

A thriller featuring Dan "Spider" Shepherd and his Serious Organised Crime Agency.

MURDER ON THE SHORT LIST, Peter Lovesey. Severn House

Short stories.

RIVER OF THE DEAD, Barbara Nadel. Headline

Ikmen and Suleyman investigate the escape of a convicted murderer from an Istanbul prison.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Boice, James, *NoVa*, Scribner. \$24.00. Seventeen-year-old Grayson Donald has hanged himself from a basketball hoop next to a playground. The question is, why? Set in Northern Virginia (NoVa).

Box, C.J., *Three Weeks to Say Goodbye*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Jack and Melissa have adopted a baby. When the birth father claims that he never signed away his parental rights, they find themselves in what may become a battle to the death over their baby daughter.

Cannell, Stephen J., *On The Grind*, St. Martin's Press. \$25.95. Lt. Shane Scully is accused of evidence tampering and his wife Alexa discovers he may be having an affair with a beautiful movie star.

Clement, Blaize, *Cat Sitter on a Hot Tin Roof*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Dixie Hemingway makes a new friend, but the more she learns about her, the more matters turn deadly.

Cobb, James H., *Robert Ludlum's The Infinity Affair*, Grand Central Publishing. \$23.99. A new installment in the Covert-One series created by Ludlum.

Evanovich, Janet, *Plum Spooky*, St. Martin's Press. \$27.95. A Stephanie Plum Between-the-Numbers novel.

Fredrickson, Jack, *Honestly Dearest, You're Dead*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Dek Elstrom has been named to execute a will. The dead woman's lawyer is offering a fast \$400 for

the job. Instead of finding an easy payday, Dek finds he must race to find a killer – before the dead woman is killed again!

Goldberg, Lee, *Mr. Monk Is Miserable*, Obsidian. \$21.95. A compulsive read – based on the hit TV show.

Green, Norman, *The Last Gig*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$25.95. This series debut introduces Alessandra Martilla, a P.I. from the Bronx whose first case involves catching a mob traitor.

Greenwood, Kerry, *Death By Water*, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. Phryne Fisher takes on a case of theft on the high seas.

Gregory, Jill and Tintori, Karen, *The Illumination*, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. Natalie, a museum curator, is given a gift by her sister: a necklace with a blue evil eye pendant on it. When Dana is murdered, Natalie begins to think her amulet had something to do with her sister's death and finds herself sucked into an international battle between powerful religious factions, each battling for the eye.

Harris, Charlaïne, *Living Dead In Dallas*, Ace. \$24.95. The second paranormal mystery featuring Sookie Stackhouse has been released in hardcover. Due, no doubt, to the success of the HBO series *True Blood*.

Holton, Hugh, *Revenge*, Forge. \$24.95. Holton's final novel featuring Chicago cop Larry Cole.

Hooper, Kay, *Blood Sins*, Bantam. \$25.00. Noah Bishop investigates a fanatical reverend who may be using his psychic powers to kill.

Jones, J. Sydney, *The Empty Mirror*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. It is the summer of 1898 and Austria is transfixed by a series of brutal murders. When a female model of the painter Gustav Klimt becomes the fifth victim, the artist is fingered as the murderer.

Kaminsky, Stuart M., *Bright Future*, Forge. \$23.95. Lew Fonseca is once again faced with more than one case that tries his patience and tests his sanity.

McGarrity, Michael, *Dead or Alive*, Dutton. \$24.95. Recently retired Santa Fe Police Chief Kevin Kerney returns to New Mexico from London when an escaped prisoner goes on a killing spree.

McKevett, G.A., *A Body To Die For*, Kensington. \$22.00. P.I. Savannah Reid investigates a murder where a weight-loss queen is the prime suspect.

Merullo, Roland, *Fidel's Last Days*, Shaye Areheart. \$23.00. A plot to assassinate the Cuban leader. Again.

Nunn, Malla, *A Beautiful Place to Die*, Atria Books. \$25.00. Nunn, a screenwriter, sets her thriller in Jacob's Rest, a tiny town on the border between South Africa and Mozambique. It is 1952 and new apartheid laws have recently gone into effect. When Detective Emmanuel Cooper, an Englishman, begins investigating the murder of an Afrikaans police officer, his mission is taken over by the suspicious Afrikaner Secret Police, dedicated to their campaign to capture and fill the jails with black communist radicals.

Patterson, Richard North, *Eclipse*, Henry Holt. \$26.00. An American lawyer takes on a nearly impossible case when he defends an African freedom fighter against his corrupt government's charges of murder.

Penny, Louise, *A Rule Against Murder*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Award winner Penny creates a "locked room" mystery when Chief Inspector Armand Gamache celebrates his wedding anniversary at the remote Manor Bellechasse. The only other guests are members of a rich and respectable family and Peter and Clara Morrow. Gamache's holiday becomes a busman's

anniversary when it becomes clear that the peaceful lodge is a place where visitors come to escape their past, until the past catches up with them.

Richards, Linda L., *Death Was In the Picture*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. It's the 1930s and while the rest of America is stuck in the Depression, Hollywood is booming. It's a cutthroat business and, as Kitty Pangborn is about to find out, that's not always a metaphor.

Robinson, Lewis, *Water Dogs*, Random House. \$ 25.00. A twenty-something dropout living in squalor in Maine tries to uncover the answer to a drifter's disappearance.

Smith, Susan Arnout, *Out At Night*, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$25.95. The death of a leading scientist puts crime scene tech Grace Descanso into the investigation of a sweeping conspiracy.

Spindler, Erica, *Breakneck*, St. Martin's Press. \$23.95. Detectives MC Riggio and Kitt Lundgren investigate a killer who threatens family and friendships.

Todd, Charles, *A Matter of Justice*, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. Historical series featuring Inspector Ian Rutledge.

Vincent, E. Uke, *The Strip*, Bloomsbury. \$25.00. A TV producer works overtime to keep the Las Vegas mob out of his show's action.

Woods, Stuart, *Mounting Fears*, Putnam. \$25.95. This political thriller from Woods finds President Will Lee having a rough time: his vice president died during surgery and confirmation hearings for the new v.p. are under way, but the governor whom Will has nominated may have some skeletons in his closet. Meanwhile, rogue CIA agent, Teddy Fay is plotting his revenge on CIA director Kate Rule Lee – the president's wife.

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