

# BOOKAHOLIC

## For the Mystery Addict

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### WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***THE SWEETNESS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIE*, Alan Bradley, Delacorte Press. \$23.00**

This is the kind of book that I think I should enjoy because it has best seller written all over it. It ain't bad, but it does not drive me into the collector's frenzy (must have a signed first edition!) that it has for others. Flavia de Luce is an aspiring chemist who loves nothing better than playing around with poisons—and sometimes trying them out. She is, I should mention, eleven years old. When a body is discovered on the grounds of her home, she inserts herself into the investigation and, it turns out, is a pretty good detective. Because of the protagonist's age, this is written in a style that could be mistaken as suitable for young adults. Not so. There is some tough stuff here. Even so, too soft boiled for me.

***PLEA OF INSANITY*, Jilliane Hoffman, Vanguard Press. \$25.95**

This is Jilliane Hoffman's third book and, I think, her most successful. Julia Vacanti is a young, ambitious prosecutor who is given a chance to work on a career-making case. David Marquette, a successful Miami surgeon and devoted family man, murders his wife and three children. The plea is not guilty by reason of insanity. The defense states that he's schizophrenic; the prosecution thinks this is a fabrication. What is fascinating here is the personal journey into her own past that Julia Vacanti will have to take. Hoffman's first book, *Retribution*, received much attention, but I was not very impressed with it. This is a much more tightly constructed thriller, and it kept me guessing right up to the end—and beyond. I was hoping Hoffman wouldn't do it, but she did: loose ends not tied up. However, I do believe that this is intentional, and that it, in fact, makes the story stronger.

***A QUIET FLAME*, Philip Kerr, Putnam. \$26.95**

1950 finds Bernie Gunther on his way to Buenos Aires. He's been accused of being a war criminal, though of course we know he's not. But he is in the company of some pretty nasty characters—a chilling portrait of Adolf Eichmann here. The Peron government is more than welcoming and Bernie finds himself investigating a case that reminds him of an unsolved murder back in Berlin in 1932. Could the cases be linked? Could a serial killer from back then be working now in Argentina? This series—and I'm so glad Kerr decided that a trilogy was not enough—is a favorite of those of us who love the period leading up to WWII and beyond. More Bernie, please, although I'm not sure where Kerr can go next.

***DEXTER BY DESIGN*, Jeff Lindsay, Orion**

This is the fourth in the series that is doing so well on cable TV. Reading it, I wondered if the success of that show had an effect on the reading of the books. Initially, I was a huge fan of the

books (still am) and thought the show compromised the darkness that is Dexter—portrayed as a lovable vigilante on the small screen. Serial killers are usually sexually dysfunctional, and Dexter is no exception. This remains so in the books, and the fact that the TV Dexter seems comparatively “normal” in that area has irritated me. I realize that if the show told why Dexter really marries Rita, nobody would watch. Would they? That said, I do think that Michael C. Hall (the actor who portrays Dexter) has made the part his own, and I found myself missing in this story some of the sweetness he brings to the character.

## ON MY RADAR

### ***THERAPY*, Sebastian Fitzek, St. Martin’s Press. \$24.95**

The young daughter of psychologist Viktor Larenz vanished under mysterious circumstances. Now, four years later, a woman has come to him asking to be treated for the vision that tortures her: that of a little girl who has vanished without a trace. Viktor reluctantly begins therapy sessions, but soon these sessions take a frightening turn. What really happened to Viktor’s daughter and do his patient’s delusions describe her last days? And, is Viktor a danger to himself and others? Dark stuff from this first-time author from Germany.

### ***THE KINDLY ONES*, Jonathan Littell, HarperCollins. \$29.95**

This fictional memoir of a former Nazi living in France was the talk of the Frankfurt Book Fair a couple of years ago. And it is getting enormous publicity now that it has finally been published here, receiving reviews that either savage it as a work of pornography or laud it as one of the great modern books. If you want to decide for yourself, you’re going to have to plow through nearly 1,000 pages. Jonathan is the son of Robert Littell.

### ***THE LONG FALL*, Walter Mosley, Riverhead Books. \$25.95**

Mosley introduces a new character here: Leonid McGill is a private eye who works in Manhattan at the present time. He’s an ex-boxer and a hard drinker and, as the story begins, he is calling in old markers and greasing NYPD palms to unearth some seemingly harmless information for a client. But he learns that even in this cleaned-up city, his commitment to the straight and narrow is going to be constantly tested.

### ***BLACK NOIR*, Otto Penzler, Ed., Pegasus. \$27.95 hardcover, \$13.95 paperback**

A collection of stories, many of them original, by black authors including Walter Mosley, Chester Himes, Robert Geer, Gary Phillips, Ann Petry, Paula L. Woods, and Richard Wright.

### ***PRIVATE MIDNIGHT*, Kris Saksussemm, The Overlook Press. \$24.95**

Detective Birch Ritter has a past filled with secrets, shadows, guilt, and ghosts. A police buddy introduces him to a mysterious woman who says her business is shadows. What she knows about men is more than Ritter may want to find out, and more than he can resist learning. It is said that to try to forget is to try to conceal, and concealing evidence is a crime. The author of *Zanesville* takes the reader on a journey into the seedy, sexy, underbelly of life. The publisher is calling this crime noir for a new generation. That would not be me, but I’m intrigued.

***THE TOURIST*, Olen Steinhauer, Minotaur Books. \$24.95**

Steinhauer puts his Eastern European crime series to one side to pen an espionage thriller! Milo Weaver, a CIA operative who was once a tourist (an undercover agent with no home and no identity), is now a mid-level manager in the CIA's New York headquarters. He lives a quiet life with his wife and daughter, commuting from his brownstone in Brooklyn, until a long-sought-after assassin sets off an investigation into one of Milo's oldest colleagues. Milo goes back undercover to find out what is going on.

**FIRST MYSTERIES*****A TIGHT LIE*, Don Dahler, Minotaur Books. \$24.95**

Huck Doyle is a professional golfer who plays the smaller tournaments on the circuit. He also happens to be, among other things, a private investigator. When a high-profile baseball player claims that he's been wrongly accused of murder, he asks his friend, Doyle, to get involved. Although everything points to the player's guilt, Doyle takes on the case because he finds "murder investigations a nice distraction from the violent and depressing world of the PGA."

***PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION*, Sara Houghteling, Knopf. \$24.95**

Max Berenzen is trying to retrieve his family's art collection, looted by the Nazis during their occupation of Paris in WWII. The story is set both during and after the war and introduces the reader to some of the great families whose priceless collections were seized.

***CHINATOWN ANGEL*, A.E. Roman, Minotaur Books. \$24.95**

Chico Santana, depressed because his wife left him, runs into an old friend who introduces him to film star Kirk Atlas. On learning that Chico is a P.I., Atlas hires him to track down his cousin, a beautiful Chinese-Cuban-American girl. It seems like a simple enough case until Atlas's Brazilian maid, who is also his lover, takes a fatal fall from the rooftop of her apartment.

***SHADOWS OF DEATH*, David Sundstrand, Minotaur Books. \$24.95**

Seth Parker is considered a terrorist by the FBI, which suspects him in several southern California murders. When Parker kills two poachers in the Mojave Desert for shooting burros, he comes into the jurisdiction of Frank Flynn. Flynn sympathizes with Parker, but he must hunt him down. Even in this familiar territory, however, Flynn always seems to be just a step behind.

**NON MYSTERIES OF NOTE*****HELLMAN AND HAMMETT*, Sally Cline, The Overlook Press. \$30.00**

This dual biography of two of America's most brilliant writers and political activists starts with their unconventional upbringings, covers their fascinating lives, and discusses their work. The author has unearthed material which cuts through the half-truths and outright lies to expose the truth that lay beneath this creative couple's carefully constructed public image. A must!

## NEWS FROM THE U.K.

### ***PATHS OF GLORY*, Jeffrey Archer, Macmillan**

The story of a man who loved two women, one of whom kills him.

### ***WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEONE DIES*, Nicci French, Michael Joseph**

Ellie Falkner, the narrator of this story, has just been told that her husband has been killed in a car crash. She has also been told that there was a woman in the car with him. The more Ellie investigates, the more she is convinced that her husband was murdered.

### ***DEXTER BY DESIGN*, Jeff Lindsay, Orion**

The latest thriller featuring blood-spatter expert and serial killer Dexter Morgan is available in the UK! It will not be published here until August.

### ***THE KINDLY ONES*, Jonathan Littell, Chatto & Windus**

See under **On My Radar**.

### ***THE IGNORANCE OF BLOOD*, Robert Wilson, Harper Collins**

The final psychological thriller featuring Javier Falcon.

## BOOKS OF THE MONTH

**Archer, Jeffrey, *Paths of Glory***, St. Martin's Press. \$27.95. Inspired by a true story, this tells of a man who attempted to climb Mount Everest in 1924 and whose body remained missing until 1999.

**Bowen, Rhys, *In a Gilded Cage***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. Molly Murphy is on the trail of an orphan's rightful inheritance in the latest in this series set in New York at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Charles, Kate, *Deep Waters***, Poisoned Pen. \$24.95. Detective Inspector Neville Stewart investigates the death of a child whose parents are connected to a reality TV show.

**Doherty, P.C., *A Haunt of Murder***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. Chaucer's weary pilgrims find themselves in a Kent copse, rumored to be haunted. They persuade the Clerk of Oxford to tell a ghostly tale of love and death.

**Dunn, Carola, *Manna From Hades***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. Eleanor Trewynn is a widow who has retired to a small fishing village in Cornwall. She has founded the local charity shop and her niece, who is a detective sergeant, has been transferred nearby. The perfect set-up for a mystery about murder and double-cross!

**Eisler, Barry, *Fault Line***, Ballantine. \$25.00. This is Eisler's first stand-alone (he's put aside John Rain for now) set in Silicon Valley. It introduces Ben Treven who, when the story opens, is an undercover soldier charged with "finding, fixing, and finishing" targets in the global war on terror.

**Franklin, Ariana, *Grave Goods***, Putnam. \$25.95. The third title in the Mistress of the Art of Death series, set in the time of Henry II.

- Gautreaux, Tim, *The Missing***, Knopf. \$24.95. The fate of a missing child looms over this literary thriller.
- Goodwin, Jason, *The Bellini Card***, Farrar, Straus, Giroux. \$25.00. Ottoman Empire eunuch and detective Yashim investigates the supposed reappearance of a lost Bellini masterpiece.
- Greenwood, Kerry, *Murder in the Dark***, Poisoned Pen. \$23.95. Phryne Fisher is in a race to unmask an assassin before he kills again at the Last Best Party of 1928.
- Gross, Andrew, *Don't Look Twice***, Wm. Morrow. \$25.99. A drive-by shooting in Greenwich, Connecticut, leaves an innocent bystander dead and a town in shock.
- Haig, Matt, *The Possession of Mr. Cave***, Viking. \$24.95. Following the tragic deaths of his wife and son, antiques dealer Terence Cave is raising his only daughter, fifteen-year-old Bryony. As Bryony struggles to come to terms with the loss of her twin brother, Terence observes changes in her behavior—changes he believes are more dangerous than the common trials of adolescence. He becomes increasingly paranoid about her safety.
- Hewson, David, *Dante's Numbers***, Delacorte. \$24.00. The latest Nic Costa mystery set in Rome. The UK edition precedes this edition.
- Jones, Solomon, *Payback***, Minotaur Books. \$23.95. Karima “C.R.E.A.M.” Thomas returns. When her mother is found dead of an apparent suicide, Karima suspects that she was murdered and takes matters into her own hands.
- Khoury, Raymond, *The Sign***, Dutton. \$26.95. A CNN journalist is reporting from a scientific expedition in Antarctica when a white light envelops the scene and then disappears. This event is witnessed by the entire world, but in a bar in Egypt a man breaks out in a sweat, crosses himself, and rushes out of the bar muttering “it can't be.” Another thriller from the author of *The Last Templar* and *The Sanctuary*.
- Lakeman, Thomas, *Broken Wing***, Minotaur Books. \$25.95. FBI agent Mike Yeager goes undercover to save a kidnapped woman.
- Lippman, Laura, *Life Sentences***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.95. Lippman has a new stand-alone which will probably only enhance her reputation.
- Moodey, David, *Hater***, St. Martin's Press. \$21.95. A bureaucrat becomes obsessed with “haters”—normal people who suddenly become violent.
- Patterson, James, *Maximum Ride # 5***, Little Brown. \$19.99. The government enlists Maximum Ride and the flock to discover what is killing fish and endangering ships off the coast of Hawaii.
- Perry, Anne, *Execution Dock***, Ballantine. \$26.00. Detective William Monk battles a child pornographer in Victorian London.
- Robotham, Michael, *Shatter***, Doubleday. \$24.95. Psychologist Joe O'Loughlin tries to prevent a suicide only to wind up locked in a deadly duel with a clever killer.
- Rotenberg, Robert, *Old City Hall***, Farrar, Straus, Giroux. \$26.00. A Canadian radio host admits he killed his wife. The question is why? He's silent on that subject.
- Stahl, Jerry, *Pain Killers***, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95. Manny Rupert, ex-copy turned PI, is offered the chance to go undercover to meet a man who claims to be Dr. Joseph Mengele, the “Angel of Death” at Auschwitz.
- Vine, Barbara, *The Birthday Present***, Shaye Areheart. \$25.00. A young member of Parliament's sex life takes a dark turn in the latest psychological thriller from the pseudonymous Ruth Rendell.

**Waites, Martyn, *White Riot***, Pegasus. \$25.95. Radical groups ignite a race riot in this third thriller featuring Joe Donovan. A much overlooked series.

**White, Randy Wayne, *Dead Silence***, Putnam. \$25.95. Doc Ford is in New York at the Explorer's Club, researching a jungle expedition and awaiting the arrival of the attractive U.S. senator with whom Ford has become more than friendly. She arrives, and in front of Ford's eyes, there is an assassination attempt. It gets worse! Or better, if you're a Randy Wayne White fan.

**Winspear, Jacqueline, *Among the Mad***, Henry Holt. \$25.00. Maisie Dobbs must help catch a man who threatens murder on a massive scale.

**Wiprud, Brian, *Feelers***, St. Martin's Minotaur. \$24.95. Morty Martinez is in the estate-liquidation business as a "feeler." His job is to look for stashes of cash left out of wills, kept out of banks, and hidden away by the frugal elderly. When he hits the jackpot and discovers \$800,000, his life changes dramatically, and not necessarily for the better.

**Xiaolong, Qiu, *The Mao Case***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. Chief Inspector Chen Cao of the Shanghai Police Department is asked to take on a politically sensitive case. Jiao, a woman suspected of being Mao's granddaughter by one of his mistresses, has recently quit her job, moved into a luxury apartment, and, without visible means of support, become a part of social set. Chen must infiltrate her social circle and determine if she has any "material" related to Mao that might prove embarrassing.

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