

AIR: LETTERS FROM LOST COUNTRIES (Vertigo Comics) is the first volume of a new series by hot newcomer G. Willow Wilson (CAIRO) and artist M.K.Perker. Blythe is a flight attendant and has developed a strange fear of heights after surviving an incident on a plane. As she gets back in the saddle she meets a strange man who will change her life and lead her to wonderful and mysterious adventures. Secret countries and secret societies and loads of intrigue. This is a damn cool book.

BLACK DOGS (Three Rivers Press) by Jason Buhmester is the first crime fiction book I've read to use Led Zeppelin as a plot point, and it is a true rock and roll book. BLACK DOGS is based on the true story of a missing \$203,000 of Zeppelin's money after a performance at Madison Square Garden. Wonderfully fresh and highly entertaining this was unmitigated fun from start to finish.

BLACK EYES AND BLUE BLOOD (Mainstream Publishing(UK)) by Norman Johnson and Michael O'Rourke is an autobiography of the life and times of London gangster "Scouse" Norman Johnson. The book immediately has the advantage over true crime books of gangland tales in that here we get it right from the man himself. Johnson moved into criminal activities in the 1950's and led an extraordinarily interesting life. This is a fascinating tale and one I think fans of crime fiction should read, the real thing is fascinating.

Nevada Barr and Anna Pigeon return in **BORDERLINE**(GP Putnam), the latest masterpiece in this wonderful series. Set in Big Bend national park in Texas are on vacation, rafting and relaxing. At least for a while... Anyone who has read Barr knows it's only a matter of time before trouble finds Anna, and it has, in spades. Fast paced with nothing but perfect research this is a great summer book.

SOHO Constable has another winner on it's hands with **CAMBRIDGE BLUE** by Alison Bruce. A suspenseful and insightful novel that follows Detective Constable Gary Goodhew as he investigates a series of murders that maybe hitting a little too close to home. The writing is tight and the story is full of local flavor and wonderfully paced. Alison Bruce has the goods. This is the first of a series so get on board with book one.

A.E.Roman's **CHINATOWN ANGEL**(Minotaur Books) is one of those books that seems to envelope you as you read, wrapping you in atmosphere and tension. Chico Santana is PI in New York and his life is less than perfect. Chico is working a missing persons case which soon turns from easy money to life threatening and like a Russian nesting doll, each clue only leads to more questions drawing him in deeper and deeper. Early word on the book is saying this is a must read for 2009, and we agree.

Michael Slade seems to be one of those author's we love but no one else has read. His series with the Special X division of the Canadian Mounties is amazing. His latest is **CRUCIFIED**(Severn House) and it's a new series. A construction site in Germany turns up a strange discovery, a World War II bomber that disappeared during a secret mission. The pilot's granddaughter wants to know what really happened and turns to lawyer and historian and best selling author Wyatt Rook for help getting answers. The secrets take Rook through all facets of religion from the crusades to the resurrection of Christ. And the deeper he gets the more apparent it is that there are those who want secrets to remain secret. Amazing book.

DANTE'S NUMBERS (Delecorte) by David Hewson is his first book to have series character Nic Costa, Rome Police Detective, in the US. A crime at a movie premiere in Rome brings his hunt to San Francisco and has him unraveling clues involving Hitchcock's film Vertigo and the nine circles of Hell from Dante's Inferno. Top notch suspense in this thriller and it will be a perfect summer read.

Gillian Flynn made a splash with SHARP OBJECTS last year, and her new book should cement her place in the great authors of crime fiction. **DARK PLACES** (Shaye Areheart Books) is just what it sounds like, dark. Libby Day watched her family murdered and saw her brother jailed for it. 25 years later a strange group called The Kill Club want details and Libby sees a chance to make money from them. But more than just bringing old memories to the surface she may have awakened something much more sinister. Clever, engrossing and disturbing this was an amazing read.

DILLINGER'S WILD RIDE (Oxford University Press) by Elliott J. Gorn is out just in time to capitalize on the new Dillinger movie starring Johnny Depp. The movie, Public Enemies, is based on a book by the same name (and we reviewed it and loved it). If you are a fan of the gangsters and wild men who were part outlaw part folk hero you will enjoy this, there is a lot here that is interesting and Gord did a nice job putting it all together. It focuses on the year falling in 1933 and 1934. As most good true crime books it includes photos, and for me that's worth half the price of admission. Worth checking out.

The Carolyn Haines series featuring Sarah Booth has its latest installment out in June. **GREEDY BONES** (Minotaur

Books) has Sarah facing a possible plague, an infestation of boll weevils and plenty of down home secrets. Always entertaining Haines delivers once again in this perfect summer read.

THE HUNTED (Minotaur books) by Wayne Barcomb is called a thriller right on the cover, and while it is thrilling, what really grabbed me was the sheer volume of tension and suspense in this book. A young girl witness a horrific crime and her court appearance puts the bad guy away, for a while. Jump ahead 18 years and we have a very pissed off ex-con on the hunt for the girl who was responsible for locking him up. A sleep with the lights on book.

Another book coming in June is the latest John Ceepak from Chris Grabenstein. **MIND SCRAMBLER** (Minotaur Books) is another great addition to this series, and this time out Ceepak and Boyle find themselves in Atlantic City, and before long they are involved in a murder case. High octane action and great plotting make this a don't miss book.

Julie Kramer's second book, **MISSING MARK**(Doubleday) is every bit as entertaining as her first, and even more intriguing. Coming in July Riley Spartz is back and as ever in search of a story to tell in her job as a television reporter. Intrigued by a want ad for a brides dress Riley soon finds herself on the trail of a man who went missing the day he was to get married. Kramer fills the book with wonderful characters and a story that never quits. A new star in the mystery skies, Kramer will be one to watch as she get s better with each book.

OUT AT NIGHT(Minotaur Books) is Susan Arnout Smith's follow up to her smash debut **THE TIMER GAME**. Grace Descanso is on vacation from her job as a crime scene tech with her daughter when she is contacted by the FBI. When a Professor is found dead and Grace's name is on his phone the FBI got curious, and Grace joins the investigation to find out what's going on. A terrific fast paced thriller this is a memorable book and for fans of books that move at break neck speed.

Jerry Stahl is a hot name in the Hollywood arena right now, a writer for CSI among other things, he has also written a book about Fatty Arbuckle which has been optioned by Johnny Depp. His latest novel is **PAIN KILLER** (William Morrow) and it's a rocket ride to Hell. Ex-Cop Manny Rupert is a troubled man trying to set his life back on track, and as part of this he takes an undercover gig which may lead him to one of the most screwed up people to ever walk the planet, Joseph Mengele. Fast, dark, and at times disturbing this was a very satisfying read to offset the annoying sunny day.

PALOS VERDES BLUE (Pegasus) is a book with many layers and author John Shannon does a wonderful job not only writing a terrific mystery, but exploring social and economic issues with this book. Jack Liffey is an LA native with a knack for finding kids who go missing. A friend of his ex-wife needs Jack to locate her missing teenager and it brings Liffey to Palos Verdes, a tranquil looking place that is anything but as local residents try to terrorize anyone not local. Gritty and dark this is an intense and remarkable read.

PATIENT ZERO (St. Martin's Griffin) is a hell of a book moving at lightning speed and puts Jonathan Mayberry right at the top of the list of great thriller writers. Joe Ledger is a detective working in a unit called DMS (Department of Military Science) and he's got his hands full working against the clock to stop a bio terrorist attack which has already let a dead terrorist rise from the dead. This is high adventure/action fiction on speed.

In 1969 Bill Pronzini wrote his first story to feature the Nameless detective, now 40 years later book number 36 is out. **SCHEMERS** (Forge)is yet another top notch PI book from this Grand Master. Running with two cases in this book we have Nameless trying to solve a locked room mystery involving the theft of 8 books from a collector's assemblage of detective fiction (right up my alley), and one of Nameless's operatives is working on a case of intimidation against two brothers. Pronzini really is one of those amazing authors who never fails to write a great book, I think this one is one of his best.

SEX, THUGS AND ROCK & ROLL (Kensington) is the second anthology from Thuglit.com's Todd Robinson and it is a punch right to the gut. Hardcore and hardboiled these stories will leave you wincing, smiling and wanting a shower and all the while you'll be begging for more. Outstanding collection featuring stories from among others; Joe Lansdale, Marcus Sakey and Allan Guthrie. I don't know if I should hug Robinson or punch him. – Jon

Mo Hayder is one of our favorites here at Crimespree Central and her latest book, **SKIN** (Bantam UK) is another in her Walking Man series. A number of seemingly unrelated cases have the police's attention rather scattered, but DI Jack Caffey sees something he thinks the others are missing and it could lead him to one of the darkest places he's been. Once again Hayder has written a book that will make you want to leave the lights on and have you squirming while you read. Pure genius.

TURN COAT (ROC) is the latest Dresden Files book from Jim Butcher. Harry Dresden, wizard investigator has to face a nightmare, his chief persecutor needs his help. There is a traitor on the White Council and Harry needs to find out who it is before they find him. Butcher is at his usual best here in the highly enjoyable series.

THE VENETIAN JUDGMENT (G.P.Putnam) sees the return of Micah Dalton in this third book from David Stone. This is another action packed thriller that actually is even more fast paced than the previous two books. Dalton is an Ex-CIA "cleaner" and is doing his best to keep it together. He hears voices and guilt tends to make him do things he shouldn't. He is also a trouble magnet. Taking care of a few loose ends from his previous adventure (in THE ORPHEUS DECEPTION) he finds himself working with the CIA to find a mole. If there is an heir to Robert Ludlum, he's not writing the Bourne books, he is David Stone.

Full Reviews:

AFTERSHOCK & OTHERS (Anthology)

F. Paul Wilson

2009

Forge

Wilson has written over forty novels. Somehow that wasn't enough to contain this genius author's words. This short story collection has nineteen including a wonderful new Repairman Jack story.

The stories within have a little bit of everything and should satisfy every reader. Some of my favorites include "Lying Toward Bethlehem", a story with a unique view point, the wonderful Repairman Jack in "Interlude at Duane's", and "The Sex Slaves of the Dragon Tong", a story that could have been right at home in the pulps.

Wilson is a great writer and his skill with short stories is equal to his talent with novels. This great collection should be a must have for every fan of crime fiction and great action.

Jon Jordan

ALL THE COLORS OF DARKNESS

Peter Robinson

2009

Wm. Morrow

The deaths, about which much of the plot of Peter Robinson's newest Inspector Banks novel revolves, occur just before the opening pages. A particularly brutal murder is soon followed by the apparent suicide of the prime suspect. All the evidence points to that sequence of events, with none indicating the presence of any third person. The two men had been lovers, and the subsequent investigation turns up photos of the murder victim with another man, the conclusion being obvious: A 'simple case' of extreme jealousy, rage, and remorse. Banks remains unconvinced of that scenario, however, based solely on a nagging suspicion that there is more here than meets the eye. The discovery of a business card which had been in the possession of one of the dead men on which is printed a phone number which does not exist and so much effort is taken to ensure that the case is closed with no further investigation. There is the feeling of an Othello analogy at play.

Othello is the current production of the amateur theater group performing at the Eastvale Theater, where the suicide victim worked. When Banks attends the play with his girlfriend, he describes it to her as being about 'jealousy, betrayal, envy, ambition, greed, lust, revenge . . . All the colors of darkness.' Of the murder victim, he is told others only saw "a small part of him. The rest was shades of darkness, shadows, smoke and mirrors." And, as the end of the book nears, Banks perceives "all of it nothing but a distortion of the darkness he was beginning to believe lay at the center of everything."

On a lighter note, part of his investigation brings the DCI to the office of a pretty private investigator who, upon meeting Banks, exclaims with delight: "Are you Brian Banks' father?" This is a first for Banks, whose son is a guitar player in a rock band and apparently somewhat of a rock hero.

When DI Annie Cabbot says to her superior "We have to pursue the truth," she is told "Since when? That's a luxury we can ill afford." The novel deals with the unexpected and perhaps unintended consequences of lies told, or matters otherwise misconstrued. The author, celebrating the 21st anniversary of the first Inspector Banks novel, never fails to deliver a book filled with gorgeous prose.

Gloria Feit

ANDEAN EXPRESS

Juan de Recacoechea (trans. Adrian Althoff)

April 2009

Akashic Books

Another beautifully written book from Akashic. ANDEAN EXPRESS is, to some degree, the homage to Agatha Christie that you'd think it to be. It has all the classic trappings of a murder mystery with a nuance of humor that should please her fans. This is Christie with a modern, noir edge.

The Andean Express cuts through the Andes carrying an eclectic group of passengers towards La Paz. This motley crew is made up of a helpful madam, a priest with a hidden agenda, a honeymooning couple (the much older groom is a mine-

owner and the very beautiful young wife, Guiletta), the brides mother, the owner of a cabaret, a cripple and our lead, Ricardo Beintigoitia, a vacationing high school graduate. He can't help but be beguiled by Guiletta and can't understand why she is with the cantankerous old man, Alderete. She tells him it is a complicated story. And indeed it is. A story steeped in money, hatred and revenge. Yet somehow this has little to do with the first murder. As Ricardo collects stories, back-stories and snippets of venom from his fellow rail riders, a poker game brings our cast together. Anger flows with the alcohol and the night will see another murder victim with a train full of suspects.

Bolivian de Recacochea takes two days and turns them into a slideshow of life in the late 1950's. Snappy and poignant, this is a fast and satisfying read.

Jen Jordan

BAD THINGS

Michael Marshall

May 2009

William Morrow

You've read *THE INTRUDERS* or *THE STRAW MEN*. You know the kind of book Marshall writes. The kind that crawls into your head while you're reading it and stays well after you've closed the covers. They are deeply disturbing books that leave the reader thinking thoughts that would make Dr. Phil throw his hands up in despair.

John Henderson witnessed his four-year-old son Scott from his window as the boy headed for a pier on the family property. Worried, he ran to the boy only to watch helplessly as the worst case scenario happened. After staring at something behind his father with horror. The boy falls into the lake. There is no reason for the boy's death. He was fate was sealed before he hit that water.

Three years later and John lives far away from where the tragedy happened, without his wife and surviving daughter. He waits on the summer crowd on the beach in Oregon, leading a disposable existence. But he receives an email that changes all of that. It says, simply, "I know what happened." This sentence is enough to draw him back to the Black Ridge where he revisits the old tragedy and is drawn into a new one. As he opens the town's old wound, something seeps out that threatens John and the people whose lives he has briefly touched in his quest for the truth. And the truth decides to come looking for him.

This is a creepy, well written book that even the savviest reader can expect surprises from.

Jen Jordan

THE BATTERED BODY

J. B. Stanley

March 2009

Midnight Ink

Who couldn't love a woman who says on TV--"Would you rather eat this lemon meringue layer cake with a filling of cream and strawberries, or a rubber chicken from Lean Cuisine?"

Someone doesn't love her, and it's not any of the staff of Lean Cuisine.

The Diva of Dough, Paulette Martine, is planning to prepare the wedding feast for her sister, Milla. Narrator James, is a fun character to be with--a librarian and foodie, he's happy his crusty father, Jackson, is marrying the fun-loving Milla--on one hand. On the other, he has to look for a place to live, which turns out to be another story.

It's Christmas time in Quincy's Gap, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley.

Lucy, a deputy sheriff who is James' current girlfriend, along with three others form the Supper Club, which is the title of the series. With their combined talents, they are able to solve mysteries.

Paulette died covered with batter. Supposedly she had a stroke while making the wedding cake. James believes she was murdered, but that question won't be answered until the lab tests come back. The list of suspects is thick as a recipe book, for Paulette thrived on aggravating people--big time.

If you like baking, or baked goods, as much as James, this is the book for you--full of wonderful descriptions of food, as well as recipes, such as Sweet Potato Pecan Pie, Hot Buttered Rum, and Eggnog Cake. Each chapter is named after a food, and the wedding cake design at the beginning of each chapter holds the number of calories for a piece of that food. Cozy, with a high caloric content. Figure on ten pounds plus after you read this book, even if you don't ingest a morsel of food during the reading!

Gay Toltl Kinman

BEAT THE REAPER

Josh Bazell

2009

Random House UK

This debut novel certainly has an engaging premise. Peter Brown is a medical intern working in the emergency room of a

New York City hospital. He's also a man with secrets. Deadly ones. Which is why he's currently in the U.S. Federal Witness Protection Program. Brown's history is revealed in flashbacks over the course of the narrative, exposed like a congealed wound being stripped of its dressing. It seems that Bazell's protagonist used to be a hit man, Pietro "The Bearclaw" Brnwa. He got into the murder-for-hire business as a teenager, after his own family was killed by mooks who were trying to get a leg up in organized crime. After exacting revenge on his family's slayers--thanks to some assistance from a mob attorney whose son, affectionately referred to as "Skin flick," Peter had gotten to know--our "hero" wins jobs working with the bent-nose set in New Jersey. Finally, though, he decides to get out of the biz and acquire a new identity, under which he begins training for a medical career on the opposite side of the Hudson River. However, one night Brown runs into a dying mobster at the hospital, who recognizes him. Not unexpectedly, this leads to trouble. Lots of it. Hip, violent, and funny, *BEAT THE REAPER* is a very engaging and furiously fast read. It has an interesting view on life and death, and is not merely frothy entertainment. It has heart
Ali Karim

BLUE SMOKE AND MURDER

Elizabeth Lowell

2009

Avon

St. Kilda Consulting has been described by the author as 'a multinational company whose purpose is to help people when governments can't - or won't - get the job done.' In Elizabeth Lowell's books, St. Kilda is hired by the good guys. This novel brings in what might be described as St. Kilda's evil twin, headed by someone referred to only as "Score," the identity of whose client is not revealed.

When Jill Breck, a river guide who describes herself as "a river bum, following the seasons down Western rivers, teaching kayaking and rafting and wilderness survival skills," saves the life of her client's 16-year-old son while running the Colorado River, she earns the deep gratitude of that client. Nothing unusual there, but this client is Joe Faroe, one of the guys who heads up St. Kilda's. So when Jill's life is threatened, she takes Joe up on his offer of 'any time, any where' and asks for his help. That help is provided, among other ways, by assigning Zach Balfour to protect Jill and find out who wants her dead, if, that is, he, she or they cannot otherwise obtain twelve paintings which may -or may not - have been painted by a now-dead painter whose work has become increasingly popular and unbelievably valuable, selling for amounts in seven figures.

Jill's aunt, who had been in possession of the paintings and saw them as Jill's heritage, was burned to death on her ranch in Arizona, the beauty of which is well-drawn in the author's evocative prose. I had been unaware of the influence in that part of the country of the Mormon church, but that, as well as fascinating glimpses of the worlds of art and art fraud, are among the things brought to the attention of the reader so vividly here. As Zach tells Jill, "Art is like everything else. It's worth what someone's willing to pay for it. Period. In order to make people pay more, much more, auctioneers and experts churn out a lot of blue smoke. The painting being flogged doesn't change from once decade to the next. Only the volume and quality of blue smoke varies. And the price of the art . . . In art, context is everything."

Gloria Feit

BONE BY BONE

Carol O'Connell

2008

Putnam

Carol O'Connell is the writer of the famous and infamous Mallory series. Few could write a series with a true sociopath as its central figure and manage to make us care. So we've picked at what works and what doesn't but always we've realized that the writing which takes us out of time and space and draws us onto the page is amazing. Last year I pled with readers to not forget *FIND ME* when they weighed the best of the year. December releases are so easily forgotten.

This December, Putnam released a book featuring new characters, a new direction and the same outstanding sense of time, place and personality. *BONE BY BONE* begins as two dispelled citizens of the community of Coventry return home. Coventry has presented grand vistas for tourists for a hundred years and kept the secrets of its dwellers for the same amount of time. When the bones of the young Josh Hobbs are returned to his father one at a time twenty years after he's disappeared, it is time to call the other son home.

Up on the cliff, man and wife oversee the unfolding events. A powerful lawyer and his alcoholic wife watch the past rear up to reach them through the voyeuristic lens of both binoculars and telescope. Their daughter is home for the first time in twenty years and is a part of the story.

As we read towards climatic showdowns at the Annual Birthday Ball for Mrs. Sarah Winston, Ms. O'Connell strips away the secrets and lies of a town full of people as definitively as the young Joshua did with the camera lens twenty years ago. Tragedy is not done in Coventry. The talented O'Connell has written a remarkable work once again & I will not ask you to remember *BONE BY BONE* for awards most certainly due. I'll ask you to remember to read this book and enjoy a

captivating story by one of America's fiction artisans. Craftsmanship like this should be shared amongst all who love our genre.

Ruth

THE BOOK OF MURDER

Guillermo Martinez

2008

Viking

Martinez, author of THE OXFORD MURDERS, tells this compelling tale with an anonymous narrator who gets to the heart of a mystery foretold to be a book that is never finished.

Contacted by a woman who had transcribed his own book for him when his arm was broken, our narrator is dubious when she tells him her story. After her work with him had finished, she returned to work for Argentina's now leading mystery writer, Kloster; a man that is known and read by anyone that picks up a book. Luciana is desperate. Possibly crazy. How else can it be that the people that she loves most in the world lose their lives after the bitter end of her secretarial work with the brilliant Kloster?

Listed as accidents, Luciana reveals that the deaths are identical to those in an as yet unpublished work of Kloster's. No one will listen to her story and the narrator is her last hope of stopping Kloster before what little is left of her family comes to harm. Her claims sound impossible. Unreal. But they are fostered by Kloster's hatred of Luciana. He blames her for the death of his only daughter and the break-up of his marriage. The narrator feels there is no choice but to face Kloster himself. This only makes Luciana seem crazier. But it also seems that Kloster could actually be angry enough to do what she claims.

THE BOOK OF MURDER merges revenge, possibility and deception into a unsettling and exceptional book.

Jen Jordan

BOSS OF BOSSES

Clare Longrigg

2009

Thomas Dunne

This is a non-fiction book about a mob boss in Sicily, one Bernardo Provenzano, who wiggled away from capture for over forty years. Longrigg is a journalist who has written two other books about the mafia and she does a wonderful job with the research. It tells a tale of the rise of a boss and what he did to get there. The threads of his power long and far-reaching. This is a fascinating book and if true crime and the Cosa Nostra intrigue you, you should definitely check this out.

Jon

BREAKING POINT

John Macken

2009

Bantam Press UK

BREAKING POINT is one of those wonderful novels that starts with two plots running together and manages to keep everything clear and exciting. This is another book featuring Macken's character Rueben Maitland, now an ex CID detective.

Maitland's specialty was behavioral profiling and he was working on a system to predict behavior based on DNA. His old co-workers are furthering the work but misusing it and Maitland feels compelled to stop them. He also gets caught up in the hunt for a killer who is targeting victims in the London Underground system. Tension builds as Maitland tries to stop the rogue cops from abusing his theories, by pushing people to the brink they cause the people to break and actually become the psychopaths they want to catch. Maitland is a wonderful protagonist, growing with each book, some very human flaws, but defiantly the guy you want working your case.

Macken has the science down cold and writes in a way that is utterly believable and yet never dull, no mean feat. He also writes suspense like nobody's business and I could not put this book down. By the time I finished my neck was tense and I was worn out, in a good way. Macken once again writes a fantastic novel.

Jon Jordan

BURN NOTICE: THE END GAME

Tod Goldberg

2009

Obsidian

I, for one, do not get enough adventures of Michael Westen by watching Burn Notice on USA network. I love these books. Tod Goldberg is right in tune and actually maybe even more in tune than the show's writers with Westen.

The latest, THE END GAME, has Michael going undercover in high society and entering a yacht race. His client is part of the Hurricane Cup, but needs to lose to save his family. As we know, Michael doesn't take well to kidnapers and their ilk and it can't end well for them.

Goldberg has such a wonderful flare to his writing and this series really lets it show. He's made these characters his own and really devised a wonderful plot and story. Even if you don't watch the show (though you should!) you need to read these books.

Jon Jordan

DEAD AND GONE

Charlaine Harris

May 2009

Ace

Sookie is back and if you thought things in Bon Temps were out of control before....

Sookie Stackhouse, that wonderful character brought to life by Charlaine Harris on the page and now finding a secondary life on HBO has long been a favorite in my house, in my family, amongst my friends. Harris manages, with a lightness of pen to always bring an A-1 plot, great characters, a bit of the woo, a lot of grief and a hope that is not matched by any other writer writing today.

Which doesn't mean this is a "lite read". Just note the title DEAD AND GONE. DEAD AND GONE opens with the Wereneimals following the lead of the Vampires and announcing themselves to their human cohabitants. Response is visceral and all over the map. A close friend is immediately affected and soon the horror comes even closer to home. Meanwhile the slowly dissolving secret surrounding Sookie's telepathy causes threats to our heroine's way of life and perhaps even life itself.

Okay, I've covered chapter 1. For long time fans you'll be happy to know there are moments of romance, forwarding of the story surrounding her gift, moments of great sacrifice and grand betrayal as we sort out the death of someone we all know.

Harris once again uses her fangtastical characters to parallel issues of intolerance in our time but the moment in this book for me is an incomprehensible attack upon our heroine. It is with tenderness that Charlaine writes these passages.

Conveying the horror of personal violence with a sensibility that allows her reader to not look away as this most beloved character goes through that which nightmares are made of. It is another remarkable note in a remarkable career. Long may she write.

Ruth Jordan

DEATH AND THE LIT CHICK

G. M. Malliet

2009

Midnight Ink

The story is told from multiple viewpoints.

Detective Chief Inspector Arthur St. Just, the series character, with his companion-assistant Portia De'Ath (yes!), a criminologist and a crime writer, are the sleuths.

The fun part of the book is that it's set at the Dead on Arrival Mystery Writers Conference in fictitious Dalmorton castle in Edinburgh.

Prolific and bestselling author of chick lit, Kimberlee Kalder is considering switching agents, which doesn't make her current one happy. And she manages to make several attendees unhappy with her vicious remarks about their writing, among other things. And those at the mystery writing conference are most intriguing characters!

As we learn more about Kimberlee, it's a mystery why she wasn't murdered much earlier in her career.

At the front of the book, the author has a list of the characters and their place the story, and very helpful.

Gay Toltl Kinman

DEVIL'S GARDEN

Ace Atkins

April 09

G.P. Putnam

"Ace Atkins writes rings around most of the names in the crime field" Elmore Leonard

Nope. Sorry Dutch. What Atkins continues to do with his voice is create in centric circles of plot with a kaleidoscope of prose. This to my mind makes Ace Atkins one of the most refreshing and absorbing novelists of his time.

DEVIL'S GARDEN is a love story, a mystery, a history and an homage to not only one of Atkins favorite cities but also to the young man Sam Hammett, a junior PI at Pinkerton's who would evolve into Dashiell Hammett...one of Noir's cornerstones and one of Atkins' inspirations as he sat down to write fiction for the very first time.

The story? You may remember the notorious end to Fatty Arbuckle's career in Hollywood. A drunken weekend in Frisco and a murder charge. You may even remember that the case was given the full-blown "yellow" treatment by William

Randolph Hearst and his newspaper monopoly but did you know one of the detectives chasing down leads for the defense was the young Sam Hammett?

Three threads of story.... A city with a personality all its own... the story writes itself, right? In Atkins capable hands it certainly seems that way. About the time John Jake's gave me the history of Hearst and Ms. Davies I was quite sure I never needed to read this history again. I was wrong. I was also wrong in thinking I was done with Arbuckle's tale. The real payday here is seeing the young Hammett walk through one of true crimes most discussed cases of the twentieth century. For the first time I feel as though I've read the truth. Keep in mind this is a work a fiction... well researched, gently nudged , carefully polished, but fictional history in keeping with those who've done it best. Imagine Vidal, Doctorow with Hemingway's soul..... right here people in DEVIL'S GARDEN.

Ruth Jordan

DIE FOR YOU

Lisa Unger

2009

Shaye Areheart Books

Lisa Unger is another author who seems to get better and better with each book. DIE FOR YOU is an extremely well done suspense novel that just never lets go.

Isabel Raines is a successful writer living in New York with her husband, a game designer with success of his own.

Everything seems to be perfect. Since we read these kinds of books, we know something is about to hit the fan.

Husband Marcus says goodbye and leaves for work one morning and promptly disappears off the face of the earth. As she starts to look for him she finds the FBI raiding his offices where everyone is dead, the bank accounts they shared emptied and the apartment being searched. The hammer falls as it is discovered that the real Marcus Raines has been dead for years and she actually has no idea who her husband is.

Unger has proved herself to be a master of pacing and suspense and DIE FOR YOU is no exception, in fact it is the most nerve-wracking hand wringing book I've read by her to date. This truly is edge of your seat action and my whole body was tense while I read.

BUY THIS BOOK!

Jon Jordan

DMZ BLOOD IN THE GAME : VOLUME 6

Brian Wood

2009

Vertigo

No person is any one thing, they are an amalgam of various parts. Most people like to think that somewhere in there soul is a rebel, a hero, a scholar, someone of quality. And while people can and do exhibit these qualities, it's not as often as we'd like, and sometimes not for the right reasons. The trouble is we're all human, and that means being fallible, making mistakes and living with them. Sometimes people get a chance to correct mistakes, sometimes they choose to ignore them. The human condition is a funny ole thing.

It's the human condition that makes DMZ such a great book. Brian Wood has created a fictional place that is all too real and all too human. Our guide through this place is Matty Roth, a reporter by accident in the middle of a demilitarized zone that is at the center of a civil war in the United States, Manhattan to be precise. Roth ended up there by a strange twist of fate, and he made the decision to stay and if possible find and show the truth. But the truth is not always easy to spot, and it looks different through different eyes. Roth gives us a look through his eyes, the eyes of an everyman in circumstances out of his control.

In BLOOD IN THE GAME the people of the DMZ are putting together a government and a candidate is rising to the top, one Paco Delgado. When the opposing sides decide to put a Government in place with candidates of their own the DMZ turns to former gansta Delgado. Roth is entranced and gets swept up in the mire of the politics putting his journalistic integrity beyond jeopardy.

Wood uses DMZ as a wonderful voice to talk about what is going on in our own world right now. It is a truly gifted writer that can make a political statement and do it while telling a completely satisfying fictional tale. And what I take away from this is that while it may be easier to sit back and lament the world around us, sometimes you need to dig deeper and find those hidden qualities that make us better humans.

DMZ goes beyond just great storytelling, it's a graphic editorial and its saying something everyone should listen to.

Jon Jordan

DUST AND SHADOW

Lyndsay Faye

April 2009

Simon & Schuster

The subtitle of this intriguing debut is: *An Account of the Ripper Killings by Dr. John H. Watson*; and yes, it's an account of Sherlock Holmes taking on Jack the Ripper, as told by the ever-faithful Dr. Watson.

In less-skilled hands, the story could have devolved into a cartoonish sort of Godzilla vs. King Kong pastiche. However, Faye's meticulous historical research and obvious knowledge of the Holmes canon give the reader a vastly entertaining literary adventure and provide excellent fodder for speculation about Jack the Ripper.

The story opens during the fall of 1888, after the first two Ripper murders have taken place. Called upon by Scotland Yard to investigate, Holmes and Watson stop at nothing to find the Ripper. In this era of CSI-inspired high-tech forensics, it's fascinating to see Holmes struggle with the rudimentary science available to him. And when an unscrupulous reporter accuses Holmes himself of being the Ripper, the stakes grow even higher.

The suspense builds up to a satisfyingly bloody end, including a few surprising twists and turns. Whether or not you're a fan of Holmes tributes, this is a book worth reading.

Rae Helmsworth

EVEN

Andrew Grant

May 2009

Minotaur Books

I love reading debut novels from new authors. We interviewed Andrew Grant last issue and The book is now out. And it's great.

EVEN opens up with David Trevelyan in New York, he's just finished a job and had his last dinner in the city before heading back to London. On the way to his hotel he spots a body in an alley and he goes to investigate. Within minutes the cops are at the mouth of the alley and quickly arrest him. Custody is passed to the FBI and David knows he's in deeper than he thought. Before long he gets a handle on what's happening and who the players are, and there are a few to watch for. It's pretty obvious that the only person he can really trust is himself and he'll need all his skills to clear his name.

EVEN is a great book and the beginning of a series, and Trevelyan is a great series character. He works for people in London that we don't talk about doing secret things. He has a no nonsense demeanor but a very even temper. Of course this doesn't mean he's not going to kick someone's ass if he needs to.

Grant writes in a style that quickly gets the reader interested and on board for the ride. The plot twists around but is never hard to follow. This book moves faster than a NASCAR on airplane fuel and the payoff while amazing, also sets up the next story.

I have a new author to add to my must read list.

Jon Jordan

FATAL LIES

Frank Tallis

2009

Random House

There are many types of psychological thrillers, but none encompass the body of knowledge which permeates this series featuring Detective Inspector Oskar Reinhardt and his friend and colleague, Max Lieberman, the psychiatrist who applies the principles of Freud, Adler, Kraft-Ebbing, *et al*, to their investigations. Set in turn-of-the-century Vienna, as the previous two novels in the series, the plot begins with a dead cadet at a military school.

The hint of sadism and bullying arises and Reinhardt suspects foul play. Additional complications, with hints of other motives, lead him and Lieberman to look further into the possibility of murder. The plot incorporates politics, history, music and social customs, in addition to giving insight into Lieberman as a person, torn by his affections for two women and analyzing himself as a person.

The author deliberately names the headmaster of the school Eichmann, laying the groundwork for an underlying theme, "The Banality of Evil": how ordinary people can be led to commit acts of brutality such as committed by the Nazis before and during World War II. In a short essay following the conclusion of the novel, Tallis expounds on the subject with significant understanding.

Gloria Feit

FIFTY GRAND

Adrian McKinty

May 2009

Henry Holt

Adrian McKinty has gathered a lot of well-earned acclaim with his first four books. With FIFTY GRAND, he's back with new characters and a larger than life story.

The story opens on a frozen lake in Wyoming; a taste of what's to come. Cutting quickly to a "Coyote crossing" gone terribly wrong the story begins to zoom in on the young woman who saves her fellow illegals. Who is Maria and why is she headed for Colorado on a preset timetable?

McKinty's gift with the Crime Novel is his ability to both unfold and accelerate the plot at the same time. That he does so with a poet's heart makes the readability factor even higher. This summer's thrillers are full of topical subject matter and FIFTY GRAND is no exception. Illegal immigration told with a refreshing point of view walks hand and hand with a narrative on today's Cuba. Not content there, McKinty tosses in a nice poke at the American elitism of celebrity and explores the literal and oblique value of life. He then wraps it all up in a timeline so tight you'll swear he wrote the book channeling the spirit of a Swiss watchmaker.

This book is a bottle of Pinot Noir amongst an array of table whites, fuller in body and richer in flavor. No wonder it sits atop a crowded reading pile at the Crimespreet office.

Ruth Jordan.

GONE TOMORROW

Lee Child

May 09

Delacorte Press(US) / Bantam Press (UK)

It's Electrifying...

Often times when an author and his main character find a groove in the collective minds of readers, there is little room for better or different or new. And sometimes when an author dares to change it up the inevitable why? Is a result. How many times have you read in a review A B+ from (insert name here) is like an A+ from anyone else. Ramble over.

Like many readers, I've long felt that if Lee Child's Reacher were to step off the pages of fiction I'd be sure to recognize him on the street. With the opening paragraphs of GONE TOMORROW I had to withdraw that assumption. A life changing subway ride opens this book and is the strongest first chapter I've read from anyone this year. Simple human behaviors dissected late at night until someone is dead and Jack Reacher is on the case. This scene is written with such élan that I knew from the get go I was going to be up too late finishing the book in one sitting.

When Reacher and other witnesses are held for accounts of what happened on the Subway, Reacher discovers one of his fellow passengers has vanished and the first glimpse that this tale may not read at face value is presented to Child's reader. Why was a woman from Virginia riding a NYC Subway after midnight? Why are the FBI, Homeland Security and a certain U.S. Senator so concerned with what she may have said on that train? Where is her son? And who are the mother and daughter holed up in one of New York's finest hotels?

Child takes his reader through atrocities past and present as Reacher navigates towards answers the military doesn't want found. We meet people in GONE TOMORROW that we want to meet again and people we want to see receive Reacher justice. What makes GONE TOMORROW my favorite Reacher in years is that you don't know quite who's who until the book is done.

GONE TOMORROW; it's like an A+ from Lee Child.
Ruth Jordan

GUN
Ray Banks
2009
Crime Express

GUN is biting, bleak noir with a boot in the gutter and a shooter in the waistband. Banks, author of the outstanding NO MORE HEROES and BEAST OF BURDEN has sharpened his already laser-edged storytelling in this novella about a bottom-feeder scrim sent to collect a handgun.

British crime fiction doesn't get much grittier than this foray into the mean streets of petty crooks and knuckle-breaking thugs. Banks portrays the street trash and derros of the inner city with an acuity few of his peers can match. But it's his empathetic treatment of their woes that shines out in GUN. This is a tale that speaks up for the futility of those trapped in the slum, those seeking a better life when the only options point to prison or a needle.

For such a short, and seemingly prosaic, tale Banks crams in an incredible amount. Like Hemingway's iceberg principle, there's much more going on between the lines that the keen reader will ponder on. This is no mean writing feat, and one too rarely achieved these days.

GUN is a buy in the morning and devour by the afternoon mini-masterpiece that will whet the appetite for more from this talented writer.

Reviewed by Tony Black author of GUTTED

GUTTED
Tony Black
2009
Preface Publishing (UK)

Last year, Tony Black landed in the crime fiction community like a parachutist dropping into a soccer game: out of nowhere and getting everyone's attention. It was attention well deserved, as PAYING FOR IT was a spectacular debut. With GUTTED Black proves he's no one hit wonder.

Gus Dury is back and tearing through Edinburgh again. A man is found, well, gutted, on a hillside overlooking the city. The victim is a man who has victimized plenty of people on his own, most recently a three year old girl who was killed by his pit bull. Gus finds himself caught up in the investigation and between dogfights; warring gangsters and cops with something to hide there are a lot of people who look guilty.

While on the surface rather dreary and maybe even depressing Gus Dury is a character you can't help but love. He lives in an Edinburgh tourists don't go to and is a little too comfortable there. Sharp pacing and with a wonderful narrative Black delivers a book that can't be put down and will stick with you after reading. If this were Nascar Black would be holding a lot of checkered flags.

Jon Jordan

HAUNTING BOMBAY
Shilpa Agarwal
April 2009
Soho Press, Inc.

The setting is Malabar Hill, a colonial enclave in 1960's Bombay, India. Pinky Mittal is a 13-year girl whose parents have been killed. Her grandmother is raising her, and living with them are many members of Pinky's extended family. Like many families, this one follows some inexplicable rituals, and one in particular gets under Pinky's skin: every evening before sunset, she and her grandmother must bolt the door of a particular bathroom. Of course, Pinky has been firmly warned against opening the door during the night. And, of course, the time comes when she simply cannot resist temptation.

What comes out of the bathroom is not one, but two ghosts. They're the spiritual remains of a drowned infant and its nursemaid, and they are not happy. They're looking for revenge, and are ready to kick some ass to get it.

It's now left to Pinky and her family to sift through conflicting memories and stories of the deaths, which occurred three years earlier, to find the truth before the ghosts can succeed in their vengeance.

Lovingly and humorously told, this story is both a mystery and a novel of manners. I highly recommend it, and look forward to reading more from this talented author.

Rae Helmsworth

HIGH ROLLERS

Gary Phillips
2009
Boom! Studios

Gary Phillips walks through crime fiction like a gunslinger that's never lost a fight. The man is confident and precise and it shows in everything he writes. *HIGH ROLLERS* is a graphic novel from Boom! Studios and is a gritty urban tale the American dream twisted around and appropriated for a different purpose.

CQ, or Cameron works for a drug dealer in LA, he's a good soldier doing what he's told, whether he agrees with it or not. When he makes the mistake of pointing out to his boss that maybe things could be done a little better the decision to take him out ends up having major repercussions. Rolling around the tale of CQ are his sister and brother in law who seem to have a nice life in the 'burbs, drug suppliers with a more noble cause and a whole slew of people in between, all looking to get the money and the power. It's screwed up "How to succeed in business" tale if there ever was one.

Phillips has written a damn tight story here and you would swear its real. I can't wait to see where it goes from here, I'm hoping this is just part one. Sergio Carrera did the artwork and it's a thing of beauty. His angles and perspectives are on a par with the great director of Hollywood and work perfectly with Phillips' words. This is urban crime fiction in its purest form.

Jon Jordan

HOGDOGGIN'
Anthony Neil Smith
2009
Bleak House Books

HOGDOGGIN', Anthony Neil Smith's follow-up to last year's *YELLOW MEDICINE*, may be a sequel, but it reads for all the world like a breakout book all on its own. Smith does a masterful job of doling out just enough background to help new readers understand the character without spoiling any surprises for those who might want to head back to *YELLOW MEDICINE* to see how we got here.

At its core, *HOGDOGGIN'* is a revenge tale. An FBI agent suffered a beating at the hands of ex cop/current biker Billy Lafitte, and now attempts to ensnare our boy, who has been hanging out with an aging biker appropriately named Steel God, and sharing his bike with a bright but treacherous young thing named Crystal. Absolutely nothing goes to plan for anyone, and the outwardly simple plot explodes in a dozen directions, scattering the cast until they begin to drift together for an unexpected ending that certainly leaves the door open for further (welcome) exploration. It's a violent, sexually-charged Southern-fried trek with a large cast of extremely well defined characters.

What impresses me the most about the books is Smith's willingness to set up reader expectations, and then jerk the story in *unexpected*, but completely logical, directions. Sure, the language is rich and visceral, and the characters are all compelling in their own right, but it's this element of surprise lurking around each corner that truly hooks the reader.

With Lafitte, Smith does his best to demonstrate exactly what "antihero" really means. Just when you find yourself willing to climb on Lafitte's hog and ride along, a crack appears in Lafitte's armor that leaves the reader shaken, and spins the story in new and darker directions. Being a storyteller of considerable skill, Smith saves Lafitte's most brazen acts for the conclusion, adding new layers to a character the reader will have thought they understood by that point.

Smith's voice is confident and clear, and he never shies away from pushing his characters to their extremes.

HOGDOGGIN' is a book that should appeal to hardcore fans of modern *noir* as well as more commercially minded readers seeking a little dark and gritty escapism from their antiseptic reality. Truly wonderful stuff, and a pleasure to read.

B. Clay Moore is the writer and creator of Hawaiian Dick and other comics

IGNORANCE OF BLOOD
Robert Wilson
June 2009
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt

Wrapped up in the after effects of a terrorist attack, the police in the city of Seville are under pressure with little to go on. Yet Inspector Jefe Javier Falcón is drawn into the hills where two men lay dead after a car accident. In the trunk of one the vehicle: several million euros and a series of DVD's featuring prominent members of the community taking part in very lascivious events. Ties to the Russian Mafia become apparent as is the growing threat of a turf war with the drug and prostitute trade up reward to the winner.

In what little off time he has, Falcón is still sorting through the seemingly solved case of his ex-wife's murder. The man behind bars, former judge Esteban Calderón, has only sketchy memories of the night in question and there are reasons to think he may not be responsible. And Falcón is "running" Yacoub Diouri, his best friend, as an embedded agent in the Moroccan Islamist Combatant group that may well be to blame for the Seville bombing. All becomes one as Falcón answer a frantic call of his lover Consuelo to find that her son has been kidnapped. Falcón is contacted by a group claiming to have the boy. If he wants to get the boy back, he must put do something he never thought he could do. Betray his badge.

A taut, complex book, Wilson takes seemingly divergent tales and brings them together in his superb tenth effort.
Jen Jordan

IN A GILDED CAGE

Rhys Bowen

2009

St Martin's / Minotaur

There's a touch of whimsy in the release date, as Molly Murphy, the heroine of the series, is from Ireland. The story is set in New York City at the beginning of the last century. Molly is a lady detective.

She meets some Vassar graduates at a suffragist rally and one, Fanny Poindexter, asks her to look into her husband's possible philandering. She does and is about to report back when Fanny falls ill and dies. The official cause of death is influenza, which is going around. Molly suspects Fanny's husband had a hand in her death because he inherits more than money, namely his freedom to be with his ladylove, an actress. Did he know that Fanny was having him investigated? Another Vassar graduate, Emily Boswell, who works full-time in a pharmacy to support herself, wants Molly to look into her parentage for she suspects that her 'adoptive' uncle has cheated her out of her inheritance.

Then two of her Vassar friends contract the same illness and die swiftly. There is no way she can blame those deaths on Fanny's husband.

The title refers to the lives of the married Vassar grads, and maybe one that Molly will find herself in. Police Captain Daniel Sullivan and Molly have an 'understanding' that might become more formal. In a reference to the title, will he let her join her suffragist friends on their next protest march? And even more important--let her wear bloomers?

Bowen has captured the atmosphere and setting of early New York perfectly, which adds to the enjoyment of the story.

And an excellent story it is, from this Agatha and Anthony award winner.

Gay Tolt Kinman

IN THE DARK

Brian Freeman

April 2009

Minotaur Books

Freeman's fourth installment of the Jonathan Stride/Serena Dial series is easily the best one yet. Slightly darker and more disturbing than the previous three books (probably why I enjoyed it more), IN THE DARK explores a crime in Stride's past: the murder of Laura Starr, his former sister-in-law. The case is 30 years cold, but Laura's best friend, Tish, returns to town to research for her true crime novel about Laura's murder and attempts to reopen the investigation. Part of Stride would rather leave it alone. But he knows Tish is hiding something, and he knows there is more to the case than what is in the file, and Stride can't help but throw himself back into the investigation.

Like all Freeman novels, IN THE DARK is well written and extremely well crafted. Each chapter has a complete arc and ends with a cliffhanger, driving the story forward at a relentless pace. His characters are well-developed, sympathetic, and often blur the line of good and evil. Though he treads on some controversial themes – abuse, incest, and mental illness – he does so with tact and relates everything to the main story. All of the darker images and disturbing scenes are necessary to the plot, none of them are frivolous. While it was different than his other novels, I enjoyed the darker tone and am excited to see what Freeman has in store next for Stride and Dial.

Dana Kaye

INTENT TO KILL

James Grippando

May 2009

HarperCollins

Grippando has created the ultimate story of an ordinary man trapped in extraordinary circumstances with his latest mystery, INTENT TO KILL. Ryan James is one minor league baseball game away from the majors when his wife, Chelsea, is killed in a car accident. She was on the way to his game when she was hit by a drunk driver who fled the scene. Torn apart by devastation and grief, Ryan struggles to put his life together and take care of his young daughter. Three years later, on the anniversary of Chelsea's death, Ryan visits her gravesite and finds a note which reads, "It was no accident." He immediately seeks help from Emma Carlisle, the prosecutor assigned to Chelsea's case. In an effort to locate the anonymous tipster, Emma turns to the media and reopens the cold case. But when she discovers evidence that the driver is a high profile politician, who also happens to be a mentor, she is torn between her loyalty to a friend and obligation to do what's right.

Grippando layers his external plot with internal conflicts. Each character is plagued by guilt that the accident was their fault, and this drives their actions throughout the story. His writing is an accurate portrayal of human emotion and explores the consequences of grief. The authentic characters set INTENT TO KILL apart from the mediocre and give the story life.

Dana Kaye

LADY KILLER
Lisa Scottoline
2009
Harper

A teenage indiscretion comes back to haunt Mary DiNunzio in her first appearance after the author took a four-book hiatus for the character. She is now the rainmaker for her law firm, but gets Sidetracked when a high school classmate consults her about an abusive live-in "connected" Boyfriend. Mary suggests disappearing for a while or getting an order of protection, either of which is impractical. The woman then disappears on her birthday and all of South Philadelphia fears she has been murdered by the boyfriend. The police and FBI do little to unravel the mystery and it leaves only Mary to be a superhero, if that's possible.

The flavor of the novel is replete with South Philadelphia and its Italian-American population. But more important to the plot are Mary's efforts to find the missing woman, as well as learning something about herself and her "community"--the neighborhood in which she grew up. It is a well-told, engaging tale.

Theodore Feit

THE LAST CHILD

John Hart
2009

UK John Murray / US Minotaur Books

Well I was bowled over by Hart's debut 'The King of Lies' and even more impressed by his Richard and Judy nominated and Edgar winner 'Down River' but they always say that good things come in threes; so when I cracked the spine of Hart's third novel 'The Last Child' – I was totally bowled over. When thirteen-year-old Johnny Merrimon's twin sister vanishes off a side-street, his whole world and that of his family is ruptured and disintegrates. Johnny decides that he will find out what happened to his sister Alyssa, who everyone assumes is dead. Armed only with his wits and two friends – The detective Clyde Hunt and the giant 'Levi' – he looks beneath the cracks of his Southern hometown. What he finds will make your skin crawl and tear through this haunting thriller. It is lucky that Johnny's friend, detective Hunt is a kindred spirit as Alyssa Merrimon's disappearance also affected his life, but together they delve into really happened. Filled with Southern angst on family strife, the darkness that hides in plain sight and with the taste of Harper Lee, this will be one of the big books of 2009. Hart is a major talent and his third novel shows his talents expand into the area of fellow Southern Lawyer John Grisham. This novel will feature in all the main awards this year

Ali Karim

And a second take:

THE LAST CHILD

John Hart

May 2009

Minotaur Books

THE LAST CHILD is a brilliant cross between literature and mystery, filled with rich, haunted characters struggling with their guilt. One year ago, thirteen-year-old Johnny Merrimon's twin sister, Alyssa, went missing. We come to the story in the aftermath of the abduction: Johnny's father long gone, his mother addicted to pills and unable to be a parent, Johnny suffering through the pain of not knowing what happened to his sister. Clyde Hunt, the detective assigned to the Merrimon case, is also haunted by Alyssa, and at the expense of his own family, becomes obsessed with finding out what happened to her.

Hart expertly intertwines each of these characters, using their emotional baggage and haunted pasts to drive the story forward. He doesn't create page-turning suspense through action scenes; instead, he uses the dark side of human emotion and internal conflicts to create tension on every page. As Johnny desperately searches every house in the neighborhood, knocking on every door asking about his sister, it is impossible not to feel his desperation and loss. Though the plot concept is simple – family of an abducted child refusing to give up hope – the novel is not. It is full of twists, layers, even a few surprises which, after reading so many mysteries, is difficult to accomplish.

Dana Kaye

A LIE FOR A LIE

Emilie Richards

2009

Berkley

Aggie Sloan-Wilcox is the wife of a minister, and the daughter of a hippy. She volunteers to help raise money for the local hospital's pediatric wing. Her 'job' is to be the assistant to a local boy-made-good, Grady Barber, who is the judge in the Emerald Springs 'Idyll' talent show contest. The man is from Hades, Aggie soon finds out, but having raised two girls she

knows how to handle him. And he knows just how far he can push her.

Halfway through the book she finds a body. The deceased's former spouse is arrested. A nice, neat, tidy package, the police think. The arrest also rids the town of an unwanted traveling preacher and an entourage of lions, knife throwers and that ilk.

The police conclude that the suspect just didn't have time to tidy up the crime scene, therefore left clues. Au contraire, says Aggie, someone planted the evidence.

The more she looks into the victim's past the more suspects she comes up with. One of them doesn't want her to look further, and makes that dangerously clear.

Aggie reads the victim's sanitized biography, how beloved he pictures himself. Not true, others tell Aggie, and give her their version of his life. She wonders why he left out some of those who were near and dear to him, particularly one who helped him write the hit song that started him on his career. Needless to say, a lot of people in the town have a lot of history with him, and most of it is not good.

Several strands of stories going on at the same time. Aggie is a complex character. Cozy. Ministry is Murder series.

Gay Toltl Kinman.

LORDS OF CORRUPTION

Kyle Mills

April 2009

Vanguard Press

This is the first I've heard of thriller writer, Kyle Mills, but after reading LORDS OF CORRUPTION, it is certainly not going to be my last. The suspense never lets up, his characters are passionate and determined, and he takes readers inside one of the most interesting continents: Africa.

After a series of unsuccessful job interviews, protagonist Josh Hagarty signs on with the only company that made him an offer: NewAfrica. Though this charitable organization claims to manage agricultural projects in underdeveloped African countries, it is actually a front for drug trafficking and other illegal activities. The more Hagarty uncovers, the more he risks, and in Africa, American laws don't apply.

In addition to being a thrilling story, LORDS OF CORRUPTION studies the political and economic problems of this devastated continent. There are hundreds of charitable organizations stationed in Africa on any given day, the lack of government and civilized rule lead to violence, poverty, and devastation, and the tribal conflicts in each of the countries seem impossible to resolve. Mills uses his characters to convey both the pessimistic and optimistic viewpoints, and isn't afraid to be frank on the issues. Tying the social commentary into the primary story line is what separates this seasoned thriller writer from the amateurs.

Dana Kaye

MALICE IN MINIATURE

Margaret Grace

2009

Berkley Prime Crime

The time is the present, just before Lincoln's Birthday holiday and the town of Lincoln Point, in northern California, is celebrating with art, a Lincoln-Douglas debate, and other festivities. Gerry Porter is the sleuth of this Murder in Miniature series, and enlists the help of her granddaughter, Maddie, 11, and her daughter-in-law, Mary Lou. Nephew, Skip, is also in the sleuthing business, but he's official—a police officer. He tries to stop Gerry at every turn, and refuses to give her any information. Times are hard for the amateur sleuth!

Skip has just arrested Zoe for murdering her boyfriend, Brad. This would be a good thing, except Zoe happens to be the best friend of Gerry's neighbor, June. And June is Skip's girlfriend Oh, oh.

At the festival grounds, a little skullduggery is going on. Some paintings, including one of Brad's are slashed, ruining part of the art exhibit.

Gerry doesn't know if Zoe did it or not, but she wants to find out for sure as the arrest has affected Skip and June's relationship. Zoe is not an easy person to get information from, obviously she has her reasons for keeping mum. But Gerry tries and Zoe pins her hopes on Gerry finding out the truth. Someone doesn't want her sleuthing and tries to thwart her.

In the book are helpful hints from Gerry on how to make shadow boxes and miniature scenes, for this is a big part of her life, as it is for the author.

Gay Toltl Kinman

THE MAO CASE

Qiu Xiaolong

2009

St. Martin's Press

The award-winning author of such novels as *DEATH OF A RED HEROINE* and *RED MANDARIN DRESS* is back with another Inspector Chen mystery. Reading Qiu's inspiration for the novel (which can be found on his website) is almost as fascinating as the novel itself. Everyone knows that Mao was, and remains, controversial; it's probably not so well known that his personal life was a bit, well, murky, and featured multiple wives and mistresses, several of whom met untimely, and mysterious, ends.

THE MAO CASE finds Inspector Chen being called upon to find out what, if any, material for blackmail a mysterious woman may have in her possession. The woman, Jiao, may or may not be Mao's granddaughter by one of his many mistresses. With no apparent means of support, Jiao has suddenly started living the high life in a luxury apartment and has begun hanging out with a group of people who move in quite rarified air. The Party fears that she's living off the expectation of income from extortion.

It's up to Chen to get to know Jiao and her new friends, and to find and remove the reputation-damaging material. If he doesn't succeed, and quickly, the Party will take matters into their own hands, which won't be good for anyone's continued good health.

Beautifully written, this novel contains no easy answers, leaving the reader to make their own decisions about each character's morals and motivations. I hadn't previously read Qiu's work, but I'll be looking for his earlier novels at the earliest possible moment.

Rae Helmsworth

MATING SEASON

John Loomis

May 2009

St. Martin's Minotaur

Loomis's second installment to the Detective Coffin/Officer Winters series may not measure up to its award winning predecessor, but *MATING SEASON* is still a quirky, entertaining Cape Cod mystery with enough interesting characters and plot points to keep the pages turning. Coffin and Winters are chasing down the killer of Kenji Sole, a beautiful and exotic woman who slept with half the married men in Provincetown. As detectives investigate, they find Sole didn't just sleep with men, she taped them too, and someone was putting those tapes on the web. Loomis's comedic writing style is the perfect compliment to the sex, porn, and kink sprinkled throughout the novel as detectives try to sort through the dozens of suspects that had motives, and find the one who also had means and opportunity.

Though the premise drew me in and I was eager to learn about the characters and their setting, there are many scenes in the novel which stall the story and don't further the overall plot. Events such as Winters going on a date or Coffin talking to his wife about the case suspend the action and have no need to be documented. Loomis would have done well to eliminate those unnecessary scenes and maintain suspense. However, the fact that I wanted to know what happened next, that I was interested in the story, demonstrates the book's merit, and it may be easy for some to look past these shortcomings.

Dana Kaye

NO SURVIVORS

Tom Cain

2009

Viking

Following an amazing debut with *ACCIDENT MAN*, Tom Cain is back with *NO SURVIVORS*, another tale with Samuel Carver.

The book opens with Samuel recovering from the aftermath of the previous book, resting in hospital in Switzerland. The woman he rescued, Alix, has been called back into action by her bosses and Samuel leaves before he should to get here. As he starts his global journey he uncovers a plot to start a worldwide holy war. The man behind it is a dying Texan with more money than God, and is convinced he's doing God's work. And it looks like Carver is the only one who knows all the details, which puts him in the lucky position of being the man to stop the insane plot.

Cain has such an incredible gift for action that this book feels like a movie running too fast. The characters are terrific and easy to love, and hate. *NO SURVIVORS* is a book that asks no quarter and gives none, a top notch read.

Jon Jordan

NOTORIOUSLY NEAT

Suzanne Price

April 2009

Obsidian

Sky Taylor is the owner of a cleaning service in this new Grime Solvers mystery. Pigeon Cove is a small New England

town, where crime is not exactly rampant, so Sky is about to enjoy a dinner with the 'dashing' police chief Alex Vega. Vega is dashing but to a murder scene.

The dead woman is Dr. Gail Pilsner, the local beloved vet. Her assistant, Orlando, was running away, and is soon nabbed for the crime. Sky knows the young man, and doesn't believe he is guilty. Why would anyone kill her? That's the question Sky intends to answer.

Some of Sky's friends are acting a little strange, sneaking around in the middle of the night, and it's not to practice their singing for a choral group, which they claim they are doing. What is going on?

At the end of most chapters we are treated to Sky's blog of cleaning tips. She is trying to go 'green' such as using baking soda instead of an industrial cleaner.

The author's name is a pseudonym for Jerome Preisler, a multi-published author, and wife Suzanne.

A fun, and useful, read.

Gay Toltl Kinman

THE POISON APE

Arimasa Osawa

2008

Vertical, Inc.

Anyone who likes their fiction hard-boiled will love this book. This is the second novel in the Shinjuku Shark series, and the second to be made available in English. For those unfamiliar with Osawa's work, "Shinjuku Shark" is not a fish. Shinjuku is a particularly notorious part of Tokyo, and "Shark" is the nickname for the series protagonist, Inspector Samejima.

Samejima has earned his nickname through his relentless, incessant pursuit of the yakuza, the Japanese mafia who terrorize the law-abiding citizens of the city. Samejima isn't interested in playing nice, or playing by the rules, and that behavior has caused him to be ostracized both by his colleagues and his superiors on the police force.

When a Taiwanese killer known as the Poison Ape descends upon Shinjuku and begins killing yakuza members, Samejima finds himself in the surreal position of having to defend the local criminals against both the Poison Ape, and against the Taiwanese detective who's tracked him into Samejima's territory. Because if he doesn't find and neutralize the Poison Ape, Shinjuku will become a killing field from which it may never recover.

The writing is fast-paced, the plot is twisty, and the ending leaves you wanting more. Fortunately, there are more books in the series, and it's to be hoped we don't have to wait too long for the next installment.

Rae Helmsworth

THE RENEGADES

T. Jefferson Parker

2009

Dutton

The obvious relationship between drugs and police corruption provides the plot for this follow-up novel to last year's popular L.A. OUTLAWS, which introduced Sheriff's Deputy Charlie Hood. Charlie has just put away a corrupt cop, which provides for minimal love interest when he and the assistant district attorney become attracted to each other while awaiting the start of the trial.

Meanwhile, Charlie continues riding in his patrol car and one night his partner is gunned down execution style. While the idea is distasteful to Charlie, he is recruited by Internal Affairs to find the killer. In his investigation, any number of questions arise about his partner and the reserve deputy with whom he usually rode. As the 'good cop,' Charlie begins to see bad cops raking in unaccounted for cash.

Parker's descriptions of the characters and atmosphere are acute and graphic, especially his depiction of pit bull fights.

The novel demonstrates Mr. Parker's ability to create inventive new plots while using established characters.

Theodore Feit

RUNNING FROM THE DEVIL

Jamie Freveletti

May 09

William Morrow

"An Absorbing Debut". Crimespree Magazine

Blurbable line out of the way. Let's discuss this first novel by Jamie Freveletti.

Much is being made of Ms. Freveletti's background. So much so that Morrow has chosen to give reviewers the author's background on the flap rather than story information. But mystery readers in general and thriller writers in particular aren't fooled for long by packaging.

This reviewer quickly traveled from writer's background to ingesting the story. For a summer read in 09 you'll have to

travel far to do better. This is quite a statement as the books flow past my eyes here at Crimespree headquarters. It is a very good year.

RUNNING FROM THE DEVIL begins as a plane crashes in Columbia. Biochemist Emma Caldrige is on her way to Columbia to retrace the steps of last year's trip. A man across the aisle from her appears nervous and catches her attention. The crash sends Emma's seat far from the wreckage.

Is this a simple Columbian kidnapping for profit? As her fellow passengers are rounded up, Emma looks on. Her aisle partner sees her and furtive glances give Emma a clue to his background. She makes choices in these first moments that lead her through both a literal jungle and an ever expanding forest of greed.

In the US, reaction to the downed plane and kidnap victims is immediate and cautious. The Department of Defense needs deniability. They hire Edward Banner. An enigma who runs through this first book, it is my hope that we'll see much more of Banner after this first novel. There's more to this story, much more. Jamie Freveletti is going for the slow burn and her career should be painfully exquisite with a readability factor of ten...

RUNNING FROM THE DEVIL is a marvelous First.

Ruth Jordan

RUSSIAN ROULETTE

Austin S. Camacho

June 2009

Intrigue Publishing

Hannibal Jones is a man you go to in order to get the job done, and in **RUSSIAN ROULETTE** Jones isn't given a choice about his new job. Aleksander Dimitri Ivanovich, like Hannibal is a troubleshooter, only he does it for the Russian Mob. The woman he loves is mixed up with a guy who is really bad news and rather than resort to violence he wants Hannibal to investigate and get the dirt on him. To ensure this happens, Ivanovich has put Cindy Santiago in the cross hairs. An investigation that starts out forced soon becomes a matter of getting to the truth for the former secret service agent and Hannibal won't stop till the job is done.

Just as I need coffee to start each day, I need the books by Camacho in my reading pile. Fast paced with terrific action this book satisfies on many levels. The settings are wonderful and the characters are well drawn. **RUSSIAN ROULETTE** starts with a revving engine and picks up speed till racing across the finish line. If I were in trouble, I'd want Hannibal Jones on my speed dial.

Jon Jordan

SAFER

Sean Doolittle

2009

Delacorte Press

SAFER is a suburban crime story that echoes *Lolita* in a suspenseful and immediately engrossing story. Doolittle takes the fears that drive people to Suburbia, the secrets that hide behind closed doors and twists them all through a funhouse mirror and gives us **THE** nightmare scenario.

The story is told to us in cherry-picked details parsed out and handed to us in a deliberate fashion. Right from the beginning Paul Callaway gets us on his side saving the more judgmental moments for later on. The order of information and his willingness to dance around certain things makes Paul Callaway a great example of an unreliable narrator. As he lays out the narrative and paints the picture for us the cul de sacs of the story are like the suburban neighborhood of the setting.

The "us" in the last paragraph is important because throughout the book Paul takes a break from the narrative to directly address the reader and in some cases point out the tricks that make him unreliable by deflecting us away from details that are important. There are times when this feels like a magician telling you the mechanics of the trick while he's performing it and still fooling you anyway?

The strengths of Sean Doolittle's body of work have always been clearly on display. From *Dirt on* through to *The Cleanup* he's sanded away the rough edges and pushed those strengths into greater relief so that they are now showcased front and center. Not only is *Safer* a continuation of this trend upward but it shows Doolittle's growth as an artist and stylist and a willingness to push himself in to new areas with extraordinary results.

That may be the final word but I'd like to give a parting prize for those willing to take it. A question for after you've read the book; one for further consideration. Is it possible that Paul Callaway isn't as he seems and that he is more complicit in the action and the crimes committed then the surface story would suggest? Or to phrase the question another way; *Lolita* was a confession and given its influence is *Safer* one too? A close re-read MAY or may not bear this out (or not) but I look forward to jumping back into the book again to find out.

Well played Mr. D, well played.

Brian Lindenmuth

SANCTUARY

Ken Bruen

May 2009

Minotaur Books

Jack Taylor has been through the wars. We've watched Jack for close to a decade now, righting the wrongs of the everyman in his hometown of Galloway. An addictive personality, who for all his protest does try and do the right thing. Bruen says that there is but one more Taylor story in his head and after reading SANCTUARY I'm good with that. The accolades we've all paid this series along the way; lean prose, succinct plotting, honest look at addiction, great cultural references. They are all in Sanctuary. Some are notable for an almost overwhelming onslaught; some are notable for a silence that speaks volumes on Taylor's state of mind.

Jack is still in Ireland as SANCTUARY opens having forgone his trip to America to be with a friend in need. And then comes the letter. Five victims will be had, one already dead, the last to be a child. Taylor struggles to make the threat heard to his old frenemies at the Guard. And he struggles with more. A revelation about recent history makes life itself as hard to bear as a Snow Patrol ballad.

Ken Bruen has amazed me always. With SANCTUARY he has taken Jack Taylor from the streamlined to the sublime. With his understanding of the metered word and thoughtfulness towards all that has come before he gives his reader a Jack Taylor outing like none before. I so want Jack to find peace. Will it happen? Only he and Bruen know but I will be there for the Last Supper.

Ruth Jordan

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE: THE MIST & THE PHANTOM OF THE FAIR

Matt Wagner/ Steven T Seagle

2009

Vertigo (DC Comics)

When Matt Wagner first started writing the Sandman, the classic forties hero, I was immediately intrigued by its pulp feel and the wonderful forties style throughout the series. Artist Guy Davis had a lot to do with that.

The latest volume to be reprinted by vertigo covers two of my favorite story arcs. The Mist is a tale of science gone wrong and corruption. The government is looking for new ways to fight and they are turning to scientists to help. A competition is held to see who will get funding. In order to perfect his device one scientist turns to the mob for money and is called on to murder and destroy on their behalf. We soon discover that he is the man who will eventually become the villain known as The Mist. The story has signs of the times as a group of Nazi supporters are on a crusade to disrupt things in the US. Wesley Dodds, The Sandman, eventually thwarts the evil that is afoot with the help of his companion Diane.

The second part of this collection has Sandman hunting a killer at the New York World's Fair. A vicious killer is leaving bodies and could ruin the fair, the city is feeling the terror and needs to stop it. Sandman working from the shadows is drawn in and hunts the hunter.

This is another great volume in a wonderful collection. SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE is a must have for fans of noir and pulp and people who just love damn good stories. Wonderfully atmospheric and historically accurate they are a very fun escape to another time and place with a hero who is not the normal man of action or detection. Absolutely wonderful reading and a true graphic masterpiece.

Jon Jordan

THE SCARECROW

Michael Connelly

2009

Little Brown (US) Orion (UK)

I have read every book written by Michael Connelly and have never read one I didn't enjoy. I have my favorites, but they are all great. One of my very favorite of his books is THE POET, so when I discovered that THE SCARECROW was a sequel I was thrilled. After reading it, I'm more thrilled.

Jack McEvoy has had a good run as a reporter. His book about THE POET case made him a wanted reporter. But Jack has become a victim of another kind, one that is hurting newspaper people all over the country, he's being downsized. Thirty days to train a new crime reporter and he's gone. Jack wants to go out on a high and starts a story about a 16-year-old gang banger who is arrested for murder. What he discovers goes miles beyond this killing, a serial killer who is totally under the radar. His investigation brings FBI agent Rachel Walling back into his life. As they start to work together to find the truth and the killer it soon becomes obvious that their lives would be easier if they had left this alone. But that's not who they are and that's not what they do.

Throughout THE SCARECROW we have not only a terrific story but also a view into what's happening with the newspaper industry in the US and the perils of the internet. There are some thought provoking things here that go beyond

the story. Of course the story is amazing. It moves faster and faster and Connelly really has shifted this book into high gear. Michael Connelly is not only a treasure for crime fiction fans, he's a treasure for anyone who loves to read. And at the time I write this, he is working on another book for October!

This is a can't miss book.

Jon Jordan

THE SILENT MAN

Alex Berenson

2009

G.P. Putnam's Sons

What do a theft in Russia's outback and a traffic jam during Washington D.C.'s morning commute have in common?

That's the question driving the newest installment of the terrific John Wells series.

Wells has had a pretty rough couple of years, and is working hard at creating a safe and staid life for himself and his fiancée, Jennifer Exley. But Wells knows he has enemies, and his long years of spy-dom have made him a suspicious sort. So when he and Jennifer get stuck in that traffic jam, and he sees a motorcycle bearing down on them, well, you'll have to read the book to find out what happens. Suffice it to say, Wells is more than just a little bit annoyed.

Meanwhile, and unbeknownst to him, the Russian theft wasn't just simple larceny. It was the first phase of a terrorist plan to unleash unholy hell on the West, and the US in particular. The terrorists have stolen not just one, but two nuclear warheads.

By the time Wells has dusted himself off after the motorcycle attack, the terrorist plot is well under way. But Wells only discovers it in the course of looking for the people who tried to kill him. Once he becomes aware that something deadly is afoot, Wells, with the assistance of his CIA colleagues, works frantically to try and find the terrorists.

Hampered by stonewalling from the Russian government, by a ticking clock, and by assassins who are still trying to kill him, Wells has to bend all the rules and break more than one to get the answers he needs to stop the terrorists from succeeding.

Alex Berenson writes like a reporter, which he is. His lean, almost terse style lends itself beautifully to his high-tension plots and relentless pacing. This story is another gem, and it's to be hoped this series continues for a long time to come.
Rae Helmsworth

SIX SECONDS

Rick Mofina

2009

MIRA Books

Corporal Daniel Graham, of the RCMP Major Crimes Unit's South District in Calgary, Canada, becomes involved in a search for additional victims, or perhaps survivors, of what seems to have been a wilderness accident after the body of a young boy is discovered floating in the river in Alberta. Further investigation uncovers the fact that the boy is the son of "an oddball reporter who believed in conspiracies." Graham [who at the time was at a personal crossroads in his own life resulting from the death of his pregnant wife in a car accident for which he holds himself to blame] is unable to find any trace of the reporter himself.

Maggie Conlin is the mother of a nine-year-old boy who has gone missing, apparently the victim of what is believed to be parental abduction by his father, a trucker who was behaving erratically ever since returning, traumatized, from a contract job driving convoys in Iraq.

Samara Ingram is a young woman whose adored husband and young son have been murdered in a horrific attack on all three in their home in Iraq, and whose life and psyche have been destroyed. She is now bent on revenge.

These otherwise ordinary people have all suffered great personal loss, and now become central players in a tale of tragedy played out on a much larger scale, and on an international stage.

From an intriguing beginning, the reader is led across the world and to American locales as varied as Washington, D.C., Seattle, Washington, and Lone Tree County, Montana, the site of a highly anticipated papal visit. The frighteningly real and scarily possible scenario pulled this reader along until, before I realized it, well over 300 pages had flown by. The action races along at a breakneck pace through the final 100 pages counting down to the time period of the title, and to the heart-pounding conclusion. The book is all about loss, grief, hope, and the possibility of redemption. I have enjoyed all this author's books to date, and am delighted to learn that his new series, featuring reporter Jack Gannon, will make its debut in October, 2009.

Gloria Feit

STILL BLEEDING

Steve Mosby

2009

Orion (UK)

Mosby is one of the new writers I have to look forward to reading each year. I loved THE 50/50 KILLER and CRY FOR HELP. This year's offering is STILL BLEEDING and I have to say I am even more impressed than I was by the earlier books.

Alex Conner is a man who has seen some bad times, his friend Sarah helped him through and he is in her debt. When he gets word that Sarah has been killed he heads right back home to say goodbye. On his arrival he discovers things are not going the way they should. The boyfriend arrested for the murder looks to be innocent and they can't find the body. Paul Kearney, a detective in another part of the country knowing nothing about Sarah is tracking a killer and hoping to find a missing girl. Alex and Paul eventually meet and realize something darker and more disturbing is going on and they join together to get to the bottom of things, before even more bodies go missing.

Dark and at times disturbing this is a book driven by characters that immediately connect with the reader and a plot that is wonderfully twisted and fast paced. Great reading and another fine book by Steve Mosby, a rising star that everyone should be reading.

Jon Jordan

THE SWEETNESS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIE

Alan Bradley

2009

Orion

This book is delightful. Delightful, I tell you. Now go, go buy and read it and be delighted as well!

Is that not enough of a recommendation? THE SWEETNESS AT THE BOTTOM OF THE PIE features eleven-year-old Flavia de Luce, has far too much time on her hands during a long 1950's summer. She occupies her time in a laboratory she's taken over since the death of her mother and somewhat odd great uncle. The family house, Buckshaw, is large yet it is hard to escape her two older sisters who make a project of making her life quite hellish. Flavia's stamp collecting father lives too far in his own head to take notice beyond the need to occasionally sleep or eat. Finding a body in the cucumber patch early one morning sets her mind alight. Flavia is on the case well before the local police arrive. This does not go unnoticed or appreciated by both the authorities afore mentioned or the murderer she seeks.

With her trusty bike, brilliant brain and Bunsen burners, Flavia de Luce has all she needs to make the connections between a dead snipe on the doorstep, a missing piece of pie and a dead body. This charming and hug worthy book is the first in a series. I eagerly await the sequel. Thank you, Alan Bradley.

Jen Jordan

SWORN TO SILENCE

Linda Castillo

June 2009

Minotaur Books

The first novel in a new series, SWORN TO SILENCE introduces us to Kate Burkholder, a small town police chief with a haunted past. As a young Amish girl, Kate lived through a series of brutal murders in her rural community of Painters Mill. Although physically intact, Kate's faith took a beating, and she felt compelled to leave her home.

Now she's returned as the town's police chief, and believes that she's put her past behind her. And then they find the first body.

Vowing to protect her friends and neighbors, Kate dives into the investigation, and discovers an unendurable truth. She knows the killer, but to reveal their identity will rip the community apart. And what's worse, the killer knows she's figured it all out – and has now targeted her.

Engagingly written and deftly plotted, this is a great introduction to some very likable characters, and to a community that I'll definitely want to visit again.—Rae Helmsworth

TAINTED

Ross Pennie

April 2009

ECW Press

This entertaining, and disturbing, debut features Dr. Zol Szabo, a public health officer in Ontario, and his associate, Dr. Hamish Wakefield, an infectious diseases specialist.

When the first victim of what appears to be mad cow disease appears in the morgue, it's cause for concern. But when the second and third victims die, concern becomes alarm, and a full-scale investigation begins. The challenge for Drs. Szabo and Wakefield, of course, is to find the cause of the infections without either endangering or causing panic among the public. And they don't have much time, because more and more food is becoming tainted.

Their admirable goal becomes ever more difficult to attain. The local medical authorities are concerned with their own

reputations. A government investigator with more ego than intelligence has arrived to “take over” the investigation. And Dr. Szabo, the single father of a disabled son, is worried that his child may become infected.

The author is himself an infectious diseases specialist, and writes with authority about the dangers of allowing self-monitoring by food producers and pharmaceutical companies. But beyond that, Pennie has written likable and well-rounded characters, and has concocted a pleasingly twisty plot, that I enjoyed very much. This book is the first in a series, and I look forward to reading more.

Rae Helmsworth

TETHERED

Amy MacKinnon

2009

Orion

I am always looking for something new in the crime-fiction genre, and this debut novel by a new name to me Amy MacKinnon is just that – something new, but I warn you, it is something rather disturbing. Looking at the cover, my skin crawled as its cover image is as creepy as its narrative. Featuring many damaged people including the orphaned Clara Marsh who works as an undertaker tending for the dead. The narrative is slippery, as we learn why Clara feels at home looking after the dead, but also why she became the woman she is. Enter the cop Mark Sullivan who is investigating the case of a missing girl Trecie, who played on the grounds of the funeral home, and a possible link to an unclaimed child [referred to as Precious Doe] who was murdered close to this New England refuge. Complex, filled with insight and compassion and pain, it is a tale that will haunt, and make one question what this life is about when there is so much pain. A wonderfully evocative debut, and one that will embed itself in your mind like the cries of a lost child.

Ali Karim

TRUST NO ONE

Gregg Hurwitz

June 09

St. Martin's Press

Nick Horrigan gets a visit in the night. SWAT has come to his balcony. He thought he was safe, the past buried. But “The Incident” that has had him living underground for twenty years has reared its head and now Nick must pay the piper. He will save L.A. and then run from a government that wants to honor him now but discarded him then.

Gregg Hurwitz has an ability to twist story telling like Snyder's twists pretzels. TRUST NO ONE will almost certainly be a best-seller. Nick was a child who saw one truth all those years ago when “The Truth” is a much darker and scarier reality. The death of a father will not save the life of a son but perhaps, if Nick can arrive at the truth in time, he may be able to have one.

That is the personal story within TRUST NO ONE. Hurwitz is never one to embrace a singular narrative, choosing instead to fill our imaginations and allowing us to look at issues and the subjective morality that influence us every day through media manipulations, story cycles and a government that's gone beyond Laissez Faire towards the imperialistic governments we first fought against as a nation.

This story resonates with action on every page. Our personal liberties and the governmental omnipresence that we all feel everyday is brought to the page with an unflattering and refractive light .

But this is a personal story. If Nick can get himself out of this mess we will have all one a great victory. Viva la Thriller.

When done in the manner of TRUST NO ONE, the thriller does indeed thrill.

Ruth Jordan

ULTIMATUM

Matthew Glass

April 2009

Harper Collins

In the year 2032 Joe Benton wins the office of the 48th president of the United States on a campaign focused on change. The world is facing the effects of global warming and has a relocation plan to deal with rising waters. Two months before Benton gives his inaugural address he learns from his predecessor that the rising sea levels have been grossly underestimated.

Joe Benton and his team come up with a plan but they need China on line for it to work and that's going to be the hard part.

I found myself up to one o'clock every morning reading until I fell asleep. I didn't realize how sucked in I got with this novel until it was over and I suddenly had nothing to do.

I did find Matthew Glass' character Joe Benton to be patterned after Obama. He even has his own Joe the Plumber - Joe Kowalski. There are also links to President Lincoln and we could go on and on.

And his predictions of what happens between now and the year 2032 are very interesting. Matthew Glass writes under a pseudonym and never gives away his true identity. If I were him, I'd be taking credit for this novel.

Don Longmuir - *Scene of the Crime Books*
www.murdermysteriesandmore.com

THE WANDERING HEART

Mary Malloy

April 2009

Leapfrog Press

Lizzie Manning is no detective. She's a historian with expertise in eighteenth century maritime voyages, thank you very much, and has been engaged to search for the 200-year-old corpse of a Tlingit Indian that was taken from his grave during one of Captain Cook's voyages. Pretty esoteric stuff, and more than enough to keep Lizzie both occupied and fascinated.

Lizzie's research leads her to England, to the ancestral home of the Hattons, who have a mystery of their own. In 1887, a young woman leapt to her death from the roof of the mansion. The connection between a missing Tlingit corpse, Captain Cook, and the tragic death of a young Englishwoman is elusive, and Lizzie finds herself compelled to search for answers. In the process, she discovers that her own family's history contains more than a few secrets.

Meticulously researched and intricately plotted, this historical mystery is an entertaining and engaging debut. I look forward to reading more from this talented new author.

Rae Helmsworth

WALKING DEAD

Greg Rucka

2009

Bantam

WALKING DEAD is an Atticus Kodiak tale. The end to a second trilogy featuring the body guard who you want by your side when all goes wrong. A troubled man who tries to draw the line between savior and vigilante, Kodiak has, over five previous novels and 12 years of reading time, made himself soar above a cast of similarly drawn characters. 2007's PATRIOT'S ACT found Kodiak at a place where he could be done, the violent protecting over and a life made.

He and Alena have escaped their former lives and settled in a Georgian town in the former USSR. Happy and fit with faithful dog Miata by their side, they forget to ask the obvious question. If we came here to hide, did our neighbors as well?

One night, three dead and a missing daughter. This leads Atticus on a chase across continents and with potential ramifications that could keep him from a happily ever after.

The girl has been sold, a final affront to her viciously murdered father. For Alena and himself, Kodiak must save her. But Alena seems strangely resistant, and the leads not as forthright as a desperate chase warrants.

Long a favorite character, Kodiak sings a song of grace in this, WALKING DEAD. Attacking slave traffic one cell at a time, searching for the daughter who captured their hearts through her dance lessons. Using every espionage tactic he's learned over the years and listening to his heart, Atticus walks into the abyss of an ugliness that is unconceivable and yet exists in the real world as well as within these pages.

Rucka plays to his character strength while also providing the most heart palpitating action sequences you will read this year. From Dubai, to Arizona, to Amsterdam, guns resound and knives hit their targets. And in the final passages we come to place in Atticus's story where it could end. I for one hope it won't, The writing of Greg Rucka continues to amaze and when Atticus has a story, I want Rucka to write it. Six books readers, start at the beginning and feel the presence of a life breathing Thriller Phenomenon.

Ruth Jordan

THE WAY HOME

George Pelecanos

2009

Little Brown

Since the end of Pelecanos' ground-breaking trilogy he has concentrated his fiction on stories less epic. Individuals whose lives have been shaped by one instance, one mistake. Whether the lead character is wallowing in a system that doesn't really believe in rehabilitation although it claims to, or telling the story of a man obsessed by one crime and needing to solve it, or exposing the story of youths whose lives are forever changed by one night that will haunt them forever, recent Pelecanos have had a common theme. Who you become and what you do in life is not about events but has everything to do with character. Everything.

Knowing this going into *THE WAY HOME* made me fear for Chris Flynn, a young man from the Washington 'burbs who proclaims to his father, "I know how to jail." And Chris jails, the sole white inmate of Pine Ridge, a correctional school and facility for young men mostly written off. Bonds are formed amongst the boys who inhabit the facility and reality hits most. Flash forward: Chris is working for his dad, a successful carpet installer. When he's not working or seeing his girl, he reads. Friend Ben, another Pine Ridge alum, is also a reader and works side by side with his boy. One day, on the job.... A bag of money.... The decision ... loose lips and then the aftermath.... An exhilarating, fast paced game of cat and mouse. Who be the cat and who be the mouse?

THE WAY HOME is new again, Pelecanos on a fresh path, taking another lesson from all that's come before, making it leaner and meaner.

Pelecanos is still about character and we meet a wide range of them in this book, heroic, tragic, real. Family, fellow alum, and the people who make up and break into Chris's world will keep you up, the story will make your heart race. Explaining a Pelecanos without giving anything away is tough. Reading a Pelecanos is easy. His shitz be tight.

Ruth Jordan