

Over the last few months as Crimespreemag becomes more successful we are finding ourselves with less time for reviewing. It's not really even the reading that takes up our time as the process of sitting down and writing all the reviews. What we've decided to do is to put together a wrap up of recent books we've enjoyed with a little info about them. We'll still be writing some regular reviews, but this gives us a chance to let you know about some books we might not otherwise get to cover. This by no means should indicate that these books are unworthy of a full review. It's instead a way to talk about some books we just simply didn't have time to do a full review for. The Editors

#### The Roundup - Ruth

From James Swain come the two P.B.O.s DEADMAN'S POKER AND DEAD MAN'S BLUFF. Swain's Tony Valentine series is one of my favs and I followed him with an eager heart to paperback and Vegas. Bastard. Okay so the story's great. Gerry Valentine visits a dying friend and is an almost witness to his murder. Cut to Vegas and a very corrupt Poker tournament. There are scammers and Mafioso, a beautiful sportscaster. And in a case of blind man's bluff someone is rigged the results. But have both books handy when you start this saga. For Poker ends before play is called and will leave you hanging until you find Bluff. I finally read WHITE SHADOW from Ace Atkins. This "based on a true story" novel of the life and death of Charles Wall is stunning. Atkins continues to mature as a novelist at a pace that makes me wonder if his talent has any boundaries at all. Bill Crider's A MAMMOTH MURDER was next on my list. You know you forget just how damned entertaining the Dan Rhodes books are. Then you pick one up and it all comes back. Mammoth is the story of a mammoth's tooth, a dead mechanic, an old murder and a new one. It is another look at the life and times of Rhodes and the fellow inhabitants of Blackin County and it is one of the best examples of regional fiction you'll read any year. Crider has a pulse for humorous dialog and a love for the area he writes that make him a perennial must read. Speaking of a pulse for the humorous Donna Moore's debut novel GO TO HELENA HANDBASKET is a cliché driven, entirely whimsical and absurdly accurate look at the trends in both the mysteries of both the past and today. Disguised as a tight little mystery it's own self, I'd expect nothing less than this riotous romp from Ms. Moore. Just call me Icanna Waitforemore. I wonder if Ms. Moore is a fan of the next author on my pile. Simon Brett; novelist, actor, and playwright returned this summer to the fictional world of Fethering and his oddball couple of amateur sleuths Carole and Jude. And this time out he's returning to the races as well. Brett's timing in telling a tale of murder is spot on. With the heart of a traditional cozy and the off beat humour of a Martin Vaughn production, Brett's work is a prime example of how well the classic mystery structure can still work today. I end with C.J. Box's IN PLAIN SIGHT. We've never reviewed Joe Pickett in Crimespreemag.... Never received a book to review before deadline. But we read him. Of all the writers, in all the sub-genres, Mr. Box's Pickett series is perhaps mystery's best-kept secret. Sure we love him. But I bet if you share these books with your friends and relatives whose eyes glaze over when you say you've found another new mystery writer.... Well, Box is a mainstream read. With a protagonist so richly drawn and a setting painted with the strokes of vivid words it's hard not to love this series. And the stories set in the remote areas of our modern west reach out to the heart of everyman, everywhere. And that's the roundup.

#### In Brief-Jon

**PJ Tracy's SNOWBLIND** from Putnam is another outstanding book from this Mother Daughter duo. Set in a wintery Minneapolis this book evokes the weather and makes for great summer reading. Watching Grace MacBride help solve the murder of police officers is a real treat. Outstanding book. **A MOMENT OF MADNESS** by Hilary Bonner gives yet another UK author to look forward to. Sharp and intense writing follows reporter John Kelly as he looks into the death of a rock star. This is a book that will demand that you finish it quickly. Akashic has put out a book by rock genius **Les Claypool** called **SOUTH OF THE PUMPHOUSE**. The story of two brothers who try to make amends for their past with each other by going on a fishing trip. Things of course go quite wrong. While not a straightforward crime novel it has all the elements that I enjoy in crime fiction. Extremely entertaining. **Katherine John's THE CORPSE'S TALE** is a book billed as a quick read by publisher Accent Press Ltd. It is indeed a quick read at 115 pages. It goes quicker because it's a damn good read as well. A disturbed man is jailed for murder, years later let out. The case is reopened but the townspeople don't want the truth. They want Dai Morgan gone. Cross genre God **Loren D Estleman** has another new western out. **THE ADVENTURES OF JOHNNY VERMILLION** centers on a group of actors rolling through the west. But the Pinkertons think they may be supplementing their income with a little bank robbery. Another masterpiece from a true legend in both mystery and western writing. A former FBI profiler living in Norway, along with Inspector Adam Stubo are the team in **Anne Holt's** book, **WHAT IS MINE**, that are looking for a killer who is behind the disappearance of children. Moody and dark, despite the subject matter, this is a beautiful book. **Paul Malmont** took me by surprise with his **THE CHINATOWN PERIL**. A utterly fun and wonderful book set in the 30's starring pulp writers solving the murder of HP Lovecraft. Wow. I want more. World War II intrigue and suspense are the setting in **MIDNIGHT PLAGUE** by Greg Keizer, his second book. A fast moving thriller set right before D-Day involving a boat full of dead fishermen. A terrific historical mystery/thriller. **TWO TIME** by **Chris Knopf** is the second book to feature Sam Acquillo. Small-town intrigue with wonderful characters and amazing sense of place. Knopf is a great writer. To wrap this up is **DEAD CAT**

**BOUNCE** by **Norman Green**. Green is a wonderful but seemingly over looked author. This is a follow up to his debut **DR. JACK**, which is one of my favorite books of recent years. Set in New York with New York tough guys a girl is in danger and her father and his questionable friends try to save her. Great noir drama, and shouldn't be missed.

#### ARIZONA DREAMS

Jon Talton  
September 2006  
ISBN 1-59058-318-3  
Poisoned Pen Press

Talton's continuing series features history professor David Mapstone, who now works as a deputy in the Phoenix Arizona sheriff's office with a special assignment to investigate cold cases using his specific skills as a historical research expert. Instead of a case assigned to him by his friend and boss Sheriff Mike Peralta, ARIZONA DREAMS finds Mapstone investigating two murders which involve him personally.

A tour of historic homes in his neighborhood is brought to an abrupt halt when one of the homeowners is found sprawled in his bedroom with an ice pick to the brain. And a mysterious woman visits Mapstone at his office, seeking his help in deciphering a cryptic note left behind in her deceased father's possessions. The note sends Mapstone out to the desert, where he finds a recently buried body and where two thugs find him and assault him.

Dodging his bosses's repeated pleas to resume work on his cold cases and to prepare a book which will bring the two of the fame and riches, Mapstone uses his position as a sheriff's deputy to investigate the deaths. As events unfold, other murders are discovered, and Mapstone discovers that greed and the determination to stop at nothing are the motives behind all the deaths.

As one of the fast growing cities in America's "sunbelt" Phoenix must cope with an ever expanding need for land and for water. Talton's protagonist can remember a gentler time; and while ARIZONA DREAMS is the name given to an ambitious real estate development, the title can also refer to Mapstone's wistful recollections of a vanished past.

Woodstock

#### ASHES AND BONES

Dana Cameron  
August 2006  
ISBN – 13: 978-0-06-055467-5  
Avon

*Ashes and Bones* is the sixth Emma Fielding mystery by this talented author. As it begins Emma, an archaeologist, and her husband, Brian, are enjoying a much-needed vacation on Kauai. At least, Brian is. Emma is depressed and distracted over a postcard she recently received that turned out to have on it the fingerprints of someone who's supposed to be dead. Tony Markham was part of an episode in Emma's life that she'd really rather forget, that had tragic consequences for her and for several of her loved ones. Brian believes he's dead, Emma's friends and colleagues believe he's dead, the cops believe he's dead. But is Tony Markham really dead, or has he come back to torment Emma and get retaliation for what he thinks are the wrongs she's done him? That's the central question in this tightly-plotted, fast-paced thriller. Emma is convinced early on that Tony is, in fact, alive and on a quest to destroy her. But she can't convince those around her of the danger he represents; her community not only doesn't believe that Tony's alive, but begins to treat Emma as if she might be having a breakdown. As Emma searches for the truth, the series of events that began with a harmless postcard escalates into violence and murder, until Emma's own life is threatened. Dana Cameron, an archaeologist, has created in Emma Fielding an intelligent, resourceful protagonist. Cameron's writing is both thoughtful and entertaining; I'm delighted to have discovered her work.

Rae Helmsworth

#### BEAUTIFUL LIES

Lisa Unger  
2006  
ISBN: 0307336689  
Shaye Areheart Books

BEAUTIFUL LIES is a book that will stick with you long after the reading is done. In Ridley Jones, Unger has created a character that is immediately compelling. While I really enjoyed all the books she wrote under the name Lisa Miscione, this is a whole new level of writing.

Ridley's life is thrown upside down by the arrival of a package that throws everything he thinks she knows into question. Her family and who she is may all be a lie. Ridley no longer knows who to trust. Her rich uncle may not be the altruistic soul he is portrayed to be and his past, and that of her family have more than just a few skeletons in the closet.

This book moves like a hurricane on PCP, fast and unyielding right to the end. This is a great summer read.

Jon

#### BILLY BOYLE

James R. Benn

September 2006

ISBN: 1-56947-433-8

Soho Press

The date is June 1942. In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, America's troops are being fully deployed into the European Theater of Operations, with General Dwight "Ike" Eisenhower in command. Figures like Eisenhower are icons of history, to the point that we often forget they were humans who had families, and networks of relatives. The premise of this wonderful novel is that Eisenhower, like anyone with a sense of family, is willing to give a distant cousin a break in the form of a job on his staff. So, Lieutenant William Boyle, Billy to his friends, is dispatched to London soon after basic training to assist Ike with "potentially delicate investigations". Billy, a second-generation Boston cop, isn't at all confident that he has the wherewithal to justify the trust the General has placed in him, but he isn't about to let Uncle Ike down. Billy's first assignment in his new role is to accompany his immediate superior, Major Harding – a guy who's more than just slightly annoyed at Ike's apparent nepotism – to a briefing in Suffolk with the Norwegian government in exile. Determined to keep his mouth shut and his ears open, Billy is nevertheless drawn into an investigation when one of the Norwegian king's advisors is found dead – an apparent suicide. But Billy's not so sure, and finds himself in the thick of the political intrigue surrounding the war effort as he tries to determine how and why the advisor died. Deftly plotted and beautifully written, *Billy Boyle* works on so many levels: it's rich in historical detail; it's a thrilling mystery; and the characters are fully realized, each with their own plot line and back story. This is the first in a series; I'm very much looking forward to the next installment.

Rae Helmsworth

#### BISHOP'S REACH

Kathryn R. Wall

2006

ISBN: 0-312-33795-7

St. Martin's Minotaur

*Bishop's Reach* is the sixth in the Bay Tanner series, set in the low country of South Carolina. Lydia Baynard Simpson Tanner, a pedigreed Southern lady, has broken from her family's genteel tradition to open Simpson & Tanner, Inquiry Agents. For assistance, Bay counts on her young partner, Erik Whiteside, and her cop brother-in-law Red Tanner, who is the Tanner in 'Simpson & Tanner'. *Bishop's Reach* opens with a rather unusual client asking Bay for help; her name is Karen Zwilling, and she's a hooker who's claiming that she's been raped. Karen is unwilling to go to the police – she's convinced that they won't take her seriously – so Bay rather reluctantly agrees to look into the matter. In short order Bay finds that an inquiry she expects to be as straightforward as it is distasteful, is wrapped up in her own family's difficult past and complicated present. As Bay tries to find the truth about the rape and who might really be at fault, she's drawn into a web of secrecy and double-dealing where family loyalty is tenuous at best and old enemies confront her at every turn. Kathryn Wall is a talented writer who successfully evokes the atmosphere of the South in her entertaining mysteries – I'm looking forward to more books about Bay Tanner.

Rae Helmsworth

#### BLOWN AWAY

GM Ford

Aug 2006

ISBN:0060874392

William Morrow

BLOWN AWAY is a good title for this book, because BLOWN AWAY is what I was. Number six in the Frank Corso series is everything you would expect from a great writer like Ford. Corso is a wonderful character and the way the series is set up Ford has the freedom to take him anywhere he wants.

The book opens with Corso sitting pretty with a new publisher and a sweet deal. He soon discovers that his new publisher is a little more hands on than his last and he decides to take legal action when he is being told what to write for his next book.

What they want is a book about an unsolved strange bombing. Before the lawyers can make their play however a series of events change Frank's mind and he decides he wants to follow through, and before too long a new bombing strangely like the older one increases his motivation for finding out the truth.

Ford is a master craftsman and in Corso he has found his stride. Fast paced and intelligent this is a terrific book and totally absorbing. Ford does it yet again.

Jon

#### BLOWN AWAY

Shane Gericke

2006

Pinnacle Fiction

ISBN 0-7860-1813-5

A killer has made a bloody game of his prey, and Officer Emily Thompson is the pawn in this fast-paced debut thriller from Shane Gericke. Emily has an enemy willing to kill for revenge. The only thing is -- Emily can't imagine what she's ever done to bring it about. She's doing her best to recover from the losses of her parents and husband, trying to make a life as a cop, keeping to herself. She's done nothing to cause anyone any harm. At least that what she thinks. Gericke brings us a tantalizing police procedural with a personal feel as we walk with Emily through the horrors and guilt of the crimes. The inner workings of the police department spark with detail, which made me feel like I was along as part of the investigation. The writing flows and the story kept me reading far into the night. I hope this is just the beginning of Gericke's writing career. It's a marvelous debut. I'll be reading his next book!

Judy Clemens, author of the Stella Crown series

#### THE BOOK OF LOST THINGS

John Connolly

Nov 2006

ISBN: 0743298853

Atria Books

When I first met the words of John Connolly I was horrified. Literally. After reading the "death by spiders" scene I had to shower. Twice. And then I returned to that book. And then I read his first mystery featuring Charlie Parker. And I've moved forward with all that came after. A love story has been born. I love the words of this Irish author writing an American P.I. series. And it's down to the words.

When I first met John Connolly I fell in love with the person. It was in D.C. Bouchercon came to D.C just days after 9/11 and he was there. Solidarité. His first Bouchercon and he was enamored and appreciative. Heroes as diverse as Bill Fitzhugh and Steve Stillwell. What sealed it for me was the bacon bread to ward off the hangover only a Bouchercon can provide. Mr. Connolly does nothing lightly. He reads voraciously. He knows more about writing and literature than almost anyone I know. And his writing is always true to the man.

The above is a disclaimer. All opinions forthwith are my own. Not tainted, surely not anymore. Those of us who've watched his writing have seen it evolve. The plots are tighter. The prose streamlined. But the ideas have grown.

THE BOOK OF LOST THINGS is a wonderful moment in literature. It's not a mystery. It's a fairytale for Adults. And Children. Every sentence wraps its heart around anyone who loves words. The protagonist himself loves words and therefore has an open imagination. The writer? He's operating upon another level.

"Once upon a time, for that is how every story should begin..." Well yeah. But Mr. Connolly delivers on that first line. David suffers loss and complications are added to his life but throughout the many temptations and lures within the "Book of Lost Things" David has a ground, or rather three; his mother, his love of family, and his love for the words that have shaped his imagination.

As all of us who've grown up a bit from our first days of Brother Grimm and have survived know, the story is the all. As the writer knows; any story is the beginning of another. John Connolly wraps his heart and his imagination around this concept. Little Red Riding Hood, The Big Bad Wolf, Snow White.... You'll find them all within the pages of lost things but with Connolly writing they're not lost. They've evolved.

The majik of reading can only be delivered by a few. Everyone's few is different. Mine? Caputo, Fitzgerald, Rankin, Piercey, Lewis .....

And now proudly, right next to Narnia and Gatsby, THE BOOK OF LOST THINGS will sit on the shelf of books to be coveted annually. For the books that remind you of why you love reading? They are the books to be read over and over again. Each reading will reveal more while telling less. And that reader, is why we read.

Ruth Jordan

**CANDY FROM STRANGERS**

Mark Coggins

Oct 2006

ISBN: 1932557164

Bleak House Books

All P.I. books are not the same. That may seem patently obvious but it is made all the more true by the fresh take on the sub-genre that Mark Coggins has in the third in the August Riordan series, **CANDY FROM STRANGERS**.

When you're a struggling art student with expensive tastes and an obsessive need to acquire more and more, a job at one of the local Starbucks does not many new CDs buy. But if you have the looks and the tech savvy, there is money to be made. Take one computer; attach a digital camera and suddenly your Amazon wishlist isn't made up of mere wishes anymore.

This is exactly what Caroline Stockwell and her friend Monica have done. A string of anonymous admirers make both their material dreams come true for a show of flesh, a change of costume, a cyber wink and a smile. But when Caroline goes missing, what seems like an easy way to rack up cash and stuff has gone terribly wrong. Her fussy, straight-laced mother hires August Riordan to find her and it quickly appears her cyber alter ego has garnered an admirer that wanted to do more than look from a distance.

From patron to predator, one of Caroline's MySpace friends is central to a mystery that puts on paper the problems modern society has with a need for instant gratification and a social structure more and more based on computer screens and keyboards. Coggins makes human and real what is to many just a story on the news. And he does it with humor, skill and depth.

Jennifer Jordan

**THE COLLECTORS**

David Baldacci

October 2006

ISBN 0-446-53109-X

Warner Books

David Baldacci writes best-sellers. I'm one of his biggest fans when he's on his game. **THE COLLECTORS** isn't an example of good Baldacci.

Annabelle Conroy is a grifter. A nomadic con-woman who's putting together an epic scam as the book opens. In Washington the Speaker of the House is assassinated. At the Library of Congress Jonathan DeHaven's heart stops beating in the rare book room. Enter The Camel Club, a group of nerdy conspiracy theory hounds who've banded together and suspect "the game's afoot" Which brings me to super villain and former professional turned desk jockey, Roger Seagraves. He's the bad guy. Baldacci characters every one.

As he weaves the four main plots of this novel together your expecting the Baldacci touch but something's missing. Unlike **ABSOLUTE POWER** or **THE WINNER**, something's off. I'm not sure if there's not enough flare or too much flare and it left me with a lot of dangling plot questions, something Baldacci has never done to this reader before. This one is strictly for fans who want to visit with Oliver Stone and the rest of the Camel Club again.

Ruth Jordan

**CORPSE SUZETTE**

G. A. McKeve

2006

Kensington Books

ISBN: 0-7582-0462-0

Savannah Reid is back for her eleventh adventure as a Private Investigator in San Carmelita, California. Proud of her shapely body, her Southern Georgia heritage and her passion for excellent food, she is chagrined to be hosting her friend Tammy's cousin, in town to get a makeover with a plastic surgeon at a famous new spa. Cousin Abby is not thrilled that she has 'won' this opportunity through Tammy's efforts, and she is making sure everyone knows how unhappy she is.

Savannah enjoys helping her Detective friend Dirk with his stakeouts and cases, so when he asks her help in finding Abby's missing plastic surgeon, Suzette DuBois, she is intrigued. When Suzette's smarmy business partner and ex-husband Sergio D'Alessandro wants to hire her to find \$1.5 million missing dollars, she knows there are even more turns to this story. Savannah is not above a little breaking and entry to help her client, though she suspects his motives. Her suave ex-FBI friends Ryan and John are ready to back her up with the search, too, and even take her out to fancy French restaurants to help her recover.

When a body does surface, it's Sergio and not Suzette, and there is only a tiny needle mark on his thigh, with no evidence of narcotic drugs. The list of folks with motives is pretty long, however they killed him. And where are Suzette and the missing money?

Lots of suspects and plot surprises will keep readers interested until the end. McKeveatt, a pseudonym for author Sonja Massie (in the preface, she invites readers to look at her author websites), also keeps this series going strong with a very humorous cast of supporting characters and a likeable lead in Savannah.

-Amy Alessio

#### CRUEL MUSIC

Beverle Graves Myers  
September 2006  
ISBN 1-59058-230-6  
Poisoned Pen Press

Pope Clement XII is slowly dying. The behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing at the Vatican is intense. State Inquisitor of Venice Senator Montorio wants someone he can trust on the scene, spying for him and actively promoting the candidacy of his choice. To get this trusted spy, he hauls Alessandro Amato in on false charges of salt smuggling. If convicted, Alessandro will be killed. This is enough to convince his brother, castrato Tito Amato, to make the trip. Not willingly, mind you.

When Tito gets to Rome, there is one pleasant surprise. His love from INTERRUPTED ARIA, Liya, is in Rome. They renew their friendship, which Tito would like to see become far more than that. While doing the bidding of Senator Montorio, Tito becomes an unwilling (again) accomplice to the murder of Gemma, a maidservant. In order to keep from being arrested for that murder, Tito is coerced by the head of another faction to spy and promote a different candidate. Life is very complicated for Tito, who just wants to

make lovely music and have a lovely wife.

CRUEL MUSIC, while set in the baroque period in Rome, deals with emotions that know no time. Greed, power, lust . . . the Vatican has never had a monopoly on those things. While this is definitely a historical mystery, the issues addressed are as current as any election, the politicking just as intense then as now. CRUEL MUSIC is a testament to Graves' talent as a writer; she makes "then" interesting, educational, and entertaining.

P.J. Coldren

#### DAMN NEAR DEAD

Edited by Duane Swierczynski  
2006  
ISBN: 0976715759  
Busted Flush Press

Every short story anthology is an opportunity. If the editor has done their job, every story will be a gem whether it be written by an author with multiple books to their name or that first book just signed for publication. With the names you know and have read drawing you in, you get to step back to the story buffet and load up your reading plate with someone you've never tried before. Someone who may end up being a new favorite. Someone who cleanses your palette and gets you excited for more.

Duane Swierczynski, the editor/chef of this collection, has done his job and done it well. Coining the term "geezer noir," Swierczynski has chosen a theme representing those in their golden years dealing with aged con men, bank robbers, matured murderers and retired hit men. And don't think the women are push-overs despite being in their twilight years.

Swierczynski's made an interesting choice by setting the stories in order of the age of the authors. First up, a fresh voice you'll be hearing about in the years to come, Dave White. White has a natural voice and his story, "My Father's Gun," is vivid, strong and insightful as a father and son come to terms with their mirrored grieving. From this story it is made clear that age and experience are the characters and the stories can be grim as hell. Although some are funny as hell.

Stuart McBride's story, "Daphne McAndrews and the Smack-Head Junkies" starts out with a stalwart member of society discovering a nude man in an apparently dead in her shed. As MacAndrews treats the crime scene investigators to tea, she notices the urn that holds the ashes of her beloved husband, Bill, are overturned and much of him is missing. Hell hath no fury like a widow in a lather! She is determined to hunt down the people responsible for the dastardly dead and won't hesitate to commit... violence!

Charlie Stella's "Geezer Tricks" is the quintessential example of why not to mess with a clan of older women whose need to survive runs pace with their ability to extract vengeance Donna Moore's "Pros and Cons" and Colin Cotterill's "Has Anyone Seen Mrs. Lightswitch?" were a pure joy to read. But not all the stories here are meant to elicit a chuckle.

The stories that are there to show the darker side of aging angry are also brilliant. Megan Abbott's story "Policy," gives a sliver of the life a number runner and the reason why there are rules in place in on the wrong side of the law. And Simon Kernick's "Funeral for a Friend" is the strongest writing of his I've read.

The authors behind the best anthology I've read this year, in alphabetical order this time, are Jeff Abbott, Megan Abbott, Charles Ardai, Ray Banks, Mark Billingham, Steve Brewer, Ken Bruen, Milton Burton, Reed Farrel Coleman, Colin Cotterill, Bill Crider, Sean Doolittle, Victor Gischler, Allan Guthrie, John Harvey, Simon Kernick, Laura Lippman, Stuart McBride, Donna Moore, Zoë Sharp, Jenny Siler, Jason Starr, Charlie Stella, Duane Swierczynski, Robert Ward, Sarah Weinman and Dave White.

Jennifer Jordan

A Charlie Huston Sept 2006 Ballantine Books ISBN: 034548133X	DANGEROUS	MAN
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Since reading CAUGHT STEALING, the first in Charlie Huston's Henry Thompson trilogy, I've joined a contingent of readers who, let's say, "harassed" Huston about when the new book was going to come out. He made me wait and ALREADY DEAD was a fantastic reason to wait. But I wanted to know, needed to know, what would happen to the hapless Thompson since cat sitting had lead to a life marked by violence and an unasked for lesson in covert living.

For those if you who haven't read the series yet, put this magazine down, buy CAUGHT STEALING and SIX BAD THINGS, read them and then read the rest of this review.

For those of you that have stayed with me, you understand my compelling need to read this book. Thompson was left in the hands of the Russian mob where a future of plastic surgery and the role of a reluctant hitman were all that kept his parents from being taken out.

Thompson is in recovery. He's healed from the surgery but his new Vegas life has him popping pills and accruing a paunch between jobs. His boss, David Dolokhov is not pleased with Thompson's downward spiral. It has affected his work. He isn't killing people the way he should be.

But he has a chance to make amends for his poor job performance. This time he has to keep a man alive instead of taking him down.

There's someone coming to town, a new hotshot baseball player. He's got money to burn and a gambling addiction to burn it on. Miguel Arenas shows up with a sidekick, Jay, and he's ready to get his drink on. They take to Thompson, whom they affectionately dub "Scarface," and he gets signed for a gig in New York. This is Thompson's old stomping grounds and going back is the last thing he wants. He has no choice. Arenas' baseball talk and lifestyle stick it to Thompson even further. The thread that ties him to the sane, plain, nice man he once was is tenuous but it's still there. It makes him want to do the right thing after all the bad he's done. But you don't go up against the Russian Mafia for a guy you just met... do you?

This was a brilliant wrap up to one of the earthiest, darkest stories out there. Huston has taken Henry Thompson to the edge again and again and again. But Thompson is no superman; no noir caricature, no overblown tough guy. He's just a guy with an unfortunate knack for survival written by one of the best new voice in the genre.

Jennifer Jordan

#### A DEATH AT THE ROSE PAPERWORKS

M. J. Zellnik  
October 2006  
ISBN 0-7387-0897-6  
Midnight Ink

Portland, Oregon, 1894. Seamstress Libby Seale fled an abusive husband in New York in a marriage forced on her by her parents. She finds love with newspaper reporter Peter Eberle, but it will be unrequited. Although they have decided not to see each other, they do team up when a man is found murdered at the Rose Paperworks.

At first, the police believe the dead man to be Hiram Rose, the owner of the company, but later the identity of the man is that of unimportant laborer. Why would an elaborate scheme be undertaken just to kill him? It seems more obvious that the intended victim was Rose, particularly when there are other attempts on his life. No lack of suspects here for this man who seems to go out of his way to be unlikable.

Libby makes dresses for Mrs. Rose and her pregnant sister-in-law, Mrs. Fowler, so she knows that the outward appearances of a happy family is just that--appearances.

The authors Zellnik create an excellent atmosphere, and the historical setting for this intriguing story has a sinister twist.

The story is based on an actual event--when paper made by rags, was about to be made by wood pulp, changing the industry forever.

gay toltl kinman

#### DOWN BY THE RIVERSIDE

Jackie Lynn

2006

0-312-35230-11

St Martin's

This book is in the literary vein. Two main stories are running. One is about Rose Franklin looking for a new life after her twenty-year marriage went south. The other is of a man, an apparent suicide, who was found in the water near the Shady Grove Campground where she has parked her trailer while her car is being repaired.

The dead man and she bear the same last name and Rose is curious, as someone suggested that he would never commit suicide.

Why was he on the campground at night? Avarice raises its ugly head. Could he have found the gold coins rumored to be buried in the area?

Since she has nothing else to do, knows no one, and the death is the topic of conversation, she gains knowledge that puts her on a collision course with those who would like to keep the cause of death as suicide. She's a nurse and can understand the autopsy report. Besides, this man had every reason to live.

In finding her life, she finds real friends, and true love, and solves the mystery.

Jackie Lynn writes fiction under the name of Lynne Hinton and has several books to her credit. This is her first mystery, but she can look forward to a career as a mystery writer also.

gay toltl kinman

#### DYING LIGHT

Stuart MacBride

Aug 2006

ISBN: 9780312339975

St. Martin's Minotaur

I was thrilled last year after discovering another Scottish crime writer who can write the kind of books I love. Gritty and real settings, characters that leap from the page, and a way with words that is almost magic. It would be easy to compare MacBride to the other Scottish writers, but there is no need. He has his own wonderful voice.

DYING LIGHT is book two, and also features the same cast from COLD GRANITE. The book opens with Logan MacRea doing penance in a squad filled with other officers who have fouled up. Planning a comeback he works two cases that are leaving the police without a hope, a prostitute's murder that almost literally falls in his lap, and an fire-bombing that left six dead.

MacBride writes with a sense of humanity and humility that make the people in his books just sing. It's a pleasure to read, and a joy to follow along as MacRea works a case. I predict big things for this hot new author.

Jon

#### EVERY SECRET THING

Lila Shaara

July 2006

ISBN:0-345048565-3

Ballantine Books

This first novel by Lila Shaara is not so much a mystery as two relatively unrelated, "psychological" stories, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. A one-time successful lingerie model, Gina Paletta, has settled in a sleepy town just outside the Big Apple with her 7 year-old twin sons. Besides being a doting single mom (the boys' father died when they were three), she's a sociology professor at a local college. But wouldn't you know it—her modeling career catches up with her in the form of two student stalker types who've posted spicy photos of Gina on their website. The creepy duo is also implicated in the disappearance of a fellow student. This incident brings the police into her home, literally, as there's a very real possibility that the young men might harm Gina or her sons. A mutual yet unexpressed attraction develops between Tommy, one of the live-in cops, and our heroine even though Gina has traded in her bras and baby dolls for sweatpants and flannel nightgowns.

Part Two ties up the loose ends left over from Part One but is mostly concerned with delving into some rather nasty family secrets. It's hard to fathom that part of this town's appeal for Gina was to be near these moronic schmucks. I chalked it up to her unresolved issues. And lest we blame Gina's paternal side for all her emotional problems, Gina's mother's self absorption is only surpassed by her cold and uncaring attitude toward Gina and the twins.

At times throughout the novel, it seemed like I was reading the same scenarios over and over; at 450+ pages, the book begged for some ruthless editing. However, the book has much in its favor. I got a real sense of who Gina was and what made her tick, some of Gina and Tommy's interactions were quite sweet and there was an imaginative and unexpected twist concerning one of the characters. All in all, a worthy first effort.

Jacqueline Rice

#### EVERYBODY KILLS SOMEBODY SOMETIME

Robert J. Randisi

November 2006

ISBN 0-312-33862-7

Thomas Dunne Books

Vegas, Baby, Vegas. The lights, the noise, the thousands of stories that can be told with a single deck of cards.

I'm not a big fan of today's Vegas. The "new money" feel and over the top theme park quality of today's Vegas venues rob it of the mystique that made me fall in love with Bugsy's dream. It's a bad sequel.

Eddie Gianelli and I are of one mind on this score. The difference is I know the lore only second hand and Gianelli lived it. Or so it seems in the fictional world of Robert J. Randisi

Gianelli is the lead character in EVERYBODY KILLS SOMEBODY SOMETIME a "Rat Pack". From Joey Bishop's first walk across the Casino floor Randisi sweeps me into the Vegas of my heart. You see, Dino, Dean Martin is getting these letters and "The Chairman", Frank Sinatra, is Concerned. Ocean 11 is in production and the pack is playing the Copa at night.

Enter Eddie, pit boss and man about town. Frank knows Eddie. Everybody knows Eddie. And Eddie knows everyone. Eddie is a GPS system in a world before Doppler. Frank knows this transplanted New Yorker is the man to quietly look into the threats against Martin. When the first tenuous clues lead to two dead showgirls I suspect Frank and Randisi are right.

The narrative and historical perspective of EVERYBODY KILLS SOMEBODY SOMETIME are an amazing step back into the gossamer glamour of a Vegas mystical in fact. The mystery is Fab. Randisi's kissin sevens all night long and I'm gonna let my stake ride for the promised sequel.

Ruth Jordan

#### EYE CONTACT

Cammie McGovern

June 2006

ISBN 0-670-03765-6

Penguin Group (USA)

Adam is an autistic boy on the verge of adolescence. His mother Cara is very assertive on his behalf, a true advocate for what she believes is best for Adam. All her skills as a mother and an advocate are called into play when Adam is lost at school, and then found. His friend Amelia is also lost and found, but when she is found, she is dead. It is clear early on that Adam didn't kill her. Cara is determined to find out what Adam saw, which means she is going to find out who killed Amelia.

Cara and Adam live in a smallish town, so it is no surprise that Cara knows quite a few of the people who wind up involved in the case. Cara learns as much about Adam, and his relationships with some of these people, as she does about the crime. While the main focus of the book is on solving the crime, there is certainly some time spent on Cara's realization as a parent that there is more to Adam than the son she thinks she knows.

EYE CONTACT is a fairly traditional mystery, in the classic sense of the phrase. If the work of Jodi Picault resonates for you as a reader, then you will almost certainly feel quite comfortable with Cammie McGovern's work. There is the same kind of balance in her writing, the importance of the emotional life of the characters being almost as important as the mystery being solved.

P.J. Coldren

#### FACE DOWN BESIDE ST. ANNE'S WELL

Kathy Lynn Emerson

2006

ISBN: 1-880284-82-0

Perseverance Press

The tenth entry in the Lady Appleton series, set in 16<sup>th</sup> century England, first reminds us that murder isn't a recent invention. The author, Kathy Lynn Emerson, gives historical context in the imprisonment of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scots near Buxton,

Derbyshire, where the story begins. Lady Appleton's foster daughter, Rosamund, is convinced that the drowning death of her beloved tutor, Louise Poitier, is no accident, and inveigles Susanna, Lady Appleton, to investigate. What follows is a well-plotted mystery; but it's also an intriguing glimpse of a vanished way of life. Emerson has published two well-received non-fiction books on the subject of Renaissance England, so she knows whereof she writes. The history is well-woven into the story, and the story stands on its own as a thoughtfully crafted, entertaining novel. I'm looking forward to seeing more of Lady Appleton.

Rae Helmsworth

#### THE FAITHFUL SPY

Alex Berenson

2006

ISBN: 0-345-47899-1

Random House

It's the fall of 2001, just after 9/11, and John Wells is the first American spy to ever get inside al Qaeda – and live. He's been in the mountains long enough to have developed real relationships with his fellow soldiers in the war against the West, and to have become a Muslim. And yet, he's faithful to his mission. But for how long? Fast forward to the present day. Wells has been undercover for so long that his CIA handlers are no longer confident of his loyalty, and he's been ordered back to the US by al Qaeda to support the preparations for a deadly attack, one calculated to make 9/11 look like child's play. Will Wells choose to support or betray al Qaeda? Will the CIA assassinate him? What, exactly, is the deadly plan? Alex Berenson is an investigative journalist who has spent a good portion of his career reporting on the War on Terror, and he's used that insight to craft a tightly plotted thriller full of twists, turns, and heart-stopping surprises. Berenson's writing style is straightforward, almost dry, and that heightens the tension; the book reads as if it's a deeply researched Time or Newsweek piece, not a work of fiction. It's a remarkably good debut effort, and it's to be hoped that this isn't the last we see of either John Wells or Alex Berenson.

Rae Helmsworth

#### A FIFTH OF BRUEN

Ken Bruen

2006

ISBN: 0976715724

Busted Flush Press

In a very short time here in the states Ken Bruen has become a very big name in the mystery community. And as well he should, his books are wonderful and so is he. Part of the success of Bruen's is that people are scrambling to get his early books. THE WHITE TRILOGY, collecting three earlier books sold out the first print run and went to a second printing. Well Busted Flush Press has stepped up and reprinted the very first of Ken's work. four novellas and two short story collection. It's a beautiful book and an affordable way for people to finally read these early tales originally published between 1991 and 1994. I particularly enjoyed Shades of Grace. Bruen's style is sparse and unique and this is a must have for all his fans. Busted Flush is publishing books for people who love to read. Tell your local bookstore to order this for you!

Jon

#### GENTLEMEN & PLAYERS

Joanne Harris

2005

ISBN 0-5527-7002-7

Black Swan

I loved this book. Unusual in that two stories of two different people are both told in the first person. One is in flashbacks by the mischievous grown-up child of custodian John Snyder of St. Oswald's, an exclusive boy's school in northern England. The other is a classics professor, Roy Straitley, who has been at the school for thirty-three years.

The child relates growing up in the shadow of the school. Because of the wrongs done, the adult child returns with a vengeance, and, as a teacher there, works revenge in such ways as setting up an offending faculty member with child pornography photos on his computer, and other such evil deeds. Think Mr. Ripley. Very cleverly planned.

The identity of the grown Snyder is part of the mystery. Snyder and Straitley's lives collided earlier when a student died. The theme of the story and the reason Straitley did not report what he saw, a deliberate murder, was--St. Oswald's. The school, above all, must be protected from scandal.

This book can be considered in the literary category, but no question, this is a mystery with a twist ending. Superb writing, very suspenseful, hard to put down.  
gay toltl kinman

GIRL IN A BOX  
Sujata Massey  
September 2006  
ISBN 0-06-076514  
Harper Collins

"Girl in a Box" is a Japanese idiom for the sheltered and privileged young lady of good background. GIRL IN A BOX is the latest crime fiction from Sujata Massey featuring protagonist Rei Shimura.

In the nine books of this series Massey has developed a character that is a lot of things but "Girl in a Box" isn't one of them.

As this book opens Rei is training with an ambiguous Washington Agency. Her assignment is to infiltrate an internationally known Department Store from the inside and look into their unbelievable profit margins. Rei's timeline is sped up when an agent already in play turns up dead and a break-in at the Agency's Washington offices can only be a result of malicious mechanizations on the behalf of the company she's set to investigate.

Massey has written a story for her reader that is as the back flap copy says, "a delicious blend of mystery and contemporary women's fiction." Rei is all woman when it comes to retail. Ms. Massey revels in the world of the department store, Mitsutan.

Her skills as a mystery writer keep me coming back to this series time after time. GIRL IN A BOX tells a sinister tale of Japan's current geo-economical infrastructure. It's a story I'll let you unravel for yourself.

Chick Lit with a lot of Ludlum.

Ruth Jordan

GOTHAM CENTRAL – UNRESOLVED TARGETS  
Greg Rucka/Ed Brubaker  
2006  
ISBN: 1563899957  
DC Comics

This is the third trade collection in what has become one of my favorite comic series. No men in tights in these pages, these are stories of police work. This volume has two story lines. The first, Soft Targets has Gotham's finest tracking down a sniper right before Christmas. The first victim is the Mayor, shot down in front of the Police commissioner, the second is a school superintendent. The detectives have a redball case and are working all the evidence to catch the sniper before the next deadline. Fast paced and great details make this a terrific story. I got a kick out of a small cameo role of a reporter named Simon Lippman. Also a couple other mystery names dropped in, such as Lehane street.

The Second story is an old case brought back because of a hostage situation. A high school baseball team was killed years ago and the cops are on the trail of who did it and why. Solid police work track down the evidence and the ending came as a nice surprise.

This is truly a graphic novel for mystery fans and comic fans alike, it has everything, great dialogue, great art and some fun twists and turns. Rucka and Brubaker are truly masters of story telling and this book proves it once again.

Jon

GREYWALKER  
Kat Richardson  
Oct 2006  
Roc/Ace  
ISBN: 045146107X

How do I sum up this debut effort from Kat Richardson? Let's give this a try: this book kicks ass!

Technically dead for two minutes after a blow to the head, P.I. Harper Blaine comes out of it with more than just a headache. She's seeing things; weird things. Beginning in a grey mist, these things go from menacing to monstrous.

For level-headed and very hard-boiled Blaine, this is almost more than she can handle. Not knowing if this is an after affect of the injury or if she's just going crazy, a doctor directs her to a couple he thinks may be able to help. She is soon on the doorstep of Mara and Ben Danzinger. Specializing in the paranormal, they tell Blaine something she doesn't want to hear.

Her "death" has changed her. She has inadvertently joined a group of people called the "Greywalkers." With practice, she'll be able to move between the world as she knew it and into the mist. She can see ghosts and discovers that many of the things she'd seen in old black and white movies are real.

This new ability also makes her very attractive to those from the mist and she is soon working cases that involve a missing boy who was last seen in the thrall of a very pale, very nasty man and a mysterious stranger who asks her to track down an organ that has been missing for years. As she learns to cope, she and the Danzinger's notice that the "normal" amount of paranormal activity is increasing. And not in a positive way...

Like Charlie Huston's ALREADY DEAD and Simon Greens' NIGHTSIDE series, GREYWALKER is a perfect blend of hard-boiled P.I. and supernatural thriller. It'll grab you from the first page and won't let you go until the last. Harper Blaine is a smart, strong and darkly funny lead. This promises to be a great series.

Jennifer Jordan

#### GUNPOWDER PLOT

Carola Dunn

2006

ISBN: 0-312-34989-0

St. Martin's Minotaur

GUNPOWDER PLOT is a classic traditional crime novel, and the latest in the longrunning and popular series featuring the formidable Daisy Dalrymple. I've been wanting to explore this series for awhile, and was delighted to make Daisy's acquaintance. Carola Dunn is a highly talented writer, and followers of Dorothy Sayer and Dame Agatha will feast on this series. GUNPOWDER PLOT is meticulously researched, which should come as no surprise given that Carola Dunn, now a resident of Oregon, was born and raised in England. Set in post-Great War England, Gunpowder Plot explores a series of misdeeds at a country estate whose viscount, and an unlikely guest, are found dead under suspicious circumstances at the estate's famous Guy Fawkes Day celebration. Suffice it to say that Daisy is quite the most qualified to address the situation. GUNPOWDER PLOT is a ripping good read for traditional mystery readers in general, and followers of Maisie Dobbs in particular. And Carola Dunn is a ripping good writer.

Julia Spencer-Fleming

#### HOLLYWOOD STUFF

Sharon Fiffer

2006

0-312-34306-X

St. Martin's

Jane Wheel of Kankakee, Illinois, an antiques dealer and sleuth, goes to Hollywood at the request of a small movie company that wants to buy the rights to her story. A member of the movie group is former beau, Jeb. The group calls themselves Room B because that is where they all hung out to write the TV series they worked on--and they have stuck together and helped each other through the years. Jeb wants Jane to use her sleuthing skills, as threatening notes have been received by members of Room B, and now some are dying. The first death looks like an accident because the victim fell off a roof. Then another member is injured in an explosion that is definitely not an accident. Her knowledge of antiques helps to identify the murder weapon found by another body at a flea market, and what booth it might have come from, giving the police a possible clue. Tim, Jane's antiques shopping friend, helps her ferret out information about who is doing whom in and why.

Jane's reactions to some of the Hollywood goings-on are hilarious, as are the quotes at the beginning of chapters from the fictitious Diary by Belinda St. Germaine. For example: "As soon as someone refers to you as hot...cover your ears..." and "It's difficult to be a real person in a make-believe world."

A fun book that had me laughing, and I enjoyed the information about collectibles. The author is also a non-fiction writer, and an antiques collector.

gay toltl kinman

#### IMPERIUM

Robert Harris

Sept 2006

ISBN 0-743206603-x

Simon and Schuster

Imperium: The power, basically of life or death, granted to certain Romans by the Senate. This is the story of the rise of Marcus Cicero as told through his personal recording secretary, confidant and advisor Tiro. Tiro's tale is in parts legal thriller and political thriller but always historically accurate. This isn't a mystery but that shouldn't turn a mystery reader away. The

story is full of political intrigue, murders, theft, the resulting trials and how Cicero uses his oratorical skills, his wit, his keen intelligence and his previous successes to climb the ladder of Roman politics toward Imperium. Mr. Harris paints Cicero in sympathetic colors and why not? The Roman Republic of Cicero is a broad pallet to work from.

This is a smooth read. Mr Harris covers a lot of time and many events but the reader is never confused over Roman names or families. Pompeii, Mr. Harris's previous work on Rome, plumbing and volcanoes was acclaimed by the critics and readers alike. Imperium will be no different.

Dave Biemann

#### LAST SHOT

Gregg Hurwitz

Sept 2006

ISBN:006073146X

William Morrow

With this, the fourth Rackley book, I find my self wondering if Hurwitz is ever going to write a book I don't love. I keep thinking that at some point he's got to let one slip through that's not great. Well, not yet.

LAST SHOT opens with a prison break that is genius. The escaped con quickly becomes the latest quest for Rackley and his partner Bear. Only this time Rackley is facing someone who could in every way be as good as he is. Walker Jameson is a former Marine serving his time quietly till he gets a letter. He escapes because of his nephew's health and his sister's death, something is not right and Walker wants to set things straight.

Hurwitz is a writer with the ability to write a mystery with all the elements needed for a perfect thriller. The pacing and suspense build like a piece of classical music coming to a wonderful climax. Gregg Hurwitz is one of my very favorite writers and quite frankly, should be teaching other writers how to do it. He's a writer people will be talking about decades from now.

Jon

#### LIBERATION

Olen

2006

ISBN: 0312332044

St. Martin's Minotaur

#### MOVEMENTS

Steinhauer

Olen Steinhauer has outdone himself with LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, the fourth book in his series that features a place and a history more than a specific lead. Beginning with 2003's THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS, Steinhauer has played out the agonizing history of Czechoslovakia during and after its violent political upheaval.

It is 1968 and Peter Husak, a Czech student of music theory, has made a failed run for the border to ostensibly take "The plight of the Czechoslovakia to the ears of the world." The Slovak officers are not as interested in Peter as they are in his anti-Socialist friends. The decisions he makes when faced with their questions will change many lives.

It is April 23, 1975 and Librad Terzian is making a trip at the behest of the People's Militia. It is a trip from which he does not intend to return. The flight is hijacked by the Army of the Liberation; an Armenian terrorist group blows up in mid-air.

In its wake, Gavra Noukas, of the secret police and Katja Drdova, a homicide detective who had worked with Terzian, are thrown together in an investigation of the hijacking. A passenger named Zrinka Martich comes to there attention. Little is known of her and what little they find out is suspicious. A doctor who had treated Zrinka Martich for mental illness leads them to her brother, Adrian. A charismatic man, Martrich engages Noukas on many levels and has him questioning his own existence amidst the turmoil.

Noukas is mentored by Major Brano Sev (of 36 YALTA BOULEVARD, 2005) who is the thread that ties the narrative together. With a keen intelligence and a gut instinct that rarely fails him, he guides the investigation in the right direction.

The meticulous interwoven plot of LIBERATION MOVEMENTS runs from character to character, and time frame to time frame. Many authors could lose a reader by setting this challenge before them. Not Steinhauer. This novel is tight, intelligent and incredibly well done.

Jennifer Jordan

#### LOVE, LIES AND LIQUOR

M. C. Beaton

Sept. 2006

0-312-34910-6

St. Martin's

Agatha Raisin runs the Gloucestershire Detective Agency. she is now holidaying in Snoth-on-Sea with ex-husband James, with whom she'd like to retie the knot. The dreary location is anything but a dreary itinerary for Agatha. This is a hotbed of emotions--but not the kind she had in mind.

Mrs. Jankers, with whom Agatha had a slight altercation, is found dead on the beach strangled with Agatha's scarf. There are a few other suspects, but Agatha tops the list. However, as a professional detective she uses her entire staff to solve the murder, which brings to light a variety of crimes--burglary, murder, and bad taste on the part of the first victim. Although the spouse is always the first suspect, in this case the victim was honeymooning with her third husband, Fred, so why would he want to kill her?

As Agatha looks into the background of the other suspects, she uncovers a jewelry theft ring, life insurance policy plot, money laundering, and gambling--all motives that add more suspects to the list. This is definitely not the town James fondly remembers from his childhood summer holidays.

The first murder is supposedly quickly solved--a gangster who wanted his part of the jewelry heist, which he thought the victim had. Then a double murder of the victim's son and wife. Now who did them in and why? Are all the murders related? If so, the gangster didn't do them.

Agatha is 'attacked' with poisoned coffee, and almost uses up her nine lives before she solves this case.

Over the top, with lots happening, the author seems to have as much fun as the reader.

gay toltl kinman

#### A MERRY BAND OF MURDERERS

Claudia Bishop and Don Bruns, Editors

September 2006

ISBN 1-59058-301-9

Poisoned Pen Press

And a very entertaining band they are! This is a delightfully original group of short stories. The concept had its birth in a conversation at the mystery convention Sleuthfest a few years ago, when several authors got to visiting about who among them wrote music in addition to suspense fiction.

The result is a compilation of thirteen stories, each with a connection to music in some way. Unfortunately for the reviewer, the review copy did not ship with the accompanying CD - it would have been a lot of fun to listen as well as read the entries this merry band dishes up. Readers who make a beeline for the new releases section of their local bookstore early this fall will have that pleasure, and I'm envious!

Peter Robinson and Jim Fusilli take us back to the 1960's and Robinson links to the characters on the fringes of the story in his latest Inspector Banks novel *PIECE OF MY HEART*. Fusilli's entry is a kind of "what if" scenario, which concludes in a chilling confrontation set in the present day.

John Lescroat's story is one to make your skin crawl, with a delightful laugh out loud "gotcha!" for a conclusion. The old adage "what goes around, comes around" is demonstrated in fine style by Mary Ann Evans. Val McDermid gives us a new look at a traditional Appalachian legend and Tom Corcoran's take on a classic con is set in Key West on (dare I say this?) a dark and stormy night.

Other authors included are Rhys Bowen, Jeff Deaver, Rupert Holmes, Bill Moody, Nathan Walpole and of course, the two editors. Space prevents a mention of each entry - but all are highly readable and the collection has a nice mixture of styles and something for every taste.

In short questionnaires, the authors answer questions about their tastes in music and literature. In response to the classic question of which three books to take for a sojourn on a deserted island, it's intriguing to note that Elmore Leonard and Leo Tolstoy each score as a choice for more than one of the contributors.

Woodstock

#### MISSING MEMBER

Jo-Ann Power

2006

0-312-35799-0

Thomas Dunne Books / St. Martin's

Carly Wagner, a member of Congress, found Alistair Dunhill dead in her office when she arrived at work. Since she is high on the suspect list, perhaps even with her own party, she does some damage control, namely trying to find out who would want to frame her, for why else would his mutilated body (another reference to the book's title) be in her office. The list of who wanted to kill Dunhill, also a member of Congress, is long.

The book is fascinating because we are in Carly's head for the entire ride, listening to how she thinks and her silent and hilarious remarks about those around her. Her "voice" is wonderful.

She is aware of every innuendo of the party members, knowing that they will cut her loose in less than a heartbeat if it looks like she's a liability, and that also goes for the money backers back home in Texas. She needs to find the killer, and soon--otherwise she is out of a job come next election.

Luckily Lt. Sarge Brown, a detective with the Capitol Police, shares some of his findings with her and he's smart enough to know he needs her insider information.

And through the friendship of her daughter, 12, with the deceased man's son, she learns more.

A mysterious stranger, Mr. Jones, is hired for megabucks by an unknown benefactor to protect her. Carly's worried about what kind of debt she is racking up by accepting his help, but when she is in physical danger and he gets rid of the attacker, she accepts his help.

This book is fascinating as we get a look of how politics work behind the scenes in Washington. Powers, a multi-published author, knows what she's talking about--she worked in public relations in Washington.

Carly is a wonderful character and she has my vote.

gay tottl kinman

#### MR. MONK GOES TO HAWAII

Lee Goldberg

July 2006

ISBN: 01451219007

Signet Paperback

I really enjoy Lee Goldberg's writing. I really like what he's doing with Monk. He adds more depth to characters I already love. And because of the format he can make it intricate as well. In this book, Monk obviously goes to Hawaii. Monk follows Natalie on vacation to the Islands and of course, there's a murder. One Helen Gruber, killed by coconut. Monk knows it was no accident and sets out to prove it. His task is made more complex by a psychic who loves to play it up for the camera.

In Goldberg's talented hands Monk is even more clever and more astute. He's also even more human. Goldberg writes the character so well I wonder if maybe he doesn't share some quirks? I doubt it, but the writing is so good you would think so. Goldberg is a wonderful writer and I look forward to more in this series featuring my favorite compulsive detective.

Jon

#### MURDER IN EXILE

Vincent H. O'Neil

2006

978-0-312-35207-3

St. Martin's Press

Frank Cole is in exile, literally and figuratively. He's living in Exile, Florida while he waits for his bankruptcy court decision to be appealed. The judge, in a massive fit of pique, attached Frank's future earnings to pay off his debts. Frank is laying low, earning as little as possible to thwart this ruling while it is appealed. So he is working as an insurance fact-checker, a job which would seem to be unlikely to get Frank in trouble.

Frank has an inquisitive nature, and more tenacity than perhaps he should. He is sent to check out the death of Eddie Gonzalez, the victim of a hit-and-run while he was out jogging. The policy was quite large, so there are questions.

Frank figures out that Eddie wasn't the real target, that the hit-and-run was not an accident, and that somehow he's managed to tick someone off. This is brought home to Frank when he finds a bullet on his kitchen table, on top of an article about Eddie.

Most people would drop the investigation. Frank wants to know who put the bullet there.

He does find out, with the help of some friends in Exile. He also makes some enemies, meets a woman who may turn into his girlfriend, and generally keeps his life from getting dull and boring.

MURDER IN EXILE continues the trend for the Malice Domestic/St. Martin's Press Best First Traditional Mystery Novel Contest winners: he is an interesting character, working an atypical job, who finds himself in a situation he never planned on but feels honor-bound to see the whole dirty mess through to the bitter end. Frank Cole is an angry man, with good reason, and focuses that anger in a positive way. This looks to be another good first book in a series.

P.J. Coldren

#### NEVER FEAR

Scott Frost

2006

ISBN: 0399153403

Putnam

Seventeen years ago, three young women were killed, their bodies dumped in the Los Angeles River. The serial killer was never found. Now, these many years later, Pasadena Det. Alex Delillo reopens the case when her brother is murdered after unearthing new evidence in the cases. Delillo stumbles on a number of highly questionable investigative practices, with the finger pointing at the iconic LAPD. As she closes in on the truth, flashbacks from her childhood plague her. Her own father, an actor who disappeared when she was very young, is implicated. The LAPD, its reputation on the line, wants her off the case for a number of reasons. And a shadowy figure is upping the body count of those who own parts of the long-buried truth. This book features non-stop action. Scott Frost is an accomplished screenwriter and it shows, his focused eye moving smoothly and swiftly from scene to scene, or chapter to chapter in this case, while ratcheting the plot ever more tightly. A human-scale contemporary thriller, with a lot of whodunit elements, and fine character development, NEVER FEAR is a chilling, atmospheric pageturner.

Ross Hugo-Vidal

#### OUR LADY OF PAIN

Marion Chesney

2006

ISBN: 0-312-32968-6

St. Martin's Minotaur

Anyone who enjoys the writing of M.C. Beaton (the Agatha Raisin and Hamish Macbeth series) is sure to also enjoy the work of Marion Chesney – they're one and the same. *Our Lady of Pain* is the fourth entry in Chesney's Edwardian mystery series, and it features the indomitable Lady Rose Summer and Captain Harry Cathcart. As the book opens, Rose has just endured a failed Season in London society; that is, she failed to find a husband. Rather than be exiled to India, the favorite destination for unsuccessful debutantes, Rose has convinced Harry, a private detective, that a false engagement is a good idea. All of which would be fine, except that Harry is suddenly being seen around Town in the company of Dolores Duval, a curvaceous Frenchwoman of the demi-monde. To her own surprise and mortification Rose finds that she's not just jealous, but angrily jealous, and resolves to confront the courtesan; which she does, only to discover that Dolores has been shot dead. Found standing over the body, Rose is accused of the murder, which sets off a chain of events that leads Rose and Harry into a whirlpool of intrigue and danger. Although there's plenty of humor and romance, this book is more than a light-hearted comedy of manners and mystery; it's intriguingly plotted, full of surprises, twists, and turns. I'm looking forward to reading more of Chesney's work.

Rae Helmsworth

#### PALE IMMORTAL

Anne Frasier

September, 2006

ISBN 0-451-41224-9

Onyx

The town of Tuolena, Wisconsin actually exists, according to the author and some maps. While stopping at a diner in Black River Falls, Anne Frasier overheard some locals talking about the Tuolena vampire who used to roam the streets at night of this small town on the Wisconsin River.

In "Pale Immortal" Anne Frasier blurs the lines of "genre fiction" with a tale of a town (Tuolena) and its local vampire. Best selling author Evan Stroud has made his living writing about the "Pale Immortal", aka Richard Manchester, who used to drink and bathe in the blood of his many victims. There's even a Richard Manchester fan club of sorts: The Pale Immortals. Teenagers, they've taken "goth" to whole new levels.

Now, most people think Stroud himself is a vampire. He only goes out at night, his shades are always drawn, and his skin is so pale you can almost see through it. But there's a reason: he has a disease called porphyria; he's allergic to sunlight. And recently, he's been suffering blackouts. He can't account for his time or whereabouts, which is troublesome because there's been a recent rash of corpses drained of blood.

When the murders become personal, and those closest to him are suddenly in mortal danger, Stroud must stay at least one step ahead of the police and find out what evil controls and lurks behind the Pale Immortals.

As with the best in this type of fiction, "The Pale Immortal" is ambiguous. It can be read as a modern vampire story, or as a believable serial killer thriller. But believe it or not, "Pale Immortal" makes for a gripping read.

Gary Shulze, Once Upon a Crime

#### PHILIPPINE FEVER

Bruce Cook  
August 2006  
ISBN: 0-9776276-7-5  
Capital Crime Press

This well-constructed first effort is set in the Philippines, as the title implies. Sam Haine is an agent of the Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives Division of the Homeland Security Agency on assignment to the Asian nation to intercept a shipment of arms believe intended for a Texas militia.

He arrives in Manila to find that the suspected mastermind of the arms smuggling plot has been murdered, and teams up with the lead detective of the National Bureau of Investigation (the Filipino equivalent of the FBI) to investigate the murder. As a result, he finds himself enmeshed in the swirling cauldrons of industrial espionage, sex trade and covert CIA operations in Manila.

The novel evinces the reality of the poverty and exoticness of Manila. The author worked and lived there researching the material. And its authenticity shows in every page. The subtitle seems to indicate Fever is the start of a series. Let's hope so.  
--Theodore Feit

PLAYING GOD  
Kate Flora  
2006  
ISBN 1-59414-461-3  
Five Star

When a doctor is killed in a macabre fashion while entertaining a lady of the evening in his Mercedes, Detective Joe Burgess gets the call. And I'm so glad he did. Burgess is grumpy, jaded, angry, intelligent, moral, and kind -- all of which combine to make him one of the most interesting characters I've come across in quite a while. I can't wait until Flora's next book about him. As complex as Burgess is the cast of surrounding characters: fellow police officers, lady friends, suspects, and witnesses. The camaraderie and working relationship Burgess has with his team of detectives is so real and heartfelt I found myself hoping at the end of the book for a few more chapters just about them, with their dialogue. Flora wraps up the story in a believable and real way, bringing together the lines of investigation to form a conclusion that is supported throughout the novel. I loved this book. I recommend it to anyone who loves police procedurals, traditional mysteries, suspense...

Actually, I recommend it to anyone who loves a great read. Keep them coming, Kate!

Judy Clemens, author of To Thine Own Self By True

THE POWER BROKER  
Stephen Frey  
2006  
ISBN 0-345-48060-0  
Ballantine Books

It's a promising premise: a man high in the multi-billion dollar world of finance faces several business catastrophes, a girlfriend and an attractive co-worker, and some long-time friends who might or might not be traitors. But add to that a secret sect of racist white guys, a secret group of racist black guys, a controversial presidential primary, and a multitude of secondary players who only hit the book for a couple of pages. What do you get? A book with lots of unresolved questions, loose ends, and a seriously confused reader who's not sure who the good guys and who the bad guys actually were. I did read to the end, which says something about the interesting parts of the story, but the book ultimately doesn't deliver. A disappointment from a writer who's given us many books to cheer about. I hope the next one is back on course for veteran writer Frey.

Judy Clemens

PREY FOR A MIRACLE  
Aimee and David Thurlo  
2006  
0-312-32210-0  
St. Martin's

Sister Agatha is a nun in a cloister in New Mexico who rides a motorcycle with a sidecar full of a German Shepherd named Pax, and is a sleuth.

Jessica and her eight-year-old daughter, Natalie, are run off the road. Mom tells Natalie to run for it and she does, ending up in the cloister. Mom ends up unconscious in the hospital. Sister Agatha tries to find out why the mother is in danger, and also protect the child until a suitable place can be found.

The tabloid reporters are tracking Natalie; her ex-convict father wants to find her; and so does the person who ran their car off the road.

Why? Natalie has a unique religious talent. Many believe she can make miracles, but she says no.

The setting of the convent is pervasive. We are going to Nones, Lauos, Sext, Compline, and getting up to pray at 4:30 a.m. We bake cookies, hear the noise while the roof is being replaced, and wonder who is going to pay for it, and are off on a motorcycle ride with Sister Agatha and Pax, or in the convent's car, the Anti-Chrysler.

As Sister Agatha learns more, and the nuns--one a former marine, another a journalist--come up with a plan. gay toltl kinman

#### THE SCOUT MASTER: A PREPARED DEATH

Luisa Buehler

2006

ISBN 1-59080-475-9

Echelon Press

Book four in the Grace Marston series marks a new beginning. Luisa Buehler now knows her reader and her protagonist. Unlike the previous three titles in this series, the author spends little time on the set up. Instead she trusts her narrator to do the job. The result is a finished product far superior to the first three books. Yet without them, could THE SCOUT MASTER: A PREPARED DEATH have arrived?

Grace is at home in the Chicago 'burbs. She's in between jobs and getting used to her new roll as step mom. Stepson Will goes on a troop outing with the local boy scouts to clean up trash and the first pages of an interesting mystery unfold. Just exactly what does it take to earn a merit badge in this troop? Are the local Eagle candidates doubling as the local ruffians?

Luisa Buehler is a writer unafraid of taking a good, hard look at her prose and redefining it. She has in her the makings of a very talented scribe and her career is one to cheer on.

Ruth Jordan

#### SEASON OF IRON

Sylvia Maultash Warsh

2006

ISBN: 1-55002-616-X

The Dundurn Group

In this beautiful and insightful book, Warsh takes us on two journeys: one with Frieda, a young Jewish doctor in the early days of Hitler's reign, and one with Rebecca, a young Jewish doctor in the mid-70s. SEASON OF IRON is the story of how these two women find their lives intersecting, and how they each got to that place. I was a bit confused why this novel was called a "mystery," since it is light years away from a traditional mystery tale. But the puzzle is there, and if you have been searching for something fresh, something other than the traditional mystery formula, this is it. From the streets of Berlin to the homes of Toronto, you will be enchanted with the details of each environment. And you will be horrified by the realities of Hitler's Germany in a new way -- if it is possible to be any more saddened than you already are with knowledge of the Holocaust. The perspective of an upper class Jewish family in that time is heart-wrenching, and the view of life in the death camps startling and tragic. Marsh is a wonderful writer, using words creatively and masterfully. I'll be going back to check out the first two books in the Rebecca Temple series. I hope they're as different and remarkable as this book was.

Judy Clemens

#### SEE DELPHI AND DIE

Lindsey Davis

2006

St. Martin's

ISBN 0-312-35765-6

Marcus Didius Falco and Helena are on their seventeenth adventure. This time out Lindsey Davis sends the Roman informer and his wife to Greece. In a first, someone from outside the government approaches Falco. The client wants to know what really happened to his daughter. With daughters of their own to consider, Falco and Helena take the case. Helena's brother

has gone to Greece for a legal education. In a letter home he reports a second death in a party using the same travel agency the girl used three years earlier. After doing the preparatory interviews in Rome, Falco, Helena and their entourage catch up with the Seven Sights group and here the investigation, with the winnowing of suspects, begins in earnest. There are the usual red herrings, the light touch of comedy, the convincing parallels to modern times, the lovingly drawn family relations; particularly those between Marcus and Helena, the vivid descriptions of suspects and scenery and the right touch of violence. With a story this good it's not hard to imagine seventeen more adventures coming from the hand of Ms. Davis, the acknowledged queen of the Roman Mystery.

Dave Biemann

#### THE SEVENTH SURVIVOR

Lori Lacefield

September 2006

ISBN 10: 0-9776276-8-3

Capital Crime Press

Lori Lacefield has written a debut novel worthy of a much more experienced author. She has created a highly readable book, with an unusual plot that flows meticulously to a satisfying conclusion. The story begins with an invitation to Palmer Reed and her best friend to join a local prestigious organization as directors. The purported function of the Diamond Foundation is to make grants to victims of crimes like wife beating and fraud to help jump-start new lives. Soon, however, it appears there is another, secret mission.

When Palmer was a child, she was kidnapped by the owners of a local chemical company in an effort to force her father, a union organizer, to abandon his efforts to unionize the company. The company also is accused of pouring toxic waste into the Tennessee River, causing a high incidence of leukemia in southwest Knoxville. A local reporter is seeking to expose the company, and the CEO and the general counsel are suspected of a variety of murders to prevent exposure or union organization.

Palmer finds herself in the middle of both plots and is accused of murdering her best friend. She goes underground, disguised as a man as a killer stalks her, in an effort to bring justice about.

We hope this isn't just a one-time effort and that the author is working on her second book.

--Theodore Feit

#### THE SHADOW CATCHERS

Thomas Lakeman

2006

ISBN 0-312-34799-5

St. Martin's Minotaur

For fans of the darker mysteries, a new author has come to light. Thomas Lakeman, in his debut novel, THE SHADOW CATCHERS, brings us an interesting and sympathetic character in FBI Special Agent Mike Yeager. On his own, facing a suspension from the Bureau, Yeager has traveled west to capture photos of the mountains. But before he can begin snapping pictures, he finds himself in the middle of an investigation that catches him and won't let him go. There are secrets in the small town -- secrets that haunt the people and frighten them. Secrets that will destroy their children if someone doesn't talk. Yeager is determined to get to the bottom of the horrors before more people die, but he is hampered by self-righteous lawmen, his personal struggles, and a villain so disturbed no one wants to speak of him. Especially since he's supposed to be dead... Lakeman writes like a veteran in this book, which I hope is the first of many.

Judy Clemens

#### SHAKEDOWN

Charlie Stella

2006

ISBN: 1933648058

Pegasus

Charlie Stella could very easily be the new king of mob crime novels. In SHAKEDOWN we get to meet Bobby G, a book maker who just wants to leave the life behind him and get married, get a straight job, be a regular Joe. But things never seem to go as planned and for Bobby G and his fiancé Lin Yao things are really the opposite of what they planned. Caught up between any number of wiseguys with their hands out looking for money Bobby G is in a tough spot.

Stella has a wonderful way of creating characters you can't help want to root for and then throwing them to the wolves while you watch in a bit of shock as he makes things worse and worse. Great pacing and wonderful dialogue keep this book hauling

ass to a spectacular climax. Stella flat out Rocks. And when you go to buy this book, you might as well get the rest of his books right away, because one won't be enough, you're going to be hooked.

Jon

#### SILENCE OF THE GRAVE

Arnaldur Indridason  
2006  
ISBN: 0312340710  
St. Martin's Minotaur

Silence of the Grave is a crime novel in the same sense that To Kill a Mockingbird is a crime novel. In both instances, gifted writers use the format to clothe a work of transcendent literary fiction. SILENCE OF THE GRAVE is that good. Which may explain why Arnaldur Indridason copped Silver Dagger top honors in the UK for JAR CITY. And then Gold Dagger top honors for SILENCE OF THE GRAVE, prompting a veritable Waterloo within the venerable Crime Writers Association (CWA), which took the unprecedented step of rendering translated works ineligible for future awards. SILENCE OF THE GRAVE is that good.

A skeleton is unearthed outside modern-day Reykjavik. The classic, streamlined plot revolves around parallel story lines 50 years apart, as a squad of detectives seeks the skeleton's identity. The characters are emotionally disturbing, hypnotically compelling, and the heart of the story. Noirists, traditionalists, and readers of literary fiction of all stripes will be moved. This is a work of universal appeal. SILENCE OF THE GRAVE, translated from the original Icelandic by the supremely gifted Bernard Scudder, is that good. Welcome to the U.S. Mr. Indridason!  
Ross Hugo-Vidal

#### SOMETHING TO BUILD ON

Tim Broderick  
2005  
ISBN: 0971130981  
Twilight Tales

SOMETHING TO BUILD ON is an amazing piece of graphic story telling. Tim Broderick has a wonderful style that immediately draws the reader in and makes them need to keep reading.

The tale opens with a murder on a building site, the future home owner, Mr. Stratton, is found dead in the open basement. Our view into this is through David Diangelo, a man hired by the owners to oversee the building of the new house. The couple are both lawyers, though Mrs. Stratton is at home on bed rest while pregnant. Diangelo is keeping track of her affair after the murder. Police argue over jurisdiction and Diangelo is questioned a number of times. In the course of events Diangelo discovers some things are amiss and looks deeper into the murder.

Broderick is a natural story teller and I love his tech-oriented hero. The art fits the story perfectly and creates a real mood. This was a very entertaining read. This is a perfect example of why I love graphic novels.

Jon

#### SOJOURN

Jana G. Oliver  
2006  
ISBN 1-896944-30-2  
Dragon Moon Press

Looking for something a little different? I've found it! SOJOURN has it all -- two time periods (1888 and 2057), time travel, Jack the Ripper, cool technology, shape shifters, and, of course, a stimulating mystery. Jacynnda Lassiter is a Time Rover, a kind of tour guide through time, retrieving people from the past, where they've paid to visit history. But this time the tourist doesn't want to come back. Time Immersion Corporation, the business who employs Jacynnda, is threatened with bankruptcy, so they're accepting higher fees to send people somewhere - someTIME - they'd never allowed tourists before: during the reign of Jack the Ripper. Jacynnda travels to London, 1888, dressed and acting like a woman of that period, and meets up with some men who aren't what they seem, either. They are part of a Transitive community, in which people can change their shape as they wish. Jacynnda must discover if one of these people is the killer, but has to do it before she becomes one of the Whitechapel victims. Full of well-drawn characters and a fast-moving plotline, this book was a treat to read. I hope this isn't the last we see of Jacynnda and her 19th-century friends!

Judy Clemens, author of TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE

#### SOUTH BEACH SHAKEDOWN

Don Bruns  
Sept 2006  
ISBN: 1933515012  
Oceanview

Mick Sever is back in his third adventure as he tracks down a missing rock star. SOUTH BEACH SHAKEDOWN takes Sever to Florida at the request of his ex-wife because her client, Gideon Pike, has disappeared. Putting on his detective hat again puts Mick in the crosshairs of Korean gangsters and record companies who only care about the money.

Brunns lays down a plot line like John Deacon's bass line in Another One Bites The Dust, strong and continuous. This is a great read and will leave you feeling like a music industry insider. Great reading from a great author.

Jon

#### SPQR X -A POINT OF LAW

John Maddox Roberts  
2006  
ISBN 0-312-33725-6  
St. Martin's

As the title reveals, this is the tenth Decius Caecilius Metellus (the younger, as his father is quick to point out) novel. Decius is standing for election, already a Senator, he's aiming higher. Ancient Roman politics are similar to modern American in that names are smeared, votes are bought and elections rigged. Still, it's a Republic and that's the way it's been done so Decius is only moderately worried when he's accused of being corrupt. What worries him and his family is that, on the following day, his accuser is found dead on the steps of the court. This makes it that much harder for Decius. Now, not only must he clear his name, but prove that he and his family or his electorate didn't commit murder to delay the corruption trial, as well. Roberts sure hand always makes for an enjoyable read. Decius is a very capable detective and this is another fine example of him at work. As usual Roberts provides a list of terms should the reader be new to ancient Rome.

Dave Biemann

#### STILL AS DEATH

Sarah Stewart Taylor  
2006  
ISBN 0-312-33742-6  
St. Martin's

Sweeney St. George is an art history professor, and curator of a special exhibit of Egyptian funerary artifacts at a Harvard University museum.

Twenty-five years before Karen, a student, committed suicide after a robbery. Fast forward to a robbery during Sweeney's exhibition. Are the two robberies connected? She thinks so and starts asking questions about a piece of jewelry that she believes was misidentified, possibly plundered, and that Karen worked on immediately before her death. The piece is missing, possibly misplaced, or even stolen.

Sweeney's love is Ian. He wants her to move home with him to London. Avoiding this decision plunges her deeper into the mystery, which also brings her more in contact with police officer Tim Quinn.

Sweeney interviews Karen's friends and relatives and learns that something drastic happened to Karen so that she changed after the theft.

Another murder occurs during the Egyptian exhibit, perhaps when the victim tried to stop the theft of an artifact.

Yet another body is found.

Sweeney digs deeper, and the truth begins to unravel.

Most interesting is the behind-the-scene information about a university museum, how it runs, and about the plundering of Egyptian artifacts.

gay toltl kinman

#### THESE GUNS FOR HIRE

Edited by JA Konrath  
Oct 2006  
ISBN:1932557202  
Bleak House Books

Unless you have been living under a rock you should be familiar with the name JA Konrath. Still fairly new to the mystery circuit he has made quite an impact already. His impact is about to become more apparent as his first anthology is released in Oct. THESE GUN FOR HIRE is a collection of short stories about hit men. 31 stories from a literal who's who of writers, including Lawrence Sanders, Max Allan Collins, Brian Wiprud, Sean Doolittle, Jeff Abbott, Ken Bruen, Reed Coleman and many more. David Morrell's story, The Attitude Adjuster is wonderful. Absolution by William Kent Krueger is a bit creepy, David Ellis is on top of his game with The Shining Knight. This is just a sampling of what's in this collection. The talent assembled here is staggering.

Konrath has put together a great anthology, and it is jam packed with great crime fiction. This book has some for every taste. Well Done!

Jon

#### TWELVE SHARP

Janet Evanovich

2006

ISBN0-312-34948-3

St. Martin's Press

The long-awaited twelfth Stephanie Plum finds our heroine and Lula assisting Connie, the office manager interview new bounty-hunter recruits; most of whom garnered all of their experience from watching *Dog, the Bounty Hunter*. So why the need for another acquisitions agent? Because Ranger's got other things to do, and the skips are piling up. Between the nuts who crawl out of the woodwork and the skips who are trying to crawl back under the woodwork, our intrepid bounty ladies have quite the time keeping their dignity. OK, forget the dignity.

Evanovich has kept that flavor that is Stephanie Plum and introduced a few new characters while working on a darker than usual story line. A young girl is kidnapped and a woman murdered; and Ranger is Suspect #1. Things look very, very bad. As Stephanie is targeted, tailed, shadowed, stalked and hunted, she does her best to lure the kidnapper into the open.

This will be welcomed by fans of the series—it has all of the touches one has come to expect. However, it seemed a quicker read than 310 pages would warrant, and felt slightly flatter and lacked that high-velocity crackle that defines a Stephanie Plum. While normally sharing the workload between the two, this one depended less on its plotline and more on nutty characters showing up and doing something wacky. No matter. It's still a hoot, and ya gotta love that Plum girl.

Kathleen Tromp

#### THE UP AND UP

Lee Irby

2006

ISBN 0-385-51500-6

Doubleday

Lee Irby is out to show the readers of current Florida mysteries that crime in the Sunshine State didn't start in the 1980's. In *The Up and Up*, Frank Hearn makes his second appearance. The first being in *7,000 Clams*. Frank is in Florida for various reasons, not the least of which is trying to reform from his bootlegger, criminal past. It's 1928, Florida is ripe for development and rife with rip off artists of various stripe. Gloria Swanson, Harvey Firestone, Calvin Coolidge, the Mayor of Miami's son, three beautiful women, dirty cops and some heavy duty crooks are all playing out their own situations most of which seem to have Frank Hearn, either intentionally or not, as the axle on which they turn.

Mr. Irby is a history teacher infatuated with Florida and the times. He knows his subject from two cent stamps to which hotels served watered down alcohol despite prohibition. Using the slang of the day, he turns a tough guy phrase, and delivers his physical violence in short sharp paragraphs that Floridian Hemmingway would have appreciated. The pace is fast. The plot is busy but comes together nicely. In *The Up and Up* Lee Irby delivers another enjoyable read.

Dave Biemann

#### VENETIAN HOLIDAY

David Campbell

2006

ISBN 0-312-34990-4

Thomas Dunne Books

What an incredibly fun book! The action begins on page one and doesn't let up till you've finished it all. It's a typical day in Venice, except that someone -- make that several someones -- are trying to steal a fake Mona Lisa and failing miserably. Add

in a grumpy police inspector, a greedy criminal mastermind, a voodoo heiress, an un-dead monk and his fellow friars, a hit man, plus more chase scenes than you can count, and you have a book worthy of a reading late into the night. Kate Fujimori is a thief with plenty of flaws but lots to love, as is Inspector Lemons, who is liked by no one (in the book) and truly doesn't care. The Venitian details are wonderful with the descriptions of the city and its artwork, and the plot is full of so many twists and turns you can't help but flip the page and laugh when things turn out differently than you expect. I was enchanted and entertained by every word in this lively story. I will be on the lookout for more books from Campbell!

Judy Clemens

#### THE VENUS FIX

M. J. Rose

2006

ISBN: 0-7783-2317-X

Mira Books

M.J. Rose presents us with the third book in her Butterfield Institute series, *THE VENUS FIX*. Dr. Morgan Snow, sex therapist, returns for another reluctant battle with murder. In *THE VENUS FIX* Dr. Snow has an anonymous, yet prestigious client who is addicted to internet-porn. She also is facilitating a therapy group for teens with internet porn issues.

During this, Dr. Snow struggles with the ethics in her relationship with Noah Jordain, the detective she is dating, and whose cases keep "bumping" into her client-doctor "privilege." While all of this is going on, young women are dying live, on-line while people are watching them on sex websites.

*THE VENUS FIX* takes on a contemporary issue, and does a profound job of not falling into any gender, ethnic or income stereotypes or traps. The characters felt, for the most part, like real people. Dr. Snow continues to struggle as "mom" despite all of her education and therapy experience. She also vacillates in her personal relationships.

The story is well developed and interplays well with all of her and the other's issues. It flows smoothly to an ending that makes one want to read the next in the series.

Sandi Loper-Herzog

#### VICES OF MY BLOOD

Maureen Jennings

2006

ISBN 13: 978-0-7710-4376-5

McClelland & Stewart

The sixth in Jennings' Detective Murdoch series, *Vices of My Blood* opens as Murdoch is contemplating his recent promotion and his fiancée's extended absence; he's not as happy as he'd like to be about the former, and not as concerned as he should be about the latter. So Murdoch's almost relieved to have a nice, difficult case to sink his teeth into: the murder of a popular Presbyterian minister, the Reverend Charles Howard. Set in Toronto during the last few years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, *Vices of My Blood* paints a compelling portrait of late-Victorian society as it presents an intriguing murder mystery. Constrained by society's conventions, Murdoch is doggedly determined to follow his investigation wherever it leads, no matter which members of polite society may be inconvenienced. And he's willing to use any tool at his disposal, including going under cover with a pair of disreputable con artists. Murdoch is an engaging protagonist, ahead of his times in the way he thinks, both about his profession and his private life. As the investigation takes him down dangerous and confusing paths, Murdoch resists easy conclusions to find a killer who'll stop at nothing to escape capture, and learns that love can be found in the most unusual places. Jennings's writing is as engaging as is her protagonist, and it's a joy to have discovered this fine series.

Rae Helmsworth

#### A WEDDING TO DIE FOR

Radine Trees Nehring

2006

ISBN 978-1-931206-01-3

St. Kitt's Press

Fourth in the "To Die For" series featuring Carrie McCrite, 60ish. Set in Eureka Springs, Arkansas, in the present, where she and retired police officer Hank King have decided to get married. Carrie wants a real wedding, this time, complete with white dress, church and flowers--well, flowers might be a problem. At the historic Crescent Hotel where weddings are the norm, two florists are dueling for the lucrative business.

Carrie finds a body, and is nearby when someone is shot at, and when a bomb goes off. This is carrying competitiveness a little too far! To further hamper Carrie's plans, there's the matter of the ghost bride in red who lurks around the hotel. Carrie enlists her two girlfriends to clear these matters up before the wedding.

Carrie finds herself in danger, and fears she might end up like the body she found.

The story is told in alternating POV from Carrie to Hank, and each has a distinct voice. They show themselves to be a loving couple, and looking forward to their second marriage--if both survive long enough.

Nehring's list of acknowledgements reveal how much research she did, and the story definitely shows this attention to detail.

Others in the series are: *Valley to Die For*; *A Treasure to Die For*; and *Music to Die For*.

A beautiful cover by Cat Rahmeier.

gay toltl kinman

#### WHEN THE DEVIL HOLDS THE CANDLE

Karin Fossum

July 2006 (US)

ISBN 13: 978-0-15-101188-9

Harcourt

Karin Fossum writes novels of psychological suspense; the action is as much in the minds of her deeply layered characters as it is in the physical resolution of the crime under investigation. In *When the Devil Holds the Candle*, Fossum explores the effect of secrets on relationships: their impact on the people and events they touch. Police Inspector Konrad Sejer and his colleague, Jacob Skarre, are the recurring characters in this story, set in an unnamed Norwegian town. But the most compelling voice belongs to Irma Funder, a woman who is one of society's outcasts. We discover early in the story that Irma's is a unique, disturbing, and disturbed personality. There's probably a clever medical term for the forces that drive her, but all Irma knows is that she's alone – has always been alone, from the moment in her sixth year when she realized that she was unloved and unwanted, and that society would forever cage her within its faulty perception of her: "There in the kitchen, in the yellow-green light, at the age of six, I lost my freedom." Reclusive, prickly, and paranoid, Irma has a secret. It is, perhaps, inevitable that her life should collide with that of Andreas Winther, a shallow but beautiful youth whose own secrets drive him to a life of self-indulgence and petty crime with his not-too-bright sidekick, Zipp. The results of that collision set Sejer and Skarre an almost impossible task: to conduct an investigation around people who are more interested in keeping their secrets than they are in seeing justice done. Or, maybe, justice has been done, and society's laws are an unnecessary hindrance to the appropriate order of things. These complicated social and moral issues make for a fascinating, compelling, and highly recommended read.

Rae Helmsworth

#### WICKED BREAK

Jeff Shelby

2006

ISBN:0525949542

Dutton

Shelby wowed readers last year with his debut novel, *KILLER SWELL*, 2006 sees the sequel *WICKED BREAK* doing the same. Noah Braddock is a kick ass tough guy PI and definitely a part of a new wave of ass kicking heroes.

This book opens with Noah taking what looks to be a typical missing persons case. Except that the person missing has stolen money from some very pissed of violent people. (thus the need to be missing). Noah takes a few hits and gives a few back in the search for this younger brother of his buddy Peter. And while the story picks up speed like a Harley on an open stretch of road it pulls the reader along for the ride. Excitement right to the end.

Shelby is a great new writer and I think this series is terrific. I can't wait till the next book. Seriously, I want it right now. Jeff, are you reading this? Get writing!

Jon

#### WINTER'S CHILD

Margaret Maron

2006

ISBN 0-89296-810-9

Mysterious Press

I read this in one sitting. Not too surprising, Maron always delivers a good story. Set in the present, this story has more of the POV of Judge Deborah Knott's new husband, Deputy Sheriff Dwight Bryant, as he searches for his eight-year-old son. The boy was last seen with his mother. If not, who is the woman who took him and why?

Shayville, Virginia, is a small town but big enough for the boy to disappear even though everyone is on the lookout for him. While following every clue, they determine the boy's mother may have had a secret life that offered her a lot of money.

Two murder investigations are going on at the same time. One is in Bryant's jurisdiction in North Carolina, which he left to find his son. He still keeps tabs on the case.

What is important to both cases, and what isn't, is what Dwight sifts through, trying to quell his panic about his son's disappearance.

gay toltl kinman

#### THE WRONG HOSTAGE

Elizabeth Lowell

2006

ISBN 978-0-06-082981-0

William Morrow

Starting off in the romance genre with POV switches and electric touches, this story is pure suspense. Don't start it at bedtime if you want to turn out the light soon.

Federal Judge Grace Silva knows that her philandering former husband Ted has placed their troubled son in a Catholic school in Mexico. What she didn't know was that he is a hostage until Ted delivers on the investment he promised, something in the vicinity of fifty million dollars to drug lords who control the school.

They demand that she tell them where Ted is. Although she hasn't heard from him in three weeks, they don't believe her. They give her twenty-four hours, otherwise her son will be killed. She has no doubt that they will keep their promise.

Silva contacts a former lover, Joe Faroe, who is a kidnap specialist.

The feds, American and Mexican, are also looking for Ted.

Silva enters Faroe's shadowy world of high-tech equipment guns, double-crosses, and vicious killers, as they travel back and forth across the border between Tijuana and San Diego while being followed and harassed. Every encounter is a struggle for survival.

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