

BOOKAHOLIC

For the Mystery Addict

April 2009

Vol. 7, No. 4

WHAT I'VE BEEN READING

***NO SUCH CREATURE*, Giles Blunt, Henry Holt. \$25.00**

Blunt seems to be giving his John Cardinal series a rest. This stand-alone (at least I think it's a stand-alone) features Magnus "Max" Maxwell who was once a promising Shakespearean actor, but who now uses his acting talents in other ways. Max and his nephew Owen, who is also Max's protégé, are gentlemen thieves, disguising themselves as they enter the homes of the rich and famous in order to rip them off. And they are very good at what they do. Their luck begins to turn when their latest exploit captures the interest of the Subtractors, a group of thieves who prey on other thieves. I thought I might be disappointed with this Blunt-lite story, but I became totally engrossed in this dark caper and with the lives of Max and Owen. Well written, funny, sad, exciting. Blunt, it seems, can write anything.

***THE INCREMENT*, David Ignatius, W.W. Norton. \$26.95**

This thriller takes the reader into the heart of the Iranian nuclear program, and it's a frightening place to be. In Tehran, a scientist calling himself "Dr. Ali" sends an encrypted message to the CIA. Is it for real? Harry Pappas thinks it is, and as the messages continue, it becomes clear that there is a very real threat from Iran. But Dr. Ali is worried and wants out of Tehran. Harry wants him out before he's caught and interrogated about what he's told the Americans. So Harry turns to a British spy team known as "The Increment." But the story is much more complicated than Harry realizes and to get to the bottom of it he will first have to betray his country. What is so terrific and terrifying about stories by writers who really understand espionage is that they show how complicated that world can be. Nothing is straightforward. Nothing is what it seems. A page-turner.

***BAD THINGS*, Michael Marshall, Wm. Morrow. \$24.99**

Marshall is a master of the terrifying psychological thriller. Three years ago, John Henderson saw his small son fall from the jetty of their house into the water. His son was a strong swimmer, but when John pulled him out of the water, he was dead. Not drowned. Just dead. Something rather odd did happen just before he fell, but still... John is now divorced and lives a solitary life, until he receives an email "I know what happened." As always with Marshall's work, it is important to go along for the ride because the writing is masterful, the world the reader enters feels real, and the ending of the story is very strange. There's hardly another writer who can do what this writer does. Mesmerizing.

***EVERYTHING RAVAGED, EVERYTHING BURNED*, Wells Tower, Farrar, Straus, Giroux. \$24.00**

I'm very excited about this writer. This book of short stories is his first, and it must be read. The theme is the American family landscape in all its bleak, heartbreakingly funny glory. There is one story that especially stays with me. I had started to read "*Down through the Valley*" on my way into Manhattan and remarked to a friend that the paragraph I had just read was devastating. How fortunate for me that I would, later that day, meet Wells Tower and describe my reaction to him. Or so I thought. He nodded. I was on my own. And so will you be. Don't look for comfort – from the author or anybody else. Live with this. Tower is now writing a novel. I can't wait.

ON MY RADAR***DEVIL'S GARDEN*, Ace Atkins, Putnam. \$24.95**

Silent screen star, Roscoe "Fatty" Arbuckle is arrested for manslaughter in the death of actress Virginia Rapp. His defense team calls in an investigator to try and get at the truth. That investigator is Dashiell Hammett, the book's narrator.

***BORDERLINE*, Nevada Barr, Putnam. \$25.95**

Fourteen mysteries in, the Anna Pigeon series continues to be a favorite of mine. Here she is on administrative leave after her last traumatic outing, taking a raft trip with her husband in Big Bend National Park in Texas. However, when a young college student falls overboard, a grisly discovery is made which leads Anna and Paul into yet another adventure that takes them from the Mexican desert to the steps of the Governor's Mansion in Austin.

***MYSTERY WRITERS OF AMERICA Presents THE PROSECUTION RESTS: New Stories about Courtrooms, Criminals, and the Law*, Linda Fairstein, Ed. \$24.95**

The title says it all. Twenty-two stories including one from the late Edward Hoch.

***TEA TIME FOR THE TRADITIONALLY BUILT*, Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon. \$23.95**

A No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency mystery.

***SHELLEY'S HEART*, Charles McCarry, The Overlook Press. \$25.95**

The first presidential election of the twenty-first century is bitterly contested by two men who are political rivals but personal friends. The election is stolen through computer fraud and, on the eve of the inauguration, the losing candidate presents proof of the crime to his opponent and demands that he stand aside. The winner refuses and takes the oath of office, setting in motion what may destroy him and his party and bring down the Constitution. What is remarkable here is that McCarry wrote this book in 1995. This is a reprint. Life (almost) imitates art.

***FIFTY GRAND*, Adrian McKinty, Henry Holt. \$25.00**

An illegal immigrant is killed in a hit-and-run in Fairview, a resort town in Colorado. The case is forgotten. Six months later, another illegal makes a run across the border and finds work in the town of Fairview, where she begins to investigate the collision that left her father dead.

***SHADOW AND LIGHT*, Jonathan Rabb, Farrar, Straus, Giroux. \$26.00**

Nikolai Hoffner, introduced in *Rosa*, investigates the death of an executive at the UFA film studios, found floating in his office bathtub. Hoffner's investigation takes him into the treacherous world of Berlin's sex and drug trade, the rise of Hitler's Brownshirts, and the attempts of one-time monarchists to re-arm a post-Versailles Germany. Set between the two world wars.

***RED APRIL*, Santiago Roncaglio, Pantheon. \$24.95**

Love political thrillers so this one, translated from the Spanish, caught my eye. Felix Chacaltana Saldivar is an unambitious prosecutor living in Lima. When he's put in charge of an investigation of a bizarre murder that may be linked to Peru's infamous terrorist group, the Shining Path, he'll have to confront what it means to be moral in a corrupt and brutal society. Saldivar himself sounds interesting. He's described as a mother-haunted, wife-abandoned, literature-loving eccentric.

***WALKING DEAD*, Greg Rucka, Bantam. \$25.00**

Good to see Atticus Kodiak back. Once a bodyguard, now an international fugitive, Atticus runs an international gauntlet to save the teenaged survivor of a family slaughter.

FIRST MYSTERIES

***LOSER'S TOWN*, Daniel Depp, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00**

Introduces David Spandau, a Hollywood private eye who is hired by a young rising actor and finds himself in the middle of a blackmailing scheme gone wrong. Depp is the half-brother of Johnny.

***THE SECRET KEEPER*, Paul Harris, Dutton. \$24.95**

Danny Kellerman, once a war correspondent in Sierra Leone, has been back in London for four years when he receives an urgent letter from the woman with whom he had a brief affair. Maria tells him that she's in trouble and needs his help. When Danny arrives in Freetown he discovers that Maria has been murdered in a roadside robbery.

***A FALSE DAWN*, Tom Lowe, Minotaur Books. \$24.95**

After thirteen years as a homicide detective, Sean O'Brien leaves the streets of Miami for a simpler life on the banks of the St. Johns River near the Ocala National Forest. But life gets complicated and O'Brien finds himself in the world of human trafficking and sexual slavery right in his backyard.

NEWS FROM THE U.K.

AWAKENING, S.J. Bolton. Bantam Press

Veterinary surgeon Clara Benning, disfigured by a childhood accident, lives in seclusion. When a man dies following a supposed snake bite, the victim's post mortem shows a higher concentration of venom than could ever be found in a single snake. Clara becomes involved.

GONE TOMORROW, Lee Child, Bantam Press

The latest Jack Reacher thriller, set in New York City, is being published in the U.K. first!!!

BLEED A RIVER DEEP, Brian McGilloway, Macmillan

When a controversial American senator is attacked during the opening of a Donegal gold mine, garda Inspector Benedict Devlin is blamed for a lapse in security. Then the senator's attacker is found murdered.

SECRET SPEECH, Tom Rob Smith, Simon & Schuster

The Soviet Union, 1956: Stalin is dead and Khrushchev sends out a manifesto that there will be reform. Former MGB officer Leo Demidov is in danger, not only from the political upheaval but also from someone who holds a grudge. Follow up to *Child 44*.

KILL CALL, Stephen Booth, HarperCollins

On a rain-swept Derbyshire moor, hounds from the local fox hunt find the body of a well-dressed man whose head has been crushed. D.S. Diane Fry and D.C. Ben Cooper investigate.

BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Baldacci, David, *First Family*, Grand Central. \$27.99. A kidnapping at a Camp David children's birthday party leads to a security nightmare for Sean King and Michelle Maxwell.

Barcomb, Wayne, *The Hunted*, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. A little girl witnesses a crime and her testimony helps convict the murderer. Eighteen years later, the killer is released on parole and his mission is to track down the woman he feels betrayed him.

Beckett, Bernard, *Genesis*, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. \$20.00. On a remote island in a post-apocalyptic world, a young woman discovers that her utopian society has a dark side.

Burnside, John, *The Glisters*, Doubleday. \$22.95. In a town ruined by a closed chemical plant and plagued with mental illness, two runaway boys plot revenge.

Cannell, Dorothy, *She Shoots to Conquer*, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. Amateur sleuth Ellie Haskell investigates murder at a grand estate on the Yorkshire moors.

Clark, Carol Higgins, *Cursed*, Scribner. \$25.00. Regan Reilly mystery number 12.

Clark, Mary Higgins, *Just Take My Heart*, Simon & Schuster. \$25.95. The latest from the Queen of Suspense in which a man is accused of murdering his wife.

Cleland, Jane K., *Killer Keepsakes*, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. Josie Prescott's assistant at Prescott's Antiques and Appraisals is a murder suspect and Josie investigates.

Coben, Harlan, *Long Lost*, Dutton. \$26.95. This Myron Bolitar mystery has been out now for a couple of weeks and is already #1 on the New York Times bestseller list!

- Cohen, Gabriel, *Neptune Avenue***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. A Jack Leightner crime novel.
- Dahl, K.O., *The Man in the Window***, Minotaur Books. \$25.95. An antique dealer in Oslo is found murdered. Inspector Frank Frolich and Chief Inspector Gunnar Stranda investigate.
- Davidson, Diane Mott, *Fatally Flaky***, Wm. Morrow. \$25.95. Caterer Goldy Schulz is once again up to her elbows in flour and murder.
- Dietrich, William, *The Dakota Cipher***, HarperCollins. Ethan Gage returns in this follow up to *The Rosetta Key*.
- Dugoni, Robert, *Wrongful Death***, Touchstone. \$25.00. A legal thriller from the author of *Damage Control*.
- Elgin, Anthony, *The Trail of the Wild Rose***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. In the latest English Garden Mystery, Lawrence Kingston finds himself at the center of a murder case when accidents start claiming the lives of plant hunters.
- Fowler, Earlene, *Love Mercy***, Berkley. \$24.95. New romantic suspense from the creator of the Agatha award-winning Benni Harper series.
- Freeman, Brian, *In the Dark***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. A brutal unsolved murder case from Jonathan Stride's past is reopened and deadly secrets begin to emerge.
- Gregorio, Michael, *A Visible Darkness***, Minotaur Books. \$25.95. Prussia has been overrun by Napoleon's forces that have discovered a new source of funds: enough amber to finance France's wars. When the girls who collect the stones begin to disappear, the French call upon Prussian investigator Hanno Stiffeniis to investigate.
- Haddam, Jane, *Living Witness***, Minotaur Books. \$25.95. Gregor Demarkian investigates the clubbing into unconsciousness of a 91-year-old woman.
- Hall, Parnell, *Dead Man's Puzzle***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. The puzzle lady, Cora Felton, is asked to solve a crossword puzzle found on the body of a dead man.
- Harding, Georgina, *The Spy Game***, Bloomsbury. \$24.00. Anna is convinced that her mother was a Soviet spy. Now, as an adult, she searches for answers.
- Hart, Carolyn, *Dare to Die***, Wm. Morrow. \$23.95. A beautiful stranger pits neighbor against neighbor in the latest Annie and Max Darling mystery.
- Hays, Tony, *The Killing Way***, Forge. \$24.95. Historical mystery set in Camelot.
- Henry, Sue, *The End of the Road***, Obsidian. \$23.95. Maxie McNabb's search for a killer will lead her to a place called "the end of the road."
- Karp, Marshall, *Flipping Out***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. LAPD detectives Mike Lomax and Terry Biggs investigate the murder of the wife of a fellow cop.
- Kellerman, Jonathan, *True Detectives***, Ballantine. \$27.00. Mismatched half-brothers Moses Reed and Aaron Fox descend into a seamy Los Angeles and discover a doomed scene straight out of Hollywood Babylon.
- Leonard, Peter, *Trust Me***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. The son of Elmore crafts a classic noir thriller full of double- and triple-crosses.
- Lindsay, Frederic, *My Life as a Man***, Minotaur Books. \$24.95. When Mr. Morton fires him, Harry Glass impulsively drives off with Morton's car and the woman in it, who happens to be Morton's wife. As they are pursued from city to city, Harry and Mrs. Morton form a peculiar bond. And then the menace begins.
- Lutz, Lisa, *Revenge of the Spellmans***, Simon & Schuster. \$25.00. Isabel is in therapy. She's also on the tail of her newest client's wife. Rae gets great SAT scores, and Henry has a new love interest that disrupts the whole family. The Spellman saga continues!

- McGowan, Kathleen, *The Book of Love***, Touchstone. \$25.99. The story that began with *The Expected One* continues as Maureen Paschal learns of a lost gospel written in Jesus' own hand.
- McInerney, Ralph, *The Wisdom of Father Dowling***, Five Star. \$27.95. The compassionate priest of St. Hilary's is featured in 15 short stories.
- Moerk, Christian, *Darling Jim***, Holt. \$25.00. The imprisonment and murder of two sisters by their aunt is the catalyst for a dark tale set in modern Ireland.
- Patterson, James, *The 8th Confession***, Little Brown. \$27.99. Women's Murder Club.
- Pronzini, Bill, *Schemers***, Forge,. \$24.95. A Nameless Detective mystery about the heist of a rare book.
- Scottoline, Lisa, *Look Again***, St. Martin's Press. \$26.95. When reporter Ellen Gleeson sees a "Have You Seen This Child" flyer, she is struck by that fact that the photo is identical to her adopted son.
- Shannon, Jack, *Palos Verdes***, Pegasus. \$25.00. A Jack Liffey mystery.
- Sigurdardottir, Yrsa, *My Soul to Take***, Wm. Morrow. \$24.99. Long-buried secrets go hand in hand with modern-day murder in the author's second thriller set in Iceland.
- Stone, David, *Venetian Judgment***, Putnam. \$25.95. CIA "cleaner" Micah Dalton finds himself hunting for the architects of a cunningly deceptive espionage offensive mounted by one of America's most subtle and ancient enemies.
- Sullivan, Mark, *Triple Cross***, St. Martin's Press. \$24.95. The Jefferson Club is a private resort for the world's most powerful. On New Year's Eve, as the A-list celebrates, a paramilitary force breaches the state of the art security and takes everybody hostage. "Mickey" Hennessey, former U.S. Special Agent, is called in.
- Ure, Louise, *Liars Anonymous***, Minotaur Books. \$25.95. A Roadside Assistance Operator hears a man being killed while she's on the phone with him. Now she's the only witness to murder.
- Walker, Martin, *Bruno, Chief of Police***, Knopf. \$23.95. A new series introducing Bruno, a former soldier turned municipal policeman in Benoit Coureges, a small French village where the rituals of the café still rule. First published in the UK.
- Wilson, F. Paul, *Aftershock and Others: 19 Oddities***, Forge. \$25.95. Third collection of short stories also includes a Repairman Jack tale.
- Woods, Stuart, *Loitering With Intent***, Putnam. \$25.95. Stone Barrington is hired to locate the missing son of a wealthy man, but he soon discovers that the young man may have good reason for not wanting to be found.

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