

### Buzz Bin

R.J. Ellory gets better with each book and his latest, *THE ANNIVERSARY MAN* (Overlook) is damn good reading. John Costello is an expert on serial killers not by choice so much as by circumstance. He survived an attack 20 years ago that left his girlfriend dead. His life has become that of a recluse leaving his home only to do research as part of his job as researcher for a newspaper. A new killer is working the area and it may be that only Costello will be able to figure out who is behind the killings. Tense and relentless *THE ANNIVERSARY MAN* is an astounding book.

The fourth in Stella Rimington's series featuring MI5 officer Liz Carlyle, *DEADLINE* (Knopf) is ultra fast paced and a perfect beach read. A Peace conference in Scotland is targeted by at least two foreign agents and Liz and her team need to stop them before heads of state get killed. Gritty and with the realism that only a former head of MI5 can bring to it this is the stuff.

*DEATH ECHO* (William Morrow) by Elizabeth Lowell is a knuckle biter of a thriller that is a bit different than the usual globetrotting espionage we see. Ex-CIA agent Emma Cross works for a security consulting firm that specializes in yachts and boating. Her latest case involves arms dealers, former Russian spies and she has a new partner. Mackenzie Durand is the sole survivor of a mission that was botched by bad intel and the experience has left him more than a bit angry and dangerous. This is a fresh felling story and a great read.

The first in a new series featuring Sandro Cellini PI, *THE DROWNING RIVER* (Minotaur) by Christobel Kent is a superbly written mystery set in Florence Italy. Not overly gory or too clever it is a perfect traditional mystery that utilizes its location to the fullest. A great start to a series.

Edgar winner Marc Strange's latest, *FOLLOW ME DOWN* (ECW) is a small town mystery which sees Chief of Police Orwell Brennan being warned off a murder case. Too many things don't add up and Orwell can't let go. A great mystery that is dark and traditional and pleasantly twisted.

This American debut of Swedish writer Camilla Lackberg, *THE ICE PRINCESS* (Pegasus) is a soul wrenching book. Erica Falck returns to her home town in the wake of tragedy. She's just buried her parents and her childhood friend is found dead, apparent suicide. Erica channels her grief into a writing a book, but as she delves deeper she discovers things that disturb her and along with a local cop she looks for the truth. With chilling nuances and a knack for creating suspense Lackberg is stunning.

This debut from David Carnoy, *KNIFE MUSIC* (Overlook) is a three point shot with no net. A high school girl is treated in an ER, six months later police Detective Madden is asking questions of the person who took care of her, a Dr. Cogan. The girl was found dead of a presumed suicide after being raped post release from the ER. Suspense the way it should be done this is a read that will linger.

Robert K Elder has put out a really cool book called *LAST WORDS OF THE EXECUTED* (University of Chicago Press) which is just what it sounds like. Each of the last words includes some background on the person who said them and what they did. It's a fascinating book.

*LIVE TO TELL* (Bantam) is another great book from Lisa Gardner. Suspense at it's best as Detective Warren works on a case of a murdered family with ties to a crime that took place 25 years earlier. Fast paced, great characters.

British author Sarah Pinsborough has served up a twisted police procedural called *A MATTER OF BLOOD* (Orion). A detective working too many cases is hit with a tragedy in his own family that makes it that much harder to concentrate on work. As his cases start to flow together he finds himself on a dark path. This is a fast paced book that will leave you forgetting to take a breath.

Nonfiction books about crime and criminals are in plentiful, but every now and then one jumps out from the pile. *THE MEASURE OF MADNESS* (Citadel Press) by Cheryl Paradis is a fascinating look at the criminal mind. It's a great look at forensic psychology and its role in catching criminals.

From the man who wrote *SLEEPERS* comes an entirely different and equally appealing tome, *MIDNIGHT ANGELS; A NOVEL*. Love, death and greed are here wrapped up in the world of high art. Lorenzo Carcaterra presents the reader with an "Art Thriller" where the gangs are competing for not only survival but mythical culture. This man can write anything, anytime.

Henry Perez is quickly becoming one of my favorite authors of suspenseful books and his latest, *MOURN THE LIVING* is a book that grabs the reader by the throat and won't let go. Reporter Alex Chapa is tracking a serial killer who is uncanny in his ability to allude the authorities. As Alex gets closer to the truth the killer sets his sights on Alex and his loved ones. This book got read so fast the pages got hot. Perfect summer reading.

*MR. PEANUT* (Knopf) is not a title I would pick for a book. The cover however grabbed me and bumped this to the top of the reading pile. Adam Ross has with this first novel managed to find a depth to characters that some authors never find. It's soulful procedural about a dead wife and a husband deeply in love who also makes a perfect suspect. A bit weird and very compelling, a great first novel.

*MOSCOW STING* (Ecco) is a sequel to last year's *RED TO BLACK* by Alex Dryden. The lead is once again ex-KGB officer Anna is on the run after her husband is killed. Since he's a British intelligent officer his people are obviously looking at her as a suspect. With a lot of people on the hunt Anna needs to do what she can to save herself and that may mean uncovering a mole in the CIA. Pure espionage fun.

A late entry as this was a March release, *NAKED MOON* (Minotaur) by Domenic Stansberry is the latest in his Dante Mancuso series. This is PI writing at its peak of perfection with Mancusa a troubled man trying to keep his past buried and his present uncomplicated. Family ties bring him back to the people he was trying to stay away from as he needs to help his cousin by doing just one more job for The Company. Awesome Noir.

*NEVER WAVE GOODBYE* (Touchstone) at first felt like something I've read a few times before. School bus full of kids goes missing, panic ensues. Doug Magee however has told a fresh and original story loaded with suspense and the urgency to finish the book was almost disturbing. We suggest reading this while the sun is out....

Some really good non-fiction this month, and here's another entry. *ORIGINAL GANGSTER* (St. Martin's) is by Frank Lucas. Lucas had his life story told on the screen with Denzel Washington starring in American gangster. Now Lucas tells his story in his own book. An interesting look at a real life bad guy.

*THE PULL OF THE MOON* (SOHO Constable) by Diane Janes is a gothic suspense story that is engrossing and fascinating. Kate Mayfield must face secrets from her past that changed her life. A letter arrives which brings these events racing back to the present and Kate is forced to face the past whether she wants to or not. Classic suspense and truly magical reading.

Thomas Greanias' latest book, *THE PROMISED WAR* (Atria) is mostly a thriller, though it has some time travel and maybe a bit of supernatural, though that's not quite the right word. Whatever the exact combination what results is a book that is a one sitting read. An Israeli spook finds himself in a unique position to stop a war that takes place in the present from the past, though he's not sure if he's suffering from torture or really moving through time. Great espionage and fun story.

*ROCK PAPER TIGER* (SOHO) on the surface sounds like a crazy book. Iraqi war vet Ellie Copper is in China, stranded by her soon to be ex husband. Her only friend goes missing and she finds herself on the run with nowhere to turn but an on line gaming community. If you described this to me I'd think you might be a bit nuts, but I got the book and read it straight through. Lisa Brackman is a hugely talented writer and I would safely follow her story telling anywhere it might go.

Christopher Reich has a reputation for writing great thrillers and the reputation is well deserved. His latest, *RULES OF BETRAYAL* (Doubleday) is incredibly fast paced and the story is a classic tale of betrayal and yet totally fresh. Jonathan Ransom is married to a double agent who has "gone dark", and Emma's only hope is her husband who is trying to make amends for his own past. This is a book you won't be able to read fast enough.

*SPIES OF THE BALKANS* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson – UK) is the latest from Alan Furst, a master of historical espionage thrillers. Costa Zannis is a former detective now working political cases in a country full of spies and in constant danger. Zannis soon becomes a part of an operation to smuggle Jews out of Bulgaria. Fast paced and espionage at its best Furst has delivered another great novel.

*SPRING BREAK* (St. Martin's Griffin) by Kayla Perrin is a murder mystery set during, you guessed it, spring break. A group of girl friends are on a tropical island paradise having a ball. But when Chantelle gets a desperate staticy call from her friend who is now missing things get ugly. A fun read and perfect for summer!

A SPIDER ON THE STAIRS (Minotaur) is the latest from Cassandra Chan. Another homage to the classic traditional mysteries of another age it is set against the backdrop of Xmas time as the main characters and best friends go to Yorkshire for the holidays. However while Phillip is there to visit family, detective Gibbons is there to look into a murder, part of a series of them. Good stuff.

Inger Ash Wolfe's second book THE TAKEN (HMH) also features Hazel Micalef, a detective with the Ontario provincial police. Our story opens with Hazel recovering from back injuries (from THE CALLING) and enduring more than physical pain as she requires her ex-husband's help. A case that requires her attention is a blessing and also a curse as she begins to play a game with a villain who creates a perfect puzzle. Great writing and characters make this a fast and enjoyable read.

Debut novelist John Vedon weighs in with his first thriller, THINK OF A NUMBER (Crown). Retired NY Homicide detective Dave Gurney is brought back to consult on a case involving a wickedly fiendishly clever serial killer who sends letters to his victims that begin with "Think of any number.." Complex and dark with realistic characters this is a killer debut.

TUTANKHAMUN (HARPER) by Nick Drake may not be everyone's cup of tea, but fans of historical mystery should enjoy this romp set in ancient Egypt at the time of the boy king. Someone is trying to terrorize the new King and Rahotep, detective of the Thebes division, is called into investigate. The strange happenings are tied to a series of murders in the city which could undermine the government.

TWICE BITTEN is the third book in the Chicaoland Vampire series by Chloe Neill. While there are an awful lot of these books popping up this is a fun series and worth checking out. The lead is a woman named Merit, a newly turned Vampire who is just discovering the world she lives in for what it really is. When a summit of various supernaturals is planned in Chicago Merit is given the task of protecting Gabriel Keene, a vampire with a price on his head. Action packed and loads of fun this is a great summer read.

THE WAGON and other stories from the city (University of Chicago Press) by Martin Preib is a collection of tales by a Chicago cop who has seen it all. Preib captures the reader on the first page and doesn't let go till the book is finished. Authentic and fascinating this is an incredible book. It is as much a study of human nature as it is a look at a city with its guard down. It will leave you glad that you aren't a cop and thankful for those who are.

WAKING THE WITCH (Dutton) by Kelly Armstrong is book 11 in the Otherworld series. Savannah Levine finally gets to stretch her wings and take on a case of her own while her adopted parents are on vacation. The motorcycle riding wild child teams up with another detective and heads to a small town in Washington to investigate some murders with obvious supernatural overtones. Armstrong is one of the best of this sub-genre and this is another in a great series.

## Book Reviews

### **A BAD DAY FOR PRETTY**

Sophie Littlefield

June, 2010

Minotaur Books

Stella Hardesty is back, and in a big way. Sophie Littlefield's debut novel A BAD DAY FOR SORRY garnered much buzz and every possible award nomination. A BAD DAY FOR PRETTY FIRMLY establishes her as a new brand of writer. Stella is a new and unique female protagonist. Her small town setting and day job running a sewing store on main street may suggest cozy but her hard-boiled attitude towards any human who'd lay a hand on another makes this series one that keeps the reader turning pages.

The book starts with both a twister and a twist. Stella's new found relationship with Sheriff "Goat" Brown is about to get even more complicated as a third individual adds even more baggage to a pair we're already cheering on.

But it's the unearthing of a body as a result of the tornado that propels this story forward. A woman's body has been found and the main suspect is someone Stella has dealt with in the past.

Can she prove that Neb Donovan did not commit this cold case of a murder?

It's a joy when a new writer holds your attention from beginning to end. It's a treat when she has something so new to say.

A BAD DAY FOR PRETTY; entertainment, the mystery way.

*Ruth Jordan*

### **A BOLT FROM THE BLUE**

Diane A.S. Stuckart

2010

Berkley

Dino, a.k.a. Delfina della Fazia, is called on by his Master, Leonardo da Vinci, to assist in the building of his flying machine. Relations among the city-states of Italy are volatile and the Duke of Milan wants to make the concept of the flying machine a reality so he can take control of the skies to have the advantage over his adversaries. Leonardo also hires a master carpenter to consult on the development; he hires Dino's father.

They have hardly begun their work when another apprentice to Leonardo is murdered. The clues quickly indicate that the murder is tied to the flying machine. Before the murderer can be discovered, the flying machine and Dino's father disappear. Dino must race against time to find his father and recover the flying machine. If it finds its way into the wrong hands, it could have dire consequences for all of Milan.

A BOLT FROM THE BLUE is Diane Stuckart's third book in the Leonardo da Vinci Mystery series. As with the previous two, it is a quick, light, enjoyable read. Delfina continues to develop as a character, and the inclusion of her father is a nice addition to the series. Leonardo remains an important character but keeps more to the background in this tale. What is brought to the forefront again is his exceptional intelligence. While Leonardo's apprentices study painting skills under him, this chapter in the saga focuses on da Vinci's engineering skills and of course the concept of his flying apparatus. Stuckart does a superb job throughout this series of reminding readers that da Vinci was indeed a Renaissance man.

Stuckart develops the time period, the setting, and the political unrest without bogging down the reader. The sum of all the story's elements bring Leonardo da Vinci's Italy to life.

While A BOLT FROM THE BLUE came out earlier this year, when snow was still plaguing my neck of the woods, it will make a great beach read for cozy lovers. Some references are made to the first two books in this series, but BOLT can easily be read and fully appreciated without prior knowledge of those books.

*Jen Forbus*

### **BLOOD MONEY**

Tom Bradby

2010

Corgi Books

BLOOD MONEY is a lengthy historical mystery set amidst the stock market crash of 1929. It centers on Joe Quinn, the son of a legendary NYPD detective, who is newly assigned to the detective squad at NYPD Headquarters. The novel evokes a world of intrigue and blatant corruption. The Irish fraternity in the department accepts Quinn because he is Irish himself and because many of them worked with his father. At first Quinn has a limited understanding of internal politics, which eventually turns to indifference and then disdain.

The backdrop of a nation on the brink of financial ruin is fitting considering the world we live in today. It allows the reader to sympathize with characters they might otherwise find alien. The political backdrop is also fitting. The novel takes place just before a mayoral election, between incumbent Jimmy Walker and reformist Fiorello LaGuardia. Many of the characters, for one reason or another, have an interest in maintaining the status quo. Others have a vested interest in reform. Naturally this collection of characters and competing interests will intersect. The plot is labyrinth, and discovering its twists and turns is half the fun.

I will say that it involves gangsters, politicians, and a depraved serial murderer. Bradby dumps the reader right into the middle of things. The character's histories and relationships are described on the fly. This is not a bad thing. BLOOD MONEY moves relentlessly forward. Being dropped right in the midst of things deepens the reader's sense of mystery, and also allows them to draw their own conclusions about the characters. Brady makes good use of that last aspect, using the reader's preconceptions to trick them. It's not cheap because he's not misleading you.

*John Warburton*

### **BOOK OF SHADOWS**

Alexandra Sokoloff

2010

St. Martin's

Dear readers, I will tell you right up front I have a problem with Alexandra Sokoloff. You see, while I do sleep very little, when I pick up one of her books I don't sleep at all. I'm up all night because I can't put the book down. The way I see it with book four out now she owes me at least 28 hours of sleep.

BOOK OF SHADOWS opens with Adam Garrett, homicide detective in Boston getting what looks like a slam dunk case. A girl is murdered in a way that points to satanic rituals and a Goth musician she was involved with is soon picked up. But of course nothing goes that easy and when a woman walks into the office and claims to be a witch who has visions tells Garrett and his partner that they have the wrong guy they aren't thrilled to say the least. However she makes a good case for there being other murders and Garrett soon is working with Tanith Cabarrus looking for a killer driven by something he has trouble believing.

Dark with a sprinkling of supernatural this is another on sitting read from Sokoloff. Clear away your schedule for a few hours, because when you start this book you won't stop till it's done.

*Jon Jordan*

## **BROKEN**

Karin Slaughter  
June, 2010  
Delacorte Press

It's been four years since we left Grant County. Karin Slaughter has gone on to write several great books. I wasn't sure I'd ever see Lena and Sara again. The last visit was a conclusive end to one of Crime Fiction's most hailed and controversial series. There was a story left to tell. Slaughter has executed it with an unforgiving pen.

An apparent suicide leads to another confrontation between two of mystery's most fascinating female characters. It's Thanksgiving week and Sara Linton is returning home to celebrate. At the same time Det. Lena Adams is called out of bed in the wee hours to investigate the suicide. Soon there is evidence of murder. The Grant P.D. make a grievous error, the suspect commits "suicide" in police custody and one police lies in ICU. So infuriated is Linton, she calls in the Georgia Bureau of Investigation. Enter agent Will Trent. Has Adams caused unnecessary death again? When a second body is found, we find ourselves privy to a great whodunit.

BROKEN is a book that stands on its own. You do not have to read the back list to enjoy this novel. Once you've read it you will go back.

Slaughter first shared her characters in BLINDSIGHTED. Two women, both survivors of abuse who take different paths to recover. Lena, the tough as nail cop who becomes self destructive. Sara the "in denial" female who becomes overly responsible and dependent on relationships. In the hands of a lesser writer this would have been too obviously ying and yang. With Slaughter's words, the possibilities are endless.

A police department that's lost its way after losing its heart is front and center in BROKEN. So too, is the hate that resides between the two women who must in the end try and make this right.

The story is the life. Why would a pretty young student be killed and what conclusions can be made when her boyfriend is also found dead?

BROKEN, a sequel very much worth the wait and the read.

*Ruth Jordan*

## **THE CASE OF THE MAN WHO DIED LAUGHING**

Tarquin Hall  
2010  
Simon & Schuster

Sometimes a reviewer gets lucky. A book will find its way into your hands that you may not have seen scanning the vast shelves of a massive bookstore. And that book charms you. It renders you so mentally content, so sated, that your faith in reading crime fiction is renewed. THE CASE OF THE MAN WHO DIED LAUGHING, the second of the Vish Puri, Most Private Investigator series is such a magical tome.

We are reacquainted with Puri and his crack team of undercover operatives – Tubelight, Flush and Facecream – when Dr. Jha, a major Indian scientist determined to bring to light the shenanigans of many of the country's fraudulent swamis, is murdered in the midst of a meeting of the Rajpath Laughing Club. On the top of the list of suspects – the Goddess Kali, fire breathing consort of Shiva. Her directive, the Maharaj Swami, had once been described by Jha as a "fraud" and a "charlatan." Is he a magical, mythical mystic or a mere murderous man? Puri finds he must pull aside the curtain to confront whomever is pulling the strings and pushing the buttons. From high-rise hotels to the slums of Haridwar, Puri and his team chase a deadly apparition that keeps slipping through their hands. And what is this? His wife Rumpi and his Mummy-ji are trying to crack an armed robbery case at home? This could really put a twist in Puri's waxed mustache! Tarquin Hall has brilliantly meshed solid, traditional detective work with a detective who is far from a mere Indian Philip Marlowe. Vish Puri, the "portly, persistent and unmistakably Punjabi" private eye is who feels his trade harkens back to Indian traditions established thousands of years ago in a country torn between all that was with all that it is becoming. This book is not mere amusing crime fiction. It showcases Hall's awareness of a country in chaos with a political system rife with corruption. And he treats us to a protagonist that adores Indian cuisine to such a degree the smell of curry wafts off the pages. THE CASE OF THE MAN WHO DIED LAUGHING is a full banquet and this reader is stuffed!

*Jennifer Jordan*

## **THE CASE OF THE MISSING SERVANT**

Tarquin Hall  
2010  
Simon & Schuster

There are all kinds of private detectives stationed all over the world. But until Vish Puri made his debut in this novel, none of them operated in the Indian subcontinent. Calling himself the "most private investigator," Vish operates from New Delhi and, of course, has more than his fill of matrimonial cases.

And then he is retained by an honest attorney accused of murdering his maidservant. Using common sense and his cadre of operatives, along with centuries-old principles of detection, Vish travels from Delhi to Jaipur to the uranium mines of Jharkhand to discover the facts of the case. Meanwhile, he has to check out a prospective groom to determine whether he is worthy of marriage to the granddaughter of a national hero. In this case, Vish employs modern techniques, including electronic eavesdropping and time-honored snooping.

The author has created an irrepressible character who is both amusing and shrewd. The descriptions and observations about India are right on the mark. A sequel, *THE CASE OF THE MAN WHO DIED LAUGHING*, was recently published.  
*Theodore Feit*

### **A CHOICE OF NIGHTMARES**

Lynn Kostoff  
2010  
New Pulp Press

*A CHOICE OF NIGHTMARES* starts off on familiar ground. A struggling actor, Robert Staples, is languishing in Miami, working for a shady agent who keeps him on the hook with promises of a comeback. One day Robert Staples gets a headache and throws a small dog to the alligators (literally) in front of a large crowd. In order to appease his agent he agrees to meet a man at the airport and deliver a package. The man is coming from Colombia, and the package isn't exactly what you'd think.

From there Robert Staples embarks on a downward spiral into the drug trade. He meets a woman, falls in love, and decides to invest in a highly lucrative cocaine deal. Does this sound familiar?

It isn't. *A CHOICE OF NIGHTMARES* is poetic and shocking. The novel manages to pack a maximum of story into a minimum of space. And I mean that as the highest of compliments. Kostoff manages to do more with four pages than most authors can do with ten or twenty. The world he evokes is as familiar as it is foreign.

*A CHOICE OF NIGHTMARES* has the requisite sinister characters psychopaths, seductresses, and a Machiavellian wheeler/dealer. In the middle is Robert Staples, a man who believes he's hit bottom, only to discover that he's not even close. Watching his reactions to each new situation is entertaining and revolting at the same time. This crime story will leave the reader more than satisfied.

*John Warburton*

### **COBRA**

Frederick Forsyth  
July, 2010  
Putnam

It's hard to remember whether Frederick Forsyth was my first go to Thriller writer. He was definitely amongst the first and it was in the seventies when he made the top of my list. Thirty years later, the man's got rhythm.

*COBRA* opens with a Whitehouse Dinner and ends with two fantastical double crosses. In between is classic Thriller for 2010 reader.

When the cocaine trade causes a death on the streets of D.C., the U.S. President decides it's time to shut it down. His first question is how can it be done. He goes to Cobra, a retired spy who served during the cold war to posit an agenda. What follows is an over the top, gleeful and reflective read. Pal Devereaux (aka Cobra) believes it can be done. Extreme secrecy and need to know must be strictly observed. His conclusion is that the trade cannot be stopped at either its conception nor its distribution levels. That leaves the need for the destruction of the delivery system. Cobra has a plan. He's given the means and opportunity to execute the plan.

What follows is vintage spy novel, guerilla style. Forsyth has long had the aptitude to comingle what is real and what can never be into the "this is so cool". *COBRA* is a six star thriller in a five star world.

*Ruth Jordan*

### **CRASHERS**

Dana Haynes  
2010  
Minotaur

*CRASHERS* is a procedural and a welcome one at that. Haynes steers clear of the police/military/secret society bit and focuses on completely fresh topic matter. The title refers to the investigators employed by the National Transportation Safety Board to investigate airplane crashes. I'll admit that I had some reservations about the subject matter. After all how exciting could crash investigators be when there are plenty of suspense novels featuring CIA agents and Special Forces personnel?

The answer is, plenty exciting. The characters are well drawn, and every bit as resourceful as a Tom Clancy hero, and quite a bit more realistic. The main protagonist is Dr. Leonard Tomzak, known as Tommy, a pathologist who is roped into

the role of lead investigator.

The novel is packed with detail about the mechanics of a crash investigation. Naturally everything is not as it seems. The crash was not an accident, but rather an act of terrorism. (This is made clear in the opening pages, so I'm not spoiling anything.)

In addition to the CRASHERS, the novel features two other protagonists. The most interesting is Daria Gibron, an ex-spy for Israel. Her storyline intersects with the main plot in ways I won't reveal. The other is Ray Calabrese, an FBI agent who serves as Daria's handler. The antagonists are a mentally unstable computer programmer and group of Irish terrorists. The terrorists are not IRA members, as most people would expect, rather they are members of a Protestant terror group from Belfast.

The characters and the plot all intersect as the novel progresses. The results are pure entertainment. I look forward to Mr. Haynes' next novel.

*John Warburton*

## **DARK BLOOD**

Stuart MacBride

April 2010

HarperCollins UK

Stuart MacBride has used a true crime story as the basis for this novel, the sixth in the Logan McRae series. It serves as the main case among the Detective Sergeant's work overload, exacerbating his moodiness, drinking and smoking, all of which is heightened, of course, by his interaction with DI Steele, one of the more interesting characters in the genre. On top of her continually riding Logan, he has to cope with another superior, incompetent DI Beattie.

The main plot involves Richard Knox, a man convicted of raping an elderly grandfather.

After serving his time, Knox decides to come to Aberdeen and occupy his late grandmother's home. He is brought to the Scottish city by DI Danby, who originally arrested him. The arrival of Knox sets off waves of protest and his house is burned down. He is whisked off to a "safe" house, from which he is soon kidnapped. Logan, among others, has the task of "protecting" Knox, so it falls to him to find him and the reason for his abduction. At the same time, DI Danby disappears, doubling Logan's task.

The lengthy novel is awash in various subplots, keeping Logan busy virtually 24/7. It seems he has to stop a flood of counterfeit currency in Aberdeen, the murder of a confidential informant, and a couple of jewelry store robberies, among other side issues. All in a day's (or week's) work. Despite the book's length, it is fast reading, tautly plotted and engrossing. Logan, Steele and the other characters are all interesting, and the dialogue, as usual, sparkling.

*Theodore Feit*

## **DARK RAIN**

Mat Johnson & Simon Gane

August 2010

Vertigo

I come from a prose world. This makes the world of the graphic novel much more black and white for me than for those who've always read both. Johnson's shown his talent with INCOGNITO, shown the beauty of how script and art can tell a story with clarity that prose alone will never match.

DARK RAIN goes back to that September in 2005. The day the levies broke in New Orleans haunts us in a way even the Towers can't. We let ourselves down. Johnson captures this. As DARK RAIN opens people in New Orleans are getting ready to weather another hurricane. The government is about to show just how little they can do, and in Houston, TX. Two half-way house roommates see an opportunity.

Gane's art meets Johnson's script; spare and with no frills. Dabny Arceneaux is a romantic. He's also a Veteran with child support issues. Working as a guard on Houston's docks he knew it was wrong to look the other way. He owns his arrest, while refurbishing a rundown boat. Jack Emmitt was born in the Quarter. He worked in a bank. He was caught pilfering safe deposit boxes during lunch and transferred to Houston due to overcrowding.

As the water rises their plan congeals. Sharing with Dabney's former commanding officer may not be in their best interest. DARK RAIN, military for hire.... The scum that rose to the top of the Katrina story before the water receded. The two individuals, entering the chaos with personal motives but finding a humanity they'd never realized.

This book captures images of Katrina more vividly than CNN dared at the time. Citizens trapped on roofs, the elderly sacrificing for the young, the travesty of the stadium, of an America divided between the haves and have nots. Johnson and Gane boil it all down to one panel. Money will weigh down any hero.

DARK RAIN is the story of two men fighting the elements and their own past. Much more than the story of a bank heist, DARK RAIN is a 21<sup>st</sup> century parable told in words and pictures.

*Ruth Jordan*

## **DOWN TO THE WIRE**

David Rosenfelt

2010  
Minotaur

It is a journalistic axiom that a reporter should never become part of the story. Unfortunately, that principle does not apply to Chris Turner, a reporter for the *Bergen News* who is led by the nose by a serial killer, who initially entices him with a tip about a scandal about a leading political figure and then feeds him additional leads. To dead bodies.

At one point, even Chris is suspected of being the mysterious "PT," the source of the information which has made him nationally, and even internationally, famous, while he claims modestly he was only lucky, being in the right place at the right time. It makes for a rousing plot.

This is the author's second standalone novel, following the highly popular Andy Carpenter series, which included seven entries. What this book proves is that he is not limited to a formula. The book is well written and the story moves ahead swiftly, keeping the reader off kilter [in a good way].

*Theodore Feit*

## **EYE OF THE RED TSAR**

Sam Eastland  
2010  
Bantam Books

EYE OF THE RED TSAR is combination political thriller and detective novel. (Think Sherlock Holmes, not Philip Marlow.) The protagonist is a man named Pekkala. Before the Russian Revolution, Pekkala was known as the Emerald Eye, the Tsar's personal investigator. He wielded authority and commanded respect.

At the start of the novel Pekkala has been a political prisoner for twelve years, however he is set free, at the behest of those who imprisoned him, in order to solve a mystery. All I will say is that the mystery concerns the deaths of the Romanov family. (It has nothing to do with Anastasia.) Since Pekkala was not only a brilliant investigator, but personally close to the Romanov's, the powers that be (Stalin) decide that he is the best man for the job.

The main story takes place in 1929, however there are numerous flashback sequences that deal with the pre-Revolution era. Usually I'm not a fan of this technique, but in this case it works. The flashbacks are essential to developing the plot and characters.

Some might consider this book historical fiction, but I think that's a mistake. It is a mystery set in a historical era. Now we're getting into finite distinctions, but any one who reads Internet review boards knows that there are people who love to nitpick historical inaccuracies. That's a waste of time in my opinion. Why not just enjoy the story of what it is? I certainly did.

EYE OF THE RED TSAR is an engaging mystery that features an enjoyable new character. According to the author bio in back of the book, Eastland is at work on second Pekkala novel. I can't wait.

*John Warburton*

## **THE FALL GIRL**

Kaye C. Hill  
2010  
Creme de la Crime

Lexy Lomax, working as a private detective out of her fisherman's cabin in the Suffolk, England village of Clopwolde-on-Sea, is hired by a 16-year-old girl to investigate the recent death of a woman she'd never met. This strange request is, somewhat dubiously, explained by the fact that the girl, Rowana Paterson, is convinced that her attempt at witchcraft has produced fatal results. A fuller explanation deals with the dead woman having left to Rowana all her worldly goods, including her cottage in a place called Freshing Hill.

Thirty-year-old Lexy has literally escaped three months prior from her previous life as Alexandra Warwick-Holmes, the trophy wife of an antiques dealer of questionable morality, taking her [well, technically, her husband's] scarred, caramel-coloured Chihuahua, Kinky, with her

While I must admit that generally books with paranormal/occult/four-footed beings are generally not in my comfort zone [understanding that YMMV], this author and her protagonist had me completely charmed very quickly. [The tiny animal has an important but non-speaking, non-detecting role. I must say, though, that I'm not sure what a Chihuahua's eyes look like when they "tighten."]

Lexy's investigation at the dead woman's cottage, with the invaluable assistance of her friend, DI Bernard Milo, takes some suspenseful and unexpected turns, with a wholly satisfying resolution. A thoroughly delightful tale.

*Gloria Feit*

## **FIRST THRILLS**

Edited by Lee Child  
2010

## Forge

This is another thriller anthology and it's got the big guns in it. Ken Bruen, Lee Child, Rebecca Cantrell, Heather Graham, Gregg Hurwitz, John Lutz, Karin Slaughter and many more. All the stories are brand new and have not been anywhere else before. Some stand out for me were: EDDY MAY by Theo Gangi, THE PLOT by Jeffery Deaver and UNDERBELLY by Grant McKenzie. As these are short stories I really can't say much without giving things away, but I'll tell you, there's not a clunker in the bunch, these are all stories by authors at the top of their game.

Jon Jordan

## FOGTOWN

Anderson Gabrych

Vertigo Crime

Aug 2010

On the surface it's a San Franciscan detective story. Not a bad thing, to be sure. But after a couple pages you realize the story gives a lot more than just the mystery a crime story generally comes with. What we get is not only an intriguing noir tale but an unexpected character study as well.

Setting could be the most important element in a story. Where better to set a dark tale of crime than in the foggy streets of San Francisco in the 1950's? When you see the Golden Gate City it might appear nice but when you look closer you see the dredges. Frank Grissel lives there. A veritable waste of a man, he spends his nights getting drunk and feeling sorry for himself as he wanders the city. Of course, he's a private dick. While searching for a missing prostitute for her mother he stumbles on the body of a different teenage hooker. He gets the attention of the police, the church, members of high society and a young therapist doing her own version of "the Kinsey Report." Writer Andersen Gabrych has taken all the elements of a crime story and added enough twists that you'll need to keep reading.

The most impressive part of the storytelling is how he takes Frank from a cliché to a real person. Even his name, Grissel, wants to get across that he's the type of P.I. you'd see rise from the bottle to save the damsel in distress and overcome the adversity and save the day. That's not what you get. Gabrych makes Grissel into someone that is believable from his origins, to his motivations, and naturally, with his flaws. And boy is he flawed. You don't root for him, you feel sorry for him. You pity him, and in that pity you want him to succeed. It's an emotion to feel for a protagonist that is impressive to get across. Credit should be given to Gabrych as well as to artist Brad Rader.

His art invokes memories of Harvey Pekar and Howard Cruse. It's a cartoonish realism that deftly gets across the darkness of a scene as well as a simple emotion on a face. There are moments when an expression or actions skirt the line of humorous-cartoon, but by the next panel you're pulled back in. It's not normally the type of art you'd think of when a crime book is done, but there is so much it adds. The succinct connection between the writer and artist is evident.

FOGTOWN is expertly put together and visually ideal from scene, story, and characters to the mystery and resolution. A unique and genre-breaking book, fans of noir and crime fiction need to give this book its due.

*Jo Schmidt*

## FRAGILE

Lisa Unger

August 2010

Shaye Areheart Books

In the small town of The Hollows, a secret lingers, haunting its inhabitants. Some of the inhabitants know the secret that haunts them while others feel the effects but don't know their origins. When a teenage girl goes missing, the secret rears its ugly head demanding to be acknowledged.

Jones Cooper is the head of The Hollows police department, so he's called on when Charlene goes missing. Charlene also happens to be Jones' son's girlfriend. At first it appears that Charlene has run off to New York City, but neither Charlene's mother, nor Ricky Cooper, believe that to be the case. What's more, Charlene and Jones both know the ghost that haunts The Hollows and it's eerily similar to the disappearance of Charlene.

Lisa Unger's FRAGILE is a bit of a departure from her previous thriller novels, but it hasn't departed from Unger's complexity of plot and depth of character. There is a very rich psychological element to her ninth novel, forcing the characters' thoughts and emotions into the limelight more so than their actions.

Unger depicts the small town in all its beauty as well as its warts and foibles. In some ways The Hollows is so small it's suffocating its residents, and in other ways it's so large that the ugly secret remains hidden for decades. That dichotomy is mirrored in the people inhabiting The Hollows as the past collides violently with the present.

The haunting beauty of FRAGILE is enhanced by Unger's poetic imagery that weaves consistent images throughout the novel developing the idea that we're all tied into one another, affecting one another, connected. Those connections at

once both "fragile" and strong.

Once again, Lisa Unger has succeeded at crafting a gripping tale that will echo in your thoughts long after you've turned the final page.

*Jen Forbus*

### **GATSBY'S VINEYARD**

A.E. Maxwell

2010

Busted Flush Press

GATSBY'S VINEYARD is the third novel in a series featuring Fiddler and Fiora. Fiddler is a private detective and Fiora is a financial wizard. Married once, but currently divorced, they are still in love. This odd arrangement is explored throughout the course of the novel. The story begins when Fiddler notices that a famous Napa Valley wine is being sold at discount prices. Since the owner of the vineyard is an ex-girlfriend, he is concerned that something is wrong. It is. Fiddler and Fiora are drawn into a tangled web of business rivals, ex-husbands, Texas oilmen, and University researchers, in their attempt to find out who is out to ruin Sandra Autry (the ex). I was a little skeptical at first, high society and fine wine isn't my thing, but then I started to learn a little bit about the two main characters and I got interested. The relationship between Fiddler and Fiora is the most interesting thing about the novel.

That isn't the only thing the novel has going for it though. Napa Valley is practically a character on its own. It's clear that Maxwell spent a significant amount of time in the Napa Valley. In addition to the descriptions of scenery, there is an amusing and some times brutal portrayal of the upper crust. The mystery is unique as well, and surprisingly thrilling. I definitely have to give Maxwell points for originality. The setup isn't exactly new ground, but the rest is.

*John Warburton*

### **GREEK STREET: BLOOD CALLS FOR BLOOD**

Peter Milligan

2010

Vertigo

Peter Milligan's name is a part of a select group. When his name appears on a title you buy it. Just like that.

This is the guy who wrote one of the great comic series of all time.

Greek Street has at its heart a simple premise — the Greek gods and characters from myth placed in a modern, London, criminal milieu — that is a gold mine of opportunity and story. Police detectives, street kids, strippers, gangsters, and warring families. Greek Street tells us more than once that the old stories are new and the machinations of the gods mesh seamlessly with not only the modern world but the underworld of criminal activity.

From the jump Greek Street is pretty much brilliant. It's a joy to watch how these characters and their individual story arcs mesh into the larger tapestry of arcs. By the end of the volume smaller arcs have been revealed and medium arcs have been revealed but the larger arc, much like the larger forces at work, aren't fully revealed. Fans of crime comics have a lot to sink their teeth into. The modern character types feel immediately comfortable. For fans of other types of story the opposite will be more true. They will prefer the gods and mythological characters. Either way this is a title with a broad appeal.

Greek Street is a Vertigo title and I couldn't help but think of the Vertigo Crime imprint. The more overt of the supernatural stories of the crime imprint so far have felt a little out of place but the fantastical elements of Greek Street, given the proper amount of room to breathe, and in the right hands, prove to be a potent blend.

Bottom line is that Greek Street's brilliant characters, complex story and smooth writing make it a must read.

GREEK STREET: BLOOD CALLS FOR BLOOD is the first TP volume collecting issues 1-5

*Brian Lindenmuth*

### **GUNSHOT ROAD**

Adrian Hyland

SOHO Crime

2010

GUNSHOT ROAD takes place in the Australian Outback. Its protagonist is a half Aboriginal/ half white, policewoman named Emily Tempest. Emily is a newly minted police officer in Central Australia. Emily's first day on the job involves a murder. The victim is an elderly geologist who most people believe is crazy. The case appears open and shut, but Emily isn't convinced. She begins an investigation that brings her in contact with a cast of interesting and fresh characters. This is really what drew me to GUNSHOT ROAD. The mystery is interesting, but the payoff is fairly run of the mill. The real draw is Emily Tempest and her world. The novel has a lot of Australian slang, which is difficult at first (but then so was Anthony Burgess' mix of Russian and English) but it grows on you. It also serves the purpose of drawing the reader fully

into the author's world. This aspect won't be as pronounced for Australian readers, or those that are familiar with the culture. But for me it was thrilling and enlightening experience.

Hyland takes his time getting to action, but its well worth it. There is a long middle section that, while entertaining, seems out of place in a mystery/thriller. Of course he's telling you something indirectly. As is the case with most mysteries, you need to pay attention the whole time.

*John Warburton*

## **HANDLING THE DEAD**

John Ajvide Lindqvist

October 2010

St. Martin's Press

Yes, Lindqvist wrote LET THE RIGHT ONE IN. That will be enough for many to run out and by this book. Not enough for me. When I saw the word "zombies" on the back cover I groaned. Not another author cashing in on a trend, I thought. But damned if this book isn't good. Really good!

As people across Stockholm complain of nasty headaches, the power grid is going crazy. The air itself seems to be crackling with energy. A man clutching his temples finds his way to a cemetery. He doesn't understand what he sees. A caterpillar, a small one, was rapidly becoming smaller seemingly boring through the stone engraved with a family's names. This was the beginning. The beginning of a brand of heaven for some. And of hell for others.

A man watches as his beloved wife dies after a horrible car crash. But her hand moves in his. She opens her eyes.

Another man is in mourning for his grandson. His life and the life of the boys mother, his own daughter, have lost meaning with the lads passing. When he is called to investigate a story about strange activity in the city morgue, he doesn't believe what he hears. What he sees horrifies him. And gives him hope.

A girl, almost a woman, is an outsider. Somehow feeling what others feel, she shares this curse with a grandmother who is her only anchor in life. When they also share the horrible headache it is her grandmother who tells her what the flood of feelings they are receiving means.

"The souls of the dead. They have been let out."

In the space of a few days, a city is being populated by the recently dead. Are these corpses that move? Are they the menace portrayed in films? Or are they loved ones come back from death to be cherished and not feared?

Written with a vividness and depth rarely seen in this genre, HANDLING THE DEAD is no mere horror novel. It is a dissertation on death and how it affects people as individuals and as a society. Fascinating and uncommonly good.

*Jennifer Jordan*

## **I'D KNOW YOU ANYWHERE**

Laura Lippman

August, 2010

William Morrow

Eliza and her family have returned to the States after time spent in England. They are close enough to her childhood home for the children to see their grandparents regularly and far enough away to keep the past at a distance. Until the letter arrives...

I'D KNOW YOU ANYWHERE. Eliza has a secret. The secret is shared with only five people, her parents, her sister, the husband who's made the world safe for her and the dictator of the note.

15 year old Elizabeth was kidnapped as she cut through the woods her parents forbade her to go through. Walter held her captive for months before the rescue.

About to die, Walter wants to apologize. He's found an emissary to contact his former hostage. Lippman has found another way to tell a story.

Relating a horrific past and a present day dilemma, Lippman tells the story of a serial killer and the victim who got away. As the two narratives advance, layers of morality are exposed and free will is questioned with the flow.

What makes I'D KNOW YOU ANYWHERE spectacular is the depth of Lippman's concept for the book. Once again this author has risen the bar for herself and her contemporary novelists. Everything she's written before was an exercise to write this novel. Memory is suspect. Only two can keep a secret.

Both the dialog and advancement of her characters from one page to the next make this a read best shared with the reader in print form. Present is the great sense of humor Lippman is known for and the depth of fear and loathing she's taken us to before. The delivery is different. Riveting. New. I'D KNOW YOU ANYWHERE is an experience you'll only share with yourself and the book. Sometimes a writer really can find the special blend that makes everything about their book too personal to communicate but so absorbing you'll want to share it with everyone else who read's it.

This is one of those books. To quote Henry Higgins "I do believe she's got it".

*Ruth Jordan*

## **JUST ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE**

A.E. Maxwell

re-issue 2009  
Busted Flush Press

Fiddler is a P.I. who once played the violin. He will still do anything for his ex-wife Fiora. They both love each other but learned they couldn't live together as husband and wife. Now they are "friends with occasional benefits." So, when Customs agents pay Fiora a visit concerning her twin brother, Danny, Fiora calls on Fiddler to help her find out just what kind of trouble Danny's gotten himself into this time. As they begin to investigate Danny's business dealings in computer chips, they find that Danny has problems with more than just the Feds.

JUST ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE is the first book in the Fiddler and Fiora series, and it is fun. One of my favorite parts about this book is the deft manner in which the A.E. Maxwell writing team weaves music into the book. They give the standard P.I. novel a unique twist. Analogies and metaphors pepper Fiddler's dialogue and thoughts throughout the book. The writing in this novel hooked me. There's smart humor blended with the emotional struggles of the characters. I think in this particular novel, they probably did a better job of developing Fiddler than they did Fiora, and I was a tad bit disappointed in the "damsel in distress" motif that made its way into the plot. But, JUST ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE was originally published in 1985, so I'll give them a bit of leeway on that one.

The novel reflects the time period it was written in, but that doesn't detract from the book at all. And quite frankly, it shouldn't detract. Great art imitates life. Throughout time, great works have been reflections of the time and place they were written. JUST ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE reflects California in the 1980s. It's funny with a complex plot, unique twist and characters I definitely want to visit again.

*Jen Forbus*

### **LAUGHED 'TIL HE DIED**

Carolyn Hart  
2010  
Morrow

The 20<sup>th</sup> entry in this charming series brings back Annie Darling, proprietor of Death on Demand mystery bookstore, and her husband, Max, among other things proprietor of Confidential Commissions. One of Max's other interests is the Haven, a youth recreation center where he volunteers. The shocking death of a teen who frequented the Haven is quickly followed by the killing of Booth Wagner, a pompous, wealthy retired businessman who had been intent in replacing the Haven's director, Jean Hughes. The latter had pleaded with Annie and Max to intervene to save her job. When she becomes the prime suspect in Wagner's death, their efforts evolve into a murder investigation.

Wagner was a man who "saw most things as a big joke unless the laugh was on him," and the list of enemies he'd made is long and varied. Max is a man who always keeps his promises, and he promises Jean he will get to the bottom of things. There are many with motives, and he thinks "How could he judge what mattered enough to make one of these people kill?"

All the usual characters, human and feline, are present: Laurel, Max's empathic, much-married and libidinous mother, and her investigative-minded friends; Agatha, the plump black cat who rules the bookstore, and Dorothy L, the fluffy white cat who "reigns supreme at home." The book, as always, is replete with the names of worthy mystery authors, one of the many delights of Ms. Hart's series, as are the descriptions of Broward's Rock, the South Carolina sea island where the action takes place. The writing seemed a bit padded and repetitious at times, slowing down the pace, but overall it is a well-plotted mystery with characters the reader can always look forward to meeting again.

*Gloria Feit*

### **LOST RIVER**

Stephen Booth  
April 2010  
HarperCollins (UK)

In this, the tenth book in the series featuring CID officers DS Diane Fry and DC Ben Cooper of the Derbyshire Constabulary based in Edendale, the tale opens with Ben trying to rescue an eight-year-old, out on a bank holiday in Dovedale with her family, from drowning in a few inches of water. His efforts, however, are to no avail.

Neither Diane's nor Ben's primary story line deals with any formally assigned case. Ben is dealing with the aftermath of the little girl's death, and his conviction that it may not have been an accident, while Diane's has to do with an equally personal but perhaps more traumatic event: When a hit on the National Database opens an enquiry into the rape years ago in which she was the victim, she must finally try to come to terms with the assault. Diane is granted an indefinite leave of absence so that she can work with the officers working the cold case, and Ben is appointed Acting DS. Ben thinks of himself as "the officer who failed to save Emily Nield's life." He becomes involved with the dead girl's family, and is soon viewed by his colleagues as "a police officer who'd become obsessed and was trying too hard to make a case out of nothing." As to Diane, she is described by colleagues as "Straight as an arrow . . . always going by the book." This time, not so much. She sees herself as "no different from all the washed-up people everywhere, all the fools who'd ever messed up their lives or destroyed their relationships. Work was safe ground, a place where personal feelings could be

put aside, shrugged off with her coat at the door of the office. The trouble was, right now she could feel the safe ground shifting under her feet. She was still as dedicated to the job as she'd ever been. But she had a suspicion the job wasn't quite so loyal to her any more." In the end, both Ben and Diane find that the only one they can completely trust is each other.

Detailed descriptions [almost - but only almost - to a fault] are provided of the towns and the countryside, bringing the Peak District, among other areas, to life for the reader. The book deals most of all with memories, and the distortion thereof

For readers familiar with this wonderful series and its protagonists, LOST RIVER provides in-depth character studies of both, and makes them that much more human, and both those readers and others only now being introduced to them will look forward to their return. I must admit that a certain ambiguity in the final pages made me question whether or not that will happen; I am sure I am not alone in hoping that they will reappear in Mr. Booth's future novels.

*Gloria Feit*

### **MR. MONK IS CLEANED OUT**

Lee Goldberg

2010

Obsidian

MR. MONK IS CLEANED OUT is one of those books that make me smile when it arrives. I love what Lee does with these book. His ability to channel Monk is uncanny and almost makes me wonder if they weren't basing this character on him in some way when they developed the series for TV. In truth it's just that Goldberg is a Hell of a writer.

California is broke, and this ends up hurting the city of San Francisco's police department and Mr. Monk is out of consulting work till there are funds again. Thinking he can manage to get by on savings Monk isn't too worked up... yet. Unfortunately all of Monks money was invested with a Bob Sebes who ran Reiner Investments. As it turns out Sebes took all the money and has been arrested in the mother of all fraud cases. Monk is busted flat broke. When a witness ends up dead Monk steps in to solve a case that involves the main suspect being under constant watch and not being able to leave his building.

Using a story idea "ripped from the headlines" works great here and Goldberg weaves a tale that is fun, entertaining as hell and totally satisfying. I no associate Monk with Goldberg more than the TV show.

Jon Jordan

### **NEVER LOOK AWAY**

Linwood Barclay

2010

Delacorte Press

NEVER LOOK AWAY is a mystery that appears to be several different things throughout the first quarter or so of the book. It's a great start for a story in which nothing is what it seems. Linwood Barclay is excellent at creating characters that are average in a way that allows us to see ourselves in them. The protagonist is David Harwood. He is a newspaper reporter in an era (now) where newspapers are staffed with marketers and salesmen instead of actual reporters. David is one of the few holdouts. His current story involves a company that specializes in building and staffing private prisons. David is struggling to prove that they are buying city council votes.

At the same time his wife is struggling with an on again/ off again bout of depression. She even confesses that she is thinking of killing herself. This prompts David to become deeply concerned. That concern only deepens when she disappears during a trip to a local amusement park.

The novel is brought to life through Barclay's ability to make us empathize and sympathize with its characters. I found myself squarely in David Harwood's shoes, so much so that I missed the significance of important events right along with him. Barclay brings the reader into the loop through well-done third person segments. The pacing is just right, so that you don't get to far ahead of the protagonist. But you're not left scratching your head and saying, "Huh?" either.

NEVER LOOK AWAY is an excellent thriller. It's the first novel I've read by Barclay that I've read. While I feel like I've missed out, at least I'll have something (like his whole back catalogue) to tide me over until his next release.

*John Warburton*

### **A NIGHT OF LONG KNIVES**

Rebecca Cantrell

2010

Forge

Hannah Vogel is traveling to Switzerland from South America on a writing assignment when the zeppelin she and her young son Anton are traveling in is stopped in Germany. Hannah knows right away that the authorities have stopped the zeppelin to take her and Anton into custody. Three years prior they escaped Germany and the clutches of a head Nazi SA officer, Ernst Rohm. Rohm will stop at nothing to regain custody of Anton, who he claims is his son.

Rohm's men kidnap Hannah and Anton once the zeppelin has landed. They are separated and Hannah is taken to Rohm who insists she must marry him if she hopes to ever see Anton again. Hitler steps in to prevent Hannah from marrying Rohm; he has Rohm and his SA troops executed. But Hannah still does not have Anton. She's desperate to find him and once again escape Germany.

Returning to World War II and Nazi Germany, Cantrell develops a very dark setting, examining how Hitler affected those connected to the SA troops. The title of Cantrell's book comes from the actual event in history where masses of men were silently executed and their families were left with no answers, no remains to bury, nothing. This is a group where empathy is not as easily created, given they were initially part of Hitler's forces. But by running Hannah Vogel's desperate search for her own "son" parallel to the stories of the families affected by this slaughter, Cantrell allows the reader to connect and empathize. Family is the epicenter around which the major themes of this novel work, and readers can connect and identify with family.

What strikes me the most in this novel is how Cantrell so articulately depicts the inability to trust. No one knows who they can trust or who they can't trust. Families separate as allegiances divide. Trust is a vital, yet fragile commodity. And this utter lack of trust works in developing the darkness shrouding the people of Nazi Germany. The loneliness emanates from the pages as the characters flounder in a sea of emotional isolation. Trust, when present, glimmers light and hope, but it is not easy to come by.

In *A KNIGHT OF LONG KNIVES* the blending of historical facts with the passionately imagined lives of these characters makes for a thought-provoking, riveting read.

*Jen Forbus*

### **THE SANDBOX**

David Zimmerman

2010

Soho Crime

In his debut novel, David Zimmerman's territory, literally and figuratively, is the frequently discomfiting one of Iraq and the ongoing war there. The reader is immediately thrust into the conflict on the first page when Pvt. Toby Durant discovers the dead body of a naked child in the middle of the road while riding in a Humvee in a convoy in the 118 degree heat. But that sighting becomes the least horrifying part of the scene.

Durant, stationed in the desert which his buddies call "the sandbox," has learned to do without some of the basic necessities: ready-made cigarettes, toilet paper, coffee filters, making do with "trash when they don't send us the right equipment." But it's the sights and sounds that really get to him. In his mid-twenties and with a pregnant girlfriend back home to whom he is engaged, he is determined to "get through my war. Work on one thing at a time and only think of that. Then go on to the next thing." The reader coming into this book with certain convictions regarding the controversial issues of the continuing presence of foreign troops, and of war in general, will find nothing here to quell them. But that is only the starting point in this novel, as Durant uncovers pervasive corruption on a level and to a degree that only heightens the jeopardy confronting him and the men with whom he serves.

Not an easy book to read, it is, however, well worth the effort.

*Gloria Feit*

### **SAVAGES**

Don Winslow

July, 2010

Simon & Schuster

As in every entertainment industry, Crime Fiction has an A list. Don Winslow is one of our Valedictorians. Every time I read one of his books I wonder how he can possibly outdo himself. He always does.

*SAVAGES*, read it. It's the story of a trio, two volleyball friends in business and the girl who loves them both. It's the story of a young Hispanic man who wants a better life for his girlfriend and the child she's carrying. The business the friends share, Class A Ganga with a reputation of being the best. The young man's choice of career? Muscle for the drug Cartel that would absorb our trio with violent threat. As bodies begin to fall, complete with internet beheadings, we know this book won't be comfortable. The beauty of *SAVAGES* is Winslow's ability to weave truly personal and trusting relationships into a narrative that's so dark you'll need extra wattage to make it through. The human condition as no one else writing today can put to the page. A must read for anyone who appreciates writing at its finest.

*Ruth Jordan*

### **SHIBUMI**

Trevanian

2010 (reprint)

Three Rivers Press

*SHIBUMI* has been rereleased by Three Rivers Press. Trevanian is known for his book *the EIGER SANCTION* and *THE LOO SANCTION*. For me *SHIBUMI* is his best book. I've read it numerous times and I can't tell you how many copies I've bought and given to people.

Nicholai Hel was born in Shanghai during the first world war, a Russian mother and German father and training by a master of martial arts he has become the world's best assassin. His personal quest is to achieve a state of effortless perfection, Shibumi.

He is drawn back into the life he wants to leave behind, and anyone who stands in his way is doomed.

Originally published in 1979 there is a sequel planned which will be written by Don Winslow.

This is one of my all time favorite books and the book I use to measure all other thrillers.

Jon Jordan

### **THE SINGER'S GUN**

Emily St. John Mandel

2010

Unbridled Books

Things start out uneasy for Anton Walker. He has a great job, a great wife and a wedding on the horizon. Things are looking good. Except his job duties and staff have been stripped away, he has been relegated to the basement, his wife keeps herself locked up in her study and after they finally marry after two cancellations he leaves his new wife on their honeymoon moving in to an isolated Italian village. What unfolds from this almost prosaic start is a literary crime novel heavy on character development and the relationship dynamics.

His forged Harvard degree, his missing secretary and her unexpected reappearance will provide the start to not only the upheaval of his life mentioned above but also the peeling back of the layers of his life. He comes from a family of criminals. His parents are fences, trafficking in antique stolen goods and his cousin forges documents and immigration paperwork, including passports. Anton was involved in the forgery business but successfully extracted himself from the life only to be pulled back in for one more job under the threat of being exposed. In a family of criminals the only crime is wanting a "normal" life and not possessing the desire to help his family. What Anton wants is such a foreign concept for his family of criminals that they don't know how to support him in his desire to obtain it and do nothing to help him protect it.

As the main timeline moves along the back-stories fill in by shooting and arcing away from the main story in grand and sweeping personal and family histories before coming back to the main story.

THE SINGER'S GUN may be more of a crime milieu novel than a full-fledged crime fiction it is none the less quite brilliant.

*Brian Lindenmuth*

### **SNOWBOUND**

Blake Crouch

June 2010

Minotaur Books

From his first book, DESERT PLACES to last year's stunning ABANDON, Blake Crouch has securely established himself as a writer who always has something to say. ABANDON was such an epic tale with so many layers I was curious about what we'd read next from Mr. Crouch.

The answer is SNOWBOUND, a taut and linear tale of a family torn apart and the risks they're willing to take to find their way back to one another.

As the book starts Will Innis, loving husband and father is preparing a brief in a Suburban home. Daughter Devlin sleeps peacefully, secure in her family environment. On a secluded bit of highway mother Rachel is abducted, never to return. In a world where the husband is always suspect number one, Will sees only one choice. Will and Devlin run.

Five years and a couple of identities later Will and Devlin receive a visitor. Kaylan knows Will is innocent and she believes that together they can find not only Rachel but a number of other women who've gone missing on lonely highways.

The journey towards the end of SNOWBOUND is as chilling as the setting is cold. Crouch's gift for suspense has never been this personal before. Devlin and her "special needs" make her the strongest child character I've read in years. The action in Alaska makes SNOWBOUND an eerie and charismatic read. It's the hope for a happy ending that keeps you turning pages at a pace faster than the speed of a seventies rock solo. This is Blake Crouch, scholar of words, parser of tales. Enjoy the journey from darkness to .....

With great humbleness and the back-up of a Booklist Starred Review, I cannot recommend this book highly enough.

SNOWBOUND is simply superb.

*Ruth Jordan*

### **SPEAK NO EVIL**

Martyn Waites

June, 2010

Pegasus Books

Joe Donovan is back and Martyn Waites is about to suck out a little more of your soul. I first met Joe while he was crucified to a floor. The intervening years haven't made the man's life any easier. The reading is always great. Joe's detective agency now has offices. There are people in his life he trusts. He's still haunted by the bottle and by his past. Both have stolen from him, and he confronts them anew every day.

In *SPEAK NO EVIL*, Waites opens with an interview. Joe's old life as a reporter has reached out to offer a unique challenge. At eleven years of age Anne Marie killed a boy. Decades later she wants to tell her story. Donovan's been asked to write it. As the story of her past is revealed, evidence of an even more horrific present day exposes itself. Why do young children die every time Anne Marie moves?

Waites and the Donovan series are a gift to the hard-boiled reader. This flawless writer and decidedly flawed hero have shocked and horrified since the first page of the first book and you never know where they'll take you next. *SPEAK NO EVIL* is a master stroke, a shattering look into a soul whose identity was defined before she hit puberty and the reentry of Donovan's family balance a story that is, to quote, "Mesmerizing".

Throughout everything we've been through with this duo, nothing will prepare even Waites most jaded reader for what you're about to experience. If the last chapter of this book doesn't break your heart, nothing ever will .

*Ruth Jordan*

## **THE SNOWMAN**

Jo Nesbo - Translated by Don Bartlett

2010

Harvill Secker (UK)

The Harry Hole series presents the reader with somewhat of an anomaly. On the one hand, we are informed that Norway is virtually free from serial killers. On the other hand, Hole is reputed to be the only detective in the nation with experience in catching serial killers, having accomplished his experience in Australia and also attending an FBI course. And then, serial killers tend to appear in the Harry Hole novels, including this one.

The first of several missing persons is a married mother, and the only clue is a snowman outside her home. Shortly before her disappearance, Hole received a mysterious letter which, in retrospect, leads him to believe there was a link between it and the woman's vanishing. In reviewing unsolved cases, Harry and his team find an alarming number of wives and mothers have gone missing over some years.

Once again, Jo Nesbo has written a taut thriller, one that is forceful and gripping and, this time, full of madness. His novels just keep on getting better and better. Fast-paced and staggering, always keeping the reader looking ahead to the next shift, keeping one off balance with wonder.

Theodore Feit

## **SO COLD THE RIVER**

Michael Koryta

2010

Little Brown

Eric Shaw is having a run of bad luck in life: disgraced in the movie industry, separated from his wife. Now he's in Chicago making "video life portraits." During one of the showings at a funeral, Alyssa Bradford approaches Shaw to investigate her father-in-law, Campbell Bradford, in order to create a documentary of his life. The family doesn't know much about their billionaire patriarch's early life in his home town of West Baden, Indiana, so Shaw travels there to uncover the mystery.

The only artifact Alyssa Bradford can provide Eric is a very old bottle of Pluto Water Campbell Bradford has held onto for years. This mysterious bottle of murky, smelly water pulls Shaw straight into the depths of West Baden's tumultuous past, a past that is about to rock the foundation of the present.

From the very first sentence, "You looked for the artifacts of their ambition," I savored this 500-page masterpiece. Very few writers have accomplished the feat of convincing me to let go of my grip on reality. Koryta didn't convince me to let go, he made me let go. He pulled me into the story and made *it* the reality.

*SO COLD THE RIVER* gives birth to a diverse cast of characters from the troubled Eric Shaw to the quirky Anne McKinney to the misguidedly devoted Danny Hastings. In typical Koryta style, none of the characters fit into a simple black or white, good or bad, category. Each character has his/her own unique depth and dimension. Each character has his/her own unique voice and perspective, which makes Koryta's choice of 3rd person limited an effective approach for his sixth novel. His ability to seamlessly flow in and out of each character's voice, maintaining each's authenticity enhances the fictional world he's crafting.

Koryta's overall writing style has never been stronger than in *SO COLD THE RIVER*: the beauty of the language, the flow of the dialogue. It's clean; it's concise. That may sound like an oxymoron for a 500-page novel, but the action of the plot continually moves forward, unlike many long novels that have pockets of idleness. Koryta's conservative style demands that every word work to further the story.

Weather plays a role that crosses between setting and character; Koryta stays faithful to his Midwest setting while empowering the weather in all its beauty and volatility. Mother Nature regularly provides mortals with lessons that

everything isn't always provable and believable. In *SO COLD THE RIVER*, Michael Koryta provides those lessons. There are very few writers young, old, experienced or novice who possess the skill and willingness to branch beyond what is comfortable and safe. Michael Koryta is no longer a great crime fiction writer. Michael Koryta is a great writer - period.  
*Jen Forbus*

## **THE THOUSAND**

Kevin Guilfoile  
August , 2010  
Knopf

Kevin Guilfoile's *CAST OF SHADOWS* was one of the most impressive debut novels of the last decade. Then came the wait. Now comes *THE THOUSAND*.

Canada Gold, is a young and extremely smart young woman escaping her past. She has an uncanny knack for numbers. She can also read lips in two languages and possesses a photographic memory. Her days of being able to gamble are shutting down. Her career as a jury consultant has been compromised. It is her past and a proposition that will call her home to Sweet Town Chicago from the glitz of Vegas. Here, begins Guilfoile's remarkable book.

"Nada" was a side character in one of the many "Trials of the Century". Her father, a famous composer was accused of murder, hired a talented lawyer, got off and got dead. As the young Canada waited in a hospital for a visit from her loving parent he was bleeding out in his lawyer's office. There's a rumor he may have completed the most famous unfinished symphony but it has apparently died with him.

I don't want to give anymore of this tale away . The jacket copy reveals who The Thousand are. A group descending from the days of Pythagoras with an arrogance beyond belief will entrance you.

It's Guilfoile's amazing ability to juggle the history, art and numbers into non-stop suspense that demand this book be read.

*THE THOUSAND* encompasses all the best of crime fiction; court room scenes worthy of Turow, a heroine who's a young V.I. on steroids. His cop reads like McBain and the Grimm's couldn't have come up with a better "mother". Into it all he places the story telling skills of Eco mixed with O'Brien.

Guilfoile may have made us wait for book two but he was inspired by the perfect music that propels *THE THOUSAND* to create a novel made up of many parts and reaching for the stars of immortality. Damned him, he succeeded. And now, I wait again.

*Ruth Jordan*

## **THRILLERS: 100 MUST READS**

Edited by David Morrell & Hank Wagner  
July, 2010  
Oceanview Publishing

I have always loved reading lists like this. The list of 100 must read thrillers created by ITW (International Thriller Writers) and honed by the editors Morrell and Wagner is beyond impressive. There is not a read mentioned within the pages of this compilation of essays that I disagree with.

As someone who believes in the "history of mystery" I was both excited and impressed by the list of reads celebrated and the cast of contemporary novelists who paid homage to works that had inspired them.

I'll repeat that I've always loved lists like this to explain that coincidentally or not, I had indeed read all of these stories. Therefore, for me, it became about the essays as I read on. How does one write an essay that resonates what a work long forgotten by most means to you? How the author of said tale inspired you? What did they do for "Thriller"? Did a certain tale of adventure propel one of your own writing heroes to the point where you read an author you might never otherwise have picked up?

100 tales and close to 100 different writers constructing concise and contained essays on why these works need to be read? It would be hard to be perfect. *THRILLERS* isn't. There are some beautiful pieces within these pages. There are also some klunkers. Worse still, there are untruths that while you may find references to the "fact" of the fiction on the internet are highly disregarded as anything approaching the real story by anyone who's done a modicum of research.

I learned a lot from this book. My standout piece was written by Gayle Lynds. I knew her to be a passionate writer, but she conveyed that reading was her first love. My biggest disappointment was the essay on Baroness Orczy's *The Scarlet Pimpernel*. To center a piece around disproven Jack the Ripper myth when the woman inspired everyone from Charteris to Kane? Pfu!

Still, I believe that a great list was put together and fans of the Thriller genre as well as the writers who contributed to so daunting a project should be commended. In the end, there are 100 stories here, waiting to be read by all who proclaim themselves aficionados of this compelling sub-genre.

Well done gents & chicks.

*Ruth Jordan*

## **THUNDER BEACH**

Michael Lister

2010

Tyrus Books

Merrick McKnight is an unemployed journalist who also happens to be in love with Regan, a married stripper. His intelligent sensibilities tell him he needs to cut all ties with Regan, but he's unable to tell her "no" whenever she calls. Her hot and cold behavior patterns leave him in a constant state of unrest. However, Panama City's Thunder Beach motorcycle rally brings along a distraction for Merrick. On the cover of the rally's magazine Merrick discovers his former step-daughter. Merrick lost track of Casey and her brother Kevin after their mother, Merrick's wife, died in an auto accident with Merrick's infant son Ty. Wanting to connect with Casey and Kevin again, Merrick goes to work tracking Casey down only to find a world of trouble Casey has worked her way into, a world Merrick may not be able to help her out of. Readers won't have to read far to note Michael Lister's signature prose. He brings a poetic sound to his writing and THUNDER BEACH is no exception. The characters and worlds come alive through the words.

Merrick narrates his tale, and his issues surface through his thoughts and interactions with the other characters. The psychological is a vital element of THUNDER BEACH; Merrick displays all the classic signs of codependency.

The mental aspects of the novel tie in well to the distinctive formatting Lister uses throughout the novel. There are no quotation marks. Instead Lister makes use of an em dash to indicate a character is speaking. And Merrick is telling the story in the present tense. It is almost as though the reader is simply riding around the story inside Merrick's brain. The reader hears when Merrick hears, sees when Merrick sees.

The themes of THUNDER BEACH also lend themselves to a very dark, noirish novel: strip clubs, the sex trade, murder, intolerance.

Without giving any kind of spoilers, I will say there were a couple things that caught me off guard and I felt they weren't consistent with the rest of the story and the over-reaching tone, but overall I found myself reading through THUNDER BEACH quickly to reach the resolution. I continue to enjoy being caught up in Michael Lister's unique story-telling style.

*Jen Forbus*

## **TUMOR**

Joshua Hale Fialkov

& Noel Tuazon

2010

Archaia

I read a lot of books., I also read a lot of graphic novels. I'm a big fan of reading. Every so often a read something that falls into both categories. TUMOR is beyond a doubt a graphic novel, it's told in pictures as well as words, but it left an impression in my brain like when I read my first Dennis Lehane or James Crumley or Jim Thompson. This is pure noir, hard boiled and unforgiving.

Frank Armstrong is a Private Eye at the end of his career and thanks to a brain tumor, the end of his life as well. He takes on one last job in which he hopes to find the missing daughter of a mobster, and also his own redemption. Having the tumor has changed Frank in a number of ways. Fear of death isn't really a factor, and knowing you are going to die frees up a lot of inhibitions. The tumor is also causing Frank to have problems, his brain isn't working the way it should with unhappy side effects. Frank just wants to live long enough to save the girl, and in the process maybe save his own soul. Fialkov is an obvious fan of crime fiction and this book puts him right in with the people he most likely reads. His portrayal of Frank has you sympathizing with him and yet wondering just what the Hell is wrong with the guy. Noel Tuazon's art is perfect for this tale. Sketchy and perfectly shaded and avoiding unnecessary detail he keeps the art focused on the story in such a way that pictures and words blend together in such a way that you don't remember what was told in words and what was told in pictures, creating a perfect graphic novel. This wonderfully priced hard cover (\$14.95!!) also boasts an introduction from uber noir genius Duane Swierczynski. This is a book that epitomizes what I love about crime fiction.

*Jon Jordan*

## **THE UNKNOWN**

Mark Waid

2010

BOOM! Studios

This is a new comics series from BOOM! And this first collection is a lot of fun. Mark Waid introduces us to Cathrine Allingham who is the world's most famous Private Detective. And while she may be the smartest person around not even she can cure a brain tumor that is going to kill her. Her latest obsession is finding out what happens to people after they die.

The book opens with her helping out the police on a case proving it was murder not suicide, and on her way back to her

car she meets a bouncer named James Doyle. She quickly surmises that Doyle is a pretty clever guy and having a huge guy as back up is never a bad thing. James joins her on her latest case which takes them overseas looking into the theft of a strange box which is supposed to measure the soul. The brothers who invented it are a bit odd, but I guess you would need to be wouldn't you?

The trail takes Cat and her new sidekick to the home of a strange cult which is stealing artifacts and equipment which may actually answer Cat's questions.

A wonderful combination Holmes like deduction with filtered through Fringe and the X-Files. Waid has created a great new character and I can't wait for more. It should also be noted that artist Minick Oosteveer did a superb job of portraying the action and the deduction. He's perfect for this book.

*Jon Jordan*

## **THE WHISPERERS**

John Connolly

July, 2010

Atria

If John Connolly wrote the Yellow Pages people would still read them. Thankfully his skill for story has superseded the construct of words alone. THE WHISPERERS is a tale of mystery and imagination so singular that as a reader I'd really like to pose the question, "Where did you get this idea?". As Americans fight in Bagdad casualties are heavy; civil, military and history alike. An important and protected artifact goes missing. Can a small box unleash more evil than already exists in our world?

Cut to Maine. Damien Pachett takes his dog on a final walk fighting demons no one else can see. His father later requests Charlie Parker's services. There's a waitress. She may be in some trouble. Will Charlie look into it for him? An hour after reading the latest headline of an off duty police gunned down in a parking lot, Charlie agrees to Mr. Pachett's request.

What unfolds is Connolly at his finest. The mixture of social commentary, international intrigue, and mythical evil that's all too real will cast a spell over you. THE WHISPERERS propels you forward. It will drain you and enchant you simultaneously. You will float upon the words, certain sentences will need to be reread for their beauty, others for the simple horror.

What is happening to the returning Vets in Parker's community? Why is the murder rate in Upstate Maine growing so quickly? Connolly achieves the perfect marriage between the use of words and the telling of story. THE WHISPERERS will be talked of loudly.

*Ruth Jordan*