

14 DEGREES BELOW ZERO**Quinton Skinner**

July 2005

ISBN 0-345-46543-1

Villard

Quinton Skinner received a lot of great press for his first novel, AMNESIA NIGHTS. This summer's 14 DEGREES BELOW ZERO shows some of the same promise as Skinner's first novel. His writing style is poetic. The opening of 14 DEGREES BELOW ZERO sets up a great story. A man dying in the snow; a memory. It is a beautiful passage.

As the story opens we meet Jay, her daughter Ramona, her boyfriend Steven, and her father Lewis. Everywhere is the ghost of Jay's mother Anna. It is to Skinner's credit that we feel her spirit throughout this book. The one who could have made everything turn out differently ...maybe.

Jay dropped out of college to have a baby. Lewis lost his high profile job and is working in the men's department where he used to buy shirts. Steven is a man with a future who thinks Jay is the smartest and most attractive woman he's ever met. If only he didn't have to deal with her father.

A great set up. The story manages to unfold like an accident you can't help but watch. Unfortunately Skinner fails to make you care. The more Quinton peels away the events of the past and the inevitability of the future, the less I was engaged. The reason, absolutely no one is likeable. In the end there's no one to root for except the dog. This is a book that could have worked but doesn't.

Ruth

A SHOT TO DIE FOR**Libby Fischer Hellmann**

September 2005

ISBN 1-59058-185-7

Poisoned Pen Press*

In A SHOT TO DIE FOR, heroine Ellie Foreman has the same nose for trouble that has endeared her to the readers of Fischer Hellmann's books. If you haven't caught up with her work to date it's time to start.

As SHOT opens Ellie's gotten a job in Lake Geneva Wisconsin. A recently refurbished resort called "THE LODGE" has hired our favorite video producer to put together a promotional film. Visiting a rest stop on the way home from the resort to suburban Chicago Ellie strikes up a conversation with a fellow traveler. A shot rings out, the woman lays crumpled on the tarmac, and Ellie Foreman is the closest to random violence she's ever been.

But was that violence random? A promise to friends and family not to get mixed up in another dangerous situation is about to be broken. Coincidence, proximity, and Ellie's personal emotions draw her into the history of two Lake Geneva families united through common history and murder.

Fischer Hellmann presents a traditional mystery with a modern day edge. The same sense of place she's mastered with her Chicago scenes can be found on the shores of Lake Geneva. Characters are written with a light hand that breathes life into even the cameo appearances.

The mystery entertains and Ellie's evolution as an amateur sleuth makes her author one to be read.

In A SHOT TO DIE FOR the author's confidence as a writer shows from beginning to end. The result is as refreshing as soft serve ice cream on hot summer night.

Ruth

THE ALPINE QUILT

Mary Daheim

2005

ISBN: 0345477200

Ballentine

Like many small-town newspapers, Emma Lord's little weekly exists to confirm local gossip and embellish it with a few photos. An impromptu party for a visiting former resident is big news for little Alpine. Even bigger news is her murder by poison later that day. However, since it happened at the rectory, Emma seems more concerned about the effect it will have on her brother's reputation – he's the interim priest while Father Kelly is on sabbatical – than on good reporting.

If you want to know the news in Alpine, don't go to the paper. Emma may be a good friend, but she's no news hound, and if her friends are involved in something unusual, she'll do her best to help them avoid any embarrassment.

It's easy to see why readers enjoy this series, but I didn't warm up to it completely. Emma is still nursing a broken heart for her fiancé, so she seems to be keeping a bit of emotional distance. That's perfectly normal, so I will keep reading to see how Emma evolves. More intriguing was the secret that Vera has been hiding for years. It certainly fit with her personality! THE ALPINE QUILT was a comfortable cozy.

Kathleen Tromp

THE BABY GAME

Randall Hicks

2005

ISBN: 096316385x

Wordslinger press

Hicks has written non fiction, but this is his first foray into the mystery genre of fiction. THE BABY GAME introduces Toby Dillon, an adoption attorney in California.

The story in our first adventure with Toby involve a glamorous Hollywood couple who adopt a baby. So far it's a nice happy story, but of course this is a mystery so it's just a matter of time til.... sure enough, trouble. The baby is kidnapped, or at least abducted, with no ransom demanded, and the police with no leads Toby helps the couple try and find their baby. Unfortunately the likely suspects eliminate them selves from suspicion by turning up dead.

Hicks has a wonderful voice and his writing is filled with humorous moments that off set the seriousness of what is going on perfectly. It's very obvious that Hicks is a fan of the genre and his writing reflects a skill that can only be gained by a great deal of reading with in the same genre. He has a unique style that while similar to others it is truly his own. A terrific debut, and I look forward to next years book BABY CRIMES.

I would strongly recommend this book.

Jon

BANGKOK TATTOO

John Burdett

2005

ISBN: 1400040450

Alfred A Knopf

"Killing customers just isn't good for business."

So opens Bangkok Tattoo, John Burdett's follow up to Bangkok 8. The reader is immediately drawn into a Thailand far different from its travel posters: exotic, but sinister; a world with a moral code all its own, seething with hookers, corrupt police, Yakuza gangsters, CIA operatives, transsexuals, the threat of Al Qaeda and a hefty dose of post-911 paranoia. At the heart of the beast lies Royal Thai police detective Sonchai Jitpleecheep. He is called in to his mother's brothel to deal with a dead American farang (foreigner). Luminous Chanya, whore and star employee of The Old Man's Club, has returned from an appointment in a blood soaked dress. Fortunately Sonchai's supervisor, Police Colonel Vikorn, is a senior partner in The Old Man's Club and a genius at the art of cover up; unfortunately, the dead and disemboweled farang turns out to be CIA.

As the intrigue deepens, Sonchai finds himself falling in love with Chanya, and struggling to find a middle ground between his Buddhism and his ambition. Twists and turns abound; some more gruesome details may be a bit upsetting to more sensitive readers. Bangkok Tattoo is, in all, a rich, colorfully drawn thriller: exotic, original, at times profound, and an entertaining ride that turns the travel agent's Thailand inside out.

Jill Lynch

THE BLACK SILENT

David Dun
2005
ISBN:078601637x
Pinnacle Books (PBO)

THE BLACK SILENT is a scientific thriller that grabs a hold and doesn't let go. A discovery on the bottom of the ocean triggers the events of this ride, and it's taking Haley Walthers places she didn't think she'd go. Reluctantly teamed up with Sam Winripp, she is hunting for Ben Anderson, the man who made the discovery in the first place. And they need to find him before the wrong people do, in this case the wrong people being operatives of a corporation that wants to use the discovery for their own ends. If things go wrong, the consequences could have global ramifications.

Dun writes like a prize fighter in his prime, punching the reader with twist after twist. He has the ability to make a fictional situation seem all too real and it kept me reading long after I should have been asleep. This book was a pleasure to read. I loved last year's book AT THE EDGE, and I like this one even more.

Jon

THE OLD BUZZARD HAD IT COMING

Donis Casey
July 2005
Poisoned Pen Press
ISBN 1-59058-149-0

The title is only the beginning of pleasure for the reader in this novel set on the plains of Oklahoma during the icy winter of 1912. Two families live on adjoining farms - Shaw Tucker and his wife Alafair live stable, productive lives, while Harley and Nona Day cling to the edge of stability. The Shaws have nine children, and Casey presents an appealing description of their family life and the routine of their days, never minimizing the daily rounds of repetitive, back breaking work, but also portraying their lively spirit and deep love and concern each family member feels for the others.

The Days might as well be living on another planet. Harley runs a moonshine still, and while this occupation would have provided stable income for his family, he consumes too much of his output personally and has fallen into a pattern of repetitive abuse and cruelty towards his wife and children. In stark contrast to the neighboring Tuckers, the Day's farm features broken down buildings, sparse furnishings, wretched animals and a grim picture of looming economic disaster. When Harley's frozen body is discovered with a bullet to the brain, the small prairie community brims over with suspects, and to Alafair's dismay the list of possible perpetrators includes one of her daughters and John Lee, the most responsible and well behaved of Harley's many children who happens to have fallen in love with Phoebe Tucker, the young woman who may be involved in the death.

The local sheriff is a cousin of Shaw Tucker, and this gives Alafair some insight into the progress of the investigation, and in a delightful "take charge" approach, Alafair works to clear her daughter, protect Phoebe's young sweetheart and find answers to the circumstances of the death.

Short paragraphs inserted into the flow of the narrative provide an insight into the weight of a profound personal tragedy which still haunts Alafair. By the time all the action has concluded, Casey has provided a lovely resolution for her main character, which fits perfectly into the main story.

Woodstock.

CITY OF VULTURES

Ron Ellis
2004
ISBN: 0749083611
Alison and Busby(UK)

This is the seventh novel to feature Ellis's Liverpool based Private Eye [and part-time Radio D.J.] Johnny Ace, and a welcome addition to the series. After the events of SINGLE SHOT Johnny Ace returns from Spain to his partner Marie and re-establishes his detective agency. Liverpool during Johnny's absence has been transformed due to it being named "European City of Culture" money is flooding in and property speculators have moved in. There is a scramble for land needed for development, and this soon turns to murder and these events become cases for Johnny Ace and his new partner, the flame-

headed martial artist Cameron. The mysterious Jeanne McGhee, who is the mistress for an estate agent found decapitated turns to Johnny for protection, but why was he disguised as a tramp? Meanwhile a club singer, Lucky Learoyd also needs protection, as does Ollie Clarke, whose garage has been vandalized, and head mechanic murdered. Corpses start to pile up on the streets of Liverpool, and so Johnny zig-zags across the city to get to the bottom of the cases that he finds himself embroiled in. The cases are all linked to the escalating property prices and the greed that has nurtured in the city. Soon Johnny Ace realizes that city of Liverpool has attracted some vultures who want to pick at the bones of the old city to line their own pockets. Fast paced, witty and genuinely entertaining fare from under the shadows of the Liver building. Good stuff indeed

Ali Karim

A CLEAN KILL

Leslie Glass

June 2005

ISBN: 0451411897

An Onyx Paperback Original

This is the latest in Glass's series with April Woo, A New York City Detective. This book opens with the death of a on the fashionable east side. The best suspect is the nanny who worked for the victim. But the case gets a bit weird when another woman is killed, and again the best bet is the nanny. Add to the mix that the victim were friends and the case starts to take some very interesting turns. Detective Woo has her hands full with this case.

I really enjoy the April Woo series. I find them to be intelligent and highly entertaining. Glass has a gift for writing suspense, and in this book she out does herself. Stunning detail and respect for the work involved in real police work make this a great procedural. Always on my "to buy" list.

Jon

CLOSE CASE

Alafair Burke

July, 2005

ISBN 0-8050-7784-7

Henry Holt and Co.

It's impossible not to like Samantha Kincaid. This Deputy District Attorney shows more individuality in every successive title presented by author Alafair Burke. CLOSE CASE is the third book in Burke's series of Legal-Thrillers.

The book opens on Sam's birthday. She's stuck downtown doing clerical work when her pager goes off. The scene she's called to could make or break her career. Reporter Percy Crenshaw has been gunned down.

Tensions in Portland are running high and secrets within Portland's Police Department may prove hard for Samantha on both a professional and personal level. Can she find the answers to Percy's death? This synopsis sounds like pretty basic legal thriller stuff. Don't let it keep you away this author's talent. Burke's skillful prose and understanding of storytelling are rare in any form of Crime Fiction.

The lady has a unique ability. Her narratives keep you from putting a book down. Her understanding of the law and its different players make every aspect of CLOSE CASE compelling. There are unexpected twists and turns throughout this book. Burke's greatest asset is her imagination. From her imagination comes something entirely new in legal thriller.

Ruth

COLD DARK MATTER

Alex Brett

2005

ISBN 1-55002-494-9

The Dundurn Group/University of Toronto

When PI Morgan O'Brien receives a personal plea from longtime friend, Duncan Carmichael to investigate a suspicious incident at an observatory in Hawaii and collect the notebooks of a Canadian astronomer, she reluctantly agrees. Did Yves Grenier commit suicide or was he murdered for the information contained in his research diaries? Did it have anything to do with the "Fruit Machine," a dubious technology of that era that claimed to be able to determine a person's sexual orientation? And what was the connection to the long ago disappearance of Peter Aarons, another promising astronomer? Is it all part of a government cover-up?

Morgan soon finds that she's not the only one who's looking for the diaries. And her unknown adversary's desperation leads to another death and several close calls for Morgan. Everyone is lying, everyone has something to hide, according to Andreas Mellier, an astronomer at the observatory who befriends Morgan. When Duncan disappears, leaving Morgan holding the bag, she realizes that she may be nothing but a pawn in a conspiracy of astronomical proportions. As she boomerangs between the icy streets of her hometown Ottawa and a frigid mountain top on Mauna Kea, Morgan's investigation careens nearly out of control. But, Ms. O'Brien proves to be a gutsy, capable, take no prisoners PI. Along the way Morgan drinks an inordinate amount of coffee (I got jittery just reading certain passages), is always in need of sleep or a shower and for fun allows herself to be distracted by the devastatingly distracting Detective Benson.

Using real science, authentic technology and actual events as a jumping off point for her narrative, Alex Brett manages to deftly combine a solid story with lessons on Cold War policy and astrophysics. And by weaving in a touch of social commentary on sexual identity and predilection, she shows us how far we've come and how far we've yet to go.

Jacqueline Rice

COMPANY MAN

Joseph Finder

2005

ISBN:0312319169(US) , 075286887X(UK)

St. Martin's(US) Orion(UK)

I rated Paranoia, Joe Finders previous novel as one of my best reads of 2004. I am pleased to announce that Company Man will definitely feature in my best of 2005. Such is the page-turning ability of this book. Finder seems to have found himself a niche in the thriller world, corporate espionage and intrigue in big business America, and he really knows how to turn on the taps in the reader, short terse chapters, cliff-hangers a-plenty and enough red herrings to keep a Norwegian fishing boat stocked up for the winter.

This time around, Finder tells the tale from the viewpoint of Nick Conover, a troubled CEO of an office furniture manufacturer as opposed to the flippant Generation X-er Adam Cassidy from Paranoia. The most important thing about Company Man is that it really works, this is a book that just makes you turn the pages, even when your eyes want to close at the end of a hard day. The story hooks you from page one and the pressure is unrelenting.

CEO Nick Conover, finds himself trying to bring up his two children behind the security steel bars of a gated neighborhood, coping also with the loss of his wife in a car accident as well as managing the troubled Stratton Corporation [a manufacturer of office furniture] based in Michigan. Conover is not liked in his hometown, as he has had to lay off half the work force due to the weak [post-Iraq] economy and having to compete with Chinese imports. Considering that Stratton Corp used to be the largest employer in town, Nick soon is a pariah figure locally.

Then vandalism occurs to his house, a stalker appears and things escalate when Nick asks his security director to become personally involved in a break-in that leaves a body on Nick's lawn. Before you can say "freeze punk!", Police Inspector Audrey Rhimes appears, and discovers that all may not be as it seems at Stratton Corp, as well as in the Conover household. Audrey has her own problems, because her husband was laid-off from Stratton Corp and now finds solace in the bottle. Nick finds it hard to keep everything together when Audrey and the police start to dig up evidence, clues that could shatter Conover's life and family. To make matters worse, Nick's Financial Director seems to be plotting [with the Boston based venture capitalists who own Stratton Corp] behind Nick's back and not only is the future of Stratton in the balance, but also Nick Conover's sanity, his career as well as his life.

This is a tremendous book, the only reservation I have is that it ties-up all the loose-ends just a little bit too neatly for my taste. Loose-ends are rarely wrapped-up in such a neat bow; life just is not like that, but despite this minor gripe, I would recommend this novel to anyone who likes their thrillers fast and furious because it is an excellent read.

Ali Karim

CREEPERS

David Morrell

Sept 2005

ISBN: 159315237X(US), 0755327462(UK)

CDS Books(US) Hodder Headline (UK)

This tremendous novel is one that will have you riveted to your chair because its story bonds to the reader like a steel weld, and has characters THE CEEPERS put into such an extraordinary situation, one that perhaps none of them will survive, which all makes for a tense and runaway-train of a thriller. The plot is what Hollywood would call "high concept", the theme being "Urban Infiltration" the exploration of abandoned buildings, sites, underground railway tunnels and the like by young explorers, who via the damp floor of the internet organize covert missions that take them back to the past. The moral of THE CEEPERS is that the past is not always full of sepia-tinged nostalgia. Evil often lives on.

Led by a Professor down on his luck; Conklin assembles a team to explore the site of a derelict hotel - "The Paragon" in Asbury Park, New Jersey before the demolition team erase its existence from the world. Joining him is the Reporter Frank Balenger, as well as Vinnie, Cora and Rick [The three urban infiltrators].

The infiltration team soon realise that everything is not what it seems, and that some of them are not who they appeared to be. The tunnels, and doorways in the ancient hotel, hold secrets, and the evil may well be cloaking the darkness and is no longer dormant. The team soon discover that the hotel has a dark history, for gangsters used it for their deeds, while murders occurred, gold was hidden within the walls, and the stench of evil still coats the rooms. Beyond those walls, someone watched the death and despair

that only a hotel can capture and trap. The man who built The Paragon Hotel, was Morgan Carlisle, an eccentric industrialist, a man of peculiar tastes, and one with a disease that made him a prisoner of his own mind and body.

The story is propelled by tense, sweaty dialogue and considering Morrell's award winning career that traverses Thrillers, Espionage, and Horror, It makes this book very unsettling as you just do not know what the hell is happening, and as no one is who they seem, there are a few real shocks along the way. Violent, scary and unsettling, it really lives up to its title. Not for claustrophobics or readers frightened of the dark, this one is a major book for 2005, miss it at your peril.

Ali Karim

CRIME ON THE MOVE

edited by Martin Edwards

2005

ISBN: 1904316468

DO NOT PRESS-Distributed by Dufour Editions in the US

There seem to be a lot of anthologies coming out in the last year or two. Some almost seem to be put out so that no one misses the chance to be in one. That's not the case here. Every story in this collections was wonderful. From the brilliant John Harvey to the subtleties of Reginald Hill this book is a treasure trove of great reading. Among the authors included are Michael Jecks, Amy Meyers, Rebecca Trope, Chriss Simms, Martin Edwards, Ann Cleaves and 15 others. As the title suggests, all the stories with in are based on the theme of crime and travel. A great addition to any library.

Jon

DANGEROUS CURVES

Judith Skillings

2005

ISBN: 0060583193

Avon

Changing careers doesn't mean you stop being who you were. So, Rebecca Moore, owner of a high-end classic car restoration business, still has a reporter's heart. When a young girl's bloody corpse is found in a vehicle under Rebecca's care,

she is more than a little curious. When she hears that the girl is not the first to meet a mysterious end, she decides to take action; that leads her to the men's club that employed the girl. Ah—Rebecca Moore: retired reporter, car restorer, and pole dancer...

Her relationship with Mick Hagen is complicated; his step-brother and Rebecca were an item, and that did not end well. Joachim Delacroix worships the ground she walks on, but she sees him as a friend. Although we mostly see things from Rebecca's point of view, we do sometimes get glimpses of Hagen or Delacroix's thoughts. The three-way perspective is useful because the reader gets more insight into these men than Rebecca herself could give. It also allows the reader to discover information that would be unrealistic coming from her—such an interrogation room interview.

Ms. Skillings has left a few tantalizing plot developments for future installments in the series. I certainly hope she plans on addressing them, because I'm looking forward to finding out the answers.

Kathleen Tromp

DEAD JITTERBUG

Victoria Houston
2005
ISBN: 0425202011
Berkley Crime Press

Shortly after Doc Osborne is talked into helping his eccentric friend Ray with a "Fishing for Girls" class, a national celebrity is found dead in her Loon Lake vacation home. Not counting the usual suspects, Hope McDonald's advise column was read by millions daily, and odds are that there were some who didn't appreciate all of her suggestions. Chief Lew Ferris again needs to call on the retired dentist's expertise. While murder cuts into their fishing time, Doc doesn't begrudge the extra time spent at Lew's disposal.

Lew runs a tight department, but not all of her predecessors were quite as honest and efficient, and she comes across information that the investigation into an old triple homicide was botched many years ago, and it could mean another murder.

DEAD JITTERBUG is chock-full of action, as the complicated plot keeps moving as the story lines come together, each affecting the others. Retirement for Doc Osborne means never having enough time!

As always, Ms. Houston has filled her book with the right mixture of fishing, crime and just a dash of romance. Doc seems to learn more about himself every outing, and it makes him someone with which the reader relishes a visit, on the water or off.

Kathleen Tromp

DEADER THAN DISCO

David Hiltbrand
2005
ISBN: 0060554118
AVON Mystery (PBO)

Jim McNamara is a rock and roll PI. Literally. He is the go to guy in the music industry. He knows the territory and he knows who to deal with the people in the crazy business. In DEADER THAN DISCO he is called upon to track down a diva who had topped the charts for years. Too bad that the chart she's on now is a most wanted list. Of course a dead basketball player might be a good reason for that. McNamara has his hands full trying to find her before things get any more out of control than they already are.

Hiltbrand writes with a sharp wit and a fast pace, not unlike a great song writer. This was a thoroughly enjoyable read and wonderfully clever book. McNamara is great character and he has great taste in music. Hiltbrand does for the rock and roll scene what Kaminsky does for Hollywood in his Toby Peters series. This one rocked.

Jon

DEADLY ERRORS

Allen Wyler
August 2005
ISBN 0-765-31311-1
Forge Hardcover

There is a grand tradition of medical thrillers in the suspense field--hardly surprising, since medicine is one place where life's rubber really meets the road. A new entry, DEADLY ERRORS, by a new author, Allen Wyler, is right up there with the best.

An ED doc at Maynard Medical Center makes an inexplicable error. She claims that the new electronic medical records system the hospital is beta-testing told her the comatose patient was diabetic, and she therefore administered insulin, which killed him. But the misinformation, if it was ever in the system, has disappeared. Then a different patient is given the wrong blood type.

Dr. Tyler Mathews is a brain surgeon at Maynard. When a similar fatal error happens to a patient of his, he tells management, but is not believed. A lot of money is riding on finding the new data-management system workable. As he persists in searching for an explanation, Mathews's own career, marriage, and finally his life come under attack.

Wyler is himself a neuro-surgeon, and the authenticity of the settings is very satisfying. A doctor with a heart, Tyler Mathews is believable and easy to care about when his quest brings him into personal danger. I found the book a page-turner.

Barbara D'Amato

DEATH IN THE CARDS

Sharon Short
March 2005
ISBN: 0060537981
Avon

You can't get much cozier than a mystery with a Laundromat owner and handy stain removal tips. Then again, it's often the stains at the scene of a crime that help point to the answers, so it's actually quite a logical crime-stopping career, eh? This is the fourth outing for Sharon Short's intrepid laundress, Josie Toadfern. As Halloween nears, Josie and her friends get involved in the psychic fair that is being organized by the local new-age store. A corn maze is bringing in more tourists, so little Paradise, Ohio, looks forward to the financial boon. But there's big trouble brewing: there are the logistics of managing such a big shindig, a water main break, and, as psychic world meets rural Midwest, there are some who won't take this sort of devilry lying down. It doesn't get better when Josie and her boyfriend Owen discover a body, and gets even worse when Josie's closest relative is threatened. Sharon Short's character is quirky, yet still sensible, efficient, and a great friend. There is a lot of easy camaraderie between these friends, who aren't always as sensible and efficient as Josie. DEATH IN THE CARDS was an amusing, breezy read.

Kathleen Tromp

DEATH'S LITTLE HELPER

Peter Spiegelman
July, 2005
ISBN: 1400040795
Knopf

P.I. John March is hired to find Wall Street analyst Gregory Danes. His ex-wife is not concerned about his well being, but that the alimony check continues to show up. Danes was once the daring of Wall Street and a bit of a celebrity on TV, but is now is a financial pariah with rumors of an SEC investigations. Dealing with a client he doesn't particularly like, and looking for a person that nobody cares about. March finds himself all too willing to walk away, until he has an encounter with Danes' troubled teenage son.

Peter Spiegelman writes with the skill of an old pro. You could never guess this is only his second novel. The magic of this book is not in the story, which is standard P.I. fare, but in Mr. Spiegelman's writing and in the understated portrayal of his character's angst. His P.I. is haunted from his past, but all P.I.s are, but the author does a better job than most of portraying

this without letting it seem clichéd. Peter also lets his character's formidability be evident by his actions, not by shoving it in the reader's face every other chapter.

A great book in what is fast becoming a first class series, it should be required reading for any fan of P.I. fiction.

Jeremy

FADE

Kyle Mills

June 1, 2005

St. Martin's Press

ISBN: 0312335776

A stand alone by an author well known for his big plots, this new novel easily equals his previous books. After abandoning a Navy SEAL, who was injured while working for the government, the Department of Homeland Security has a change of heart, and asks Salaam al Fayed, a.k.a. Fade, to come back and help with a developing problem. His answer is an emphatic no, and he is prepared to defend his reasoning. That's when things start to go very wrong. Fade is a well trained Arabic-American, and he won't be pushed around. What happens when he starts backing up his "no" keeps the pages flipping.

This is great book to take in vacation or read on a long week-end. Once started, it's hard to put down. Why can't this man write as fast as I read???

Karen Hildebrand

FAGS AND LAGER

Charlie Williams

2005

ISBN: 1852428554

Serpant's Tail

Williams' book DEADFOLK was brilliant, funny, and dark. I loved it. I like this latest book even more. Williams writing makes Quentin Tarantino seem tame.

Set in Mangel and again featuring Royston Blake, doorman extraordinaire at Hopper's. However due to events out of his control he loses his job. The only way to get things back on track seems to be to take on the job of investigator and find a missing girl. The payoff? 400 cans of Lager and 400 cigs. Of course nothing is easy in Blake's world, and neither is this.

I enjoyed every word in this book, truly original and refreshing as an ice cold brew. Charlie Williams is a gift to the fans of darkly humorous crime fiction. Get DEADFOLK and FAGS AND LAGER, a bit of beer, a pack of smokes, and sit down and enjoy some great reading.

Jon

FIELD OF BLOOD

Denise Mina

July 2005

ISBN 0316-735-930

Little, Brown, and Co.

Teenage girl reporter solves murder! No, you are not reading a Scottish Nancy Drew. Instead, this is a tough, gritty mystery, and young Patty Meehan has as much guts and moral sensibility as Sam Spade.

Paddy works as an ambitious copygirl at a Glasgow newspaper. When two very young children are brutally murdered, and one of the two 11-year-old ,alleged suspects is the cousin of Paddy's fiancé, Paddy is ecstatic. This could be her golden opportunity to become a reporter. However, her covert investigation becomes much more dangerous than she imagined and eventually leads her from one moral quagmire to another. After all, how moral is the Scots law that considers an 11 year old an adult? Is Paddy old enough to understand the damage she can cause?

Obstinate, hard-nosed, and not terribly attractive, Paddy was born without any privileges. However, she has always known she does not want marriage, motherhood, or religion. And she desperately wants to escape the economic, intellectual, and

cultural poverty of her Catholic family. Solving this murder is the way out, and the core of this book is not only finding the solution, but also the price Paddy has to pay for her success.

Even the physical setting of this mystery is dark. The reporters where Paddy works are cynical, lazy, crude, thoughtless and extremely sexist. The descriptions of a dirty, depressed Glasgow are reminiscent of those in Trainspotting. Poverty and ugliness are pervasive. Only Paddy seems to be fighting to rise above the muck, and one wonders how much of it will cling to her forever.

A powerful, perceptive mystery with vivid language and a strong sense of morality. Definitely recommended.

Beverly DeWeese

THE HEIST

Michael A. Black

2005

ISBN: 1594142777

Five Star First Edition

Michael A. Black gets better with each book, and in THE HEIST he takes a break from his terrific PI series and truly shines. Linc Jackson and Rick Weaver are Desert Storm vets now working construction in Chicago. Something seems to be lacking though and the two are a bit dissatisfied with the way their lives are going. As fate would have it, Linc's girlfriend has an idea. Diane works in a bank and has noticed what could be an opportunity for them all to get rich. Fate intervenes in the form of a flood and presents the opportunity for the men to actually act on their insider information. Using skills learned while serving their country they pull off what could be a perfect heist.

Perfect except for a greedy girlfriend with ideas that could place them all in jeopardy. Before too long there are a number of different parties looking for the stolen loot. Between some bad ass mafia thugs and some very determined cops it seems as though Jackson and Weaver will be lucky to come out of this alive, let alone richer.

Black has an uncanny ability to bring the reader into the story from the first page. His pacing is perfect, building the tension till it's so taut that you know something is going to snap, and snap hard. Black's take no prisoners style is spot on perfect in this hardboiled caper thriller. Michael A. Black is the real deal.

Jon

THE ITALIAN SECRETARY

Caleb Carr

2005

ISBN:0786715480

Carrol & Graf

Caleb Carr is the first modern author to be commissioned to write a Holmes book. I think THE ALIENIST and ANGEL OF DARKNESS proved he can write, and after reading this book there is no doubt they picked the right author for this.

While renovating the palace of Holyrod two servants are murdered and Holmes and Watson are summoned by Sherlock's brother Mycroft to aid in the investigation. The case may be challenging enough, but add ties to a killing from three hundred years previous and Holmes has his work cut out for him.

Carr's writing is filled with luscious details of the time, as are with his earlier work it shows an attention to detail by a writer who truly loves what he is writing about. It's my feeling that his love for the characters and time really shine in Carr's writing. This was a wonderful book, and while I really want more books from Carr featuring his own Dr. Kreizler, this goes a long way toward holding me over. Well Done.

Jon

IT'S A MOD, MOD, MOD, MOD MURDER

Rosemary Martin
2005
ISBN 0451214706
A Signet Book

This first installment in the Murder A-Go-Go Mystery Series is a breezy introduction to Bebe Bennett, a naive newcomer to New York City in 1964. Bebe, a graduate of Charlotte Marie's Secretarial School for Young Ladies and worldly-wise Darlene are unlikely roommates in the Big Apple. When the novel begins, Darlene has just arrived home after a transatlantic flight from London where she met Keith Royal, lead singer of the Beefeaters, a Beatles wannabe band. Serious about her stewardess duties, Darlene obliged when Keith took her up on her offer of "coffee, tea or me." When Darlene and Bebe find Keith dead in his hotel room bathtub and Darlene is the prime suspect, Bebe, loyal friend that she is, comes to her rescue. In addition, Bebe's dreamy boss, Bradley (I'm going to marry that man) Williams, the vice-president of Rip-Tide Records may lose his job because Keith's murder has thwarted Bradley's plans to sign the Beefeaters. The novel follows lightweight sleuth Bebe as she frolics with rock stars, moons over her boss, and flirts with danger all the while conducting a haphazard investigation of the case. Besides the fun-loving Darlene, other suspects include the Beefeater's manager who may have learned he was being replaced, a jealous band mate, and a self-serving ex-girlfriend. When Bebe's not "on the case," she's drinking Mateus, gobbling down Sugar Daddies, giggling at Red Skelton's TV antics or twisting the night away at the Peppermint lounge in her hot pink angora sweater. If you're in the mood for nonstop and none too subtle 60's references, this groovy treatment of a murder mystery probably will do. Dippity-do that is.

Jacqueline Rice

KILLER SWELL

Jeff Shelby
July 2005
ISBN 0-525-94880-5
Dutton

This is one of the best debuts I've read in years, and Shelby's surfing private eye Noah Braddock has all of the appeal of early Spenser and Elvis Cole. He's got the great dialog. He's got the uber-cool sidekick. But he doesn't have the annoying girlfriend. In fact, Killer Swell opens with Noah investigating the disappearance of his ex-girlfriend, whom he hasn't seen in eleven years. The fact that he's hired by her mother--the one who forced them to break up as high school sweethearts--is just the first of many twists and turns that lead to an exciting yet unexpected conclusion.

This has all the elements of the great ones: tough guy one-liners, femme fatales, gun fights, oddball supporting characters, and a knight errant hero straight out of the Travis McGee mold. Highly recommended, and I can't wait to see Shelby's next installment.

JA Konrath

KILLING THE BEASTS

Chris Simms
2005
ISBN: 0752868551
Orion

2005 looks like a pivotal year for Chris Simms as he publishes his third crime novel, but this time he has a new agent as well as leaving Random House for Orion Publishing. This highly polished study of madness and murder shows how well Simm's talent is maturing after his previous work *OUTSIDE THE WHITE LINES* [2002] and *PECKING ORDER* [2003], which were also cracking studies into madness and mental disintegration. The action this time takes place around the build-up to the Commonwealth Games that Manchester hosted in 2002. What starts as a standard police procedural, soon turns more into a dark character study, filled with insight and not lacking in some dark, dark humour. There are some scenes that had me laughing out loud, but also shivering at the same time, because Simm's has an engaging voice in letting his tale unfold.

Detective Jon Spicer is hunting a gang of car thieves who are targeting the "top-end" of the market – Mercedes, BMW's etc when his attention is distracted by the murder of a female model, but before you can say prostitute, further bodies turn-up and Spicer thinks that a serial-killer has emerged, which is just what

Manchester doesn't need in the lead up to the Commonwealth Games. Meanwhile Tom Benwell an advertising executive, [and one of Jon's old friends] runs into a bit of luck, as he is promoted to Managing Director of his firm "It's a Wrap" just as the feeding frenzy brought on by the games is about to reach its zenith. Energized by his new role, he takes his wife Charlotte to the Seychelles only to spend most of the time on the phone sorting out deals and PR work. One of his accounts is for Xtreme chewing gum which takes up more of his time than he expected. The strain of his new role starts to take its toll on Tom. He turns to drugs to keep him moving, and Charlotte doesn't mind as she likes to be high on the club scene anyway. Inside his drug filled haze, Tom starts to worry about the IT-Manager at "It's a Wrap", not only is he referred to as "Creepy George", but Tom discovers disturbing pornography hidden on the company servers; pornography of the worst possible kind. Tom decides to take action.

Meanwhile Jon Spicer sees a link between the stolen luxury cars and the serial killer at play, but his commander is not convinced. Meanwhile Tom Benwell's life starts falling apart as his appetite for the white powder takes control. Soon his job, his marriage and his sanity hang by loose tendrils, and a figure watches him, stalks him, and waits for him to fall because Tom Benwell drives a Porsche.

A highly polished novel about madness and disintegration and a must read for those who like their crime-fiction psychological. If you've not read Simms before, this is a great starting point to enter his world of madness, but be aware, like the drugs that Tom Benwell takes, Simm's writing is equally as addictive [and probably as dangerous!

Ali Karim

THE LIGHTNING THIEF

Rick Riordan

2005

ISBN: 0786856297

Hyperion Books For Children

Rick Riordan has taken his love of mythology and aimed it at a young adult audience. This started out as a bedtime story for his own sons and evolved into the beginning of a new series for Rick.

Percy Jackson discovers that he is the son of Poseidon, and as he soon discovers his life will be much different than it was. He is soon on a quest to track down a thief who has stolen the master lightning bolt of Zeus. Fantastic adventures follow. Percy is a great character and I really hope this is the start of a long series of tales.

I truly enjoyed this book, and it was a real joy to read something so entertaining. A real departure from the hardboiled Tres Navarro series, I am even more in awe of Riordan's writing because of the difference.

Jon

LOCKED DOOR

Blake Crouch

July 2005

ISBN-13: 978-0-312-31799-7

Thomas Dunne Books

LOCKED DOORS is Blake Crouch's second novel featuring suspense writer Andrew Thomas as protagonist.

As Thomas holes up in Alaska recovering from the events of 2004's DESERT PLACES, a body count begins to amass in the lower 48. He's being lured back home but by whom?

We soon find ourselves back in Carolina. As Andrew tries to stop a new series of deaths Crouch takes us on a road where the boundaries of good and evil are stretched like a rubber-band. Will the elastic hold or snap?

With characters eerily unique in fiction and a narrative with something fresh to say LOCKED DOORS is a surprising sequel that will fascinate the genre reader. This author shows every sign of stretching for a long, long time.

Ruth

MATTERS OF THE BLOOD

Maria Y. Lima

2005

ISBN: 0975857150

Quiet Storm Publishing

A new name showing up on bookshelves this summer is Maria Y. Lima. Her first novel, *MATTERS OF THE BLOOD*, is a stunning debut. If I had to categorize it I would call it supernatural suspense, but it doesn't fall into anyone subgenre easily.

Keira Kelly lives in Texas, she has stayed on while her family moved to Canada so she can watch over her cousin. Her cousin is a little different than the rest of the family, you see, he's only human.....

Things in the town are getting a little weird, and to add to her troubles Keira is experiencing visions. An old flame in the form of local sheriff Carlton Larson re-entering her life doesn't make things easier. And what is going on in the strange resort being renovated just outside of town?

Lima is a natural story teller and this book was a pleasure to read from the first page to the last. She has such a knack for writing characters that I swear I could hear their voices talking in a Texas drawl while I read. Get to your bookstore and demand this book!

Jon

MERCY FALLS

William Kent Krueger

August 2005

ISBN: 0743445880

Atria

In *Mercy Falls*, Sheriff Cork O'conner has 2 separate cases to deal with. First, one of his deputies is in the hospital as a result of what appears to have been an ambush for Cork. Shortly afterwards, a Chicago businessman, in town negotiating with the tribal casino, is found brutally murdered. The deceased family comes to town, Cork discovers that his half brother was a serious old flame of Cork's wife. *Mercy Falls* is as much a thriller as it is a mystery. Each of the 2 cases build to a climax at different points in the book. I

I have always been impressed with Mr. Krueger's writing, but this book takes it to the next level. Many authors get caught in a rut because they are afraid to move their characters forward in life. Kent has no problem taking chances and this makes the stories more breathtaking and his characters more realistic. While some readers may have problems with it, I find I have more of an emotional investment in Cork and his family with each book.

There is not a bad book in author's entire catalog, but this one is true gem. It is both a thriller and a mystery with a cliff-hanger of an ending that will knock you for a loop. Get back to your desk, Kent! I don't think I can wait another year to see what happens next.

Jeremy

MEW IS FOR MURDER

Clea Simon

July 2005

ISBN 1-59058-165-2

Poisoned Pen Press

Theda Krakow has recently left her steady newspaper job and is hoping to be successful as a freelance writer. She keeps up a steady flow of contacts with her friends and acquaintances in the world of publishing, and keeps her eyes open for story ideas in her metropolitan Boston neighborhood.

When a small kitten interrupts her walk through the neighborhood, Thea's curiosity is aroused by the kitten's limp, and she follows the cat to a large rambling house. She is greeted there by a large colony of other cats and a gruff elderly woman who seems to be the custodian of the felines.

Thea's journalistic instincts kick in and, thinking she has found a potential story about so called "cat hoarders," she returns to request an interview. But she discovers the old woman dead - collapsed in her kitchen with an ugly head wound and her felines circling the room in distress.

In MEW IS FOR MURDER, Simon draws on her own experiences and from topics of her previously published nonfiction works. Before the truth of the elderly woman's death is revealed, the reader learns about the plight of feral cat colonies; the persons who try to help these animals; the cruel need for space and time faced by animal shelters; the plight of mentally ill adults left without families to care for them; and the pressure on traditional Boston neighborhoods as "gentrification" operates to renovate older houses and price them out of the reach of former residents.

As an added bonus, Theda is an avid fan of Boston's alternative rock scene and readers are treated to a string of evenings in small music clubs learning about the challenges faced by the musicians who perform there. The time Theda spends in music clubs begins to produce answers to the puzzle of the old woman's death, and Theda must sort out who can be trusted among the new friends she meets there.

Woodstock

MONSTRUM

Donald James

1997 Hardcover/2000 Paperback

Century HC/Planeta PB

ISBN: 0712678603 HC/9684068573 PB

Donald James tells the tale of Russia in 2015. A Russia wracked by post-civil war poverty, mayhem and corruption. With the whole country teetering on the verge of collapse, a series of murders gains national notice by a people that thought that grown immune to fear.

Police Inspector Constantin Vadim is pulled from the remote town of Murmansk to head the investigation in war torn Red Presnya. This despite his having never headed an investigation of this type or magnitude before. He plods along studying the case of the Monstrum; a killer that is has reached almost legend status for the slaying and mutilations of young women. Everyman under him is more competent to handle the complexities of this case, but Vadim struggles on. However, his superiors, the Cheka (KGB redux), have an ulterior motive for bringing the moody detective to Presnya.

Vadim bears a striking resemblance to Leonid Koba, the strong-armed leader struggling to maintain control of the chaos that is Russia. Confused, distrustful but superficially compliant, Vadim is pulled deeper into this political intrigue. His ex-wife, Julia Petrovna, an anarchist rebel on the losing side of the civil unrest, clarifies matters when she tells him of the attempts on Koba's life. Vadim is to be a decoy. As he intuitively and doggedly begins to uncover a trail that had been long cold in the murders, he is put under the knife to enhance his likeness to the embattled vice-president. His life and Julia's are at stake, but so are those of the hapless women who must walk the streets with the Monstrum.

James, a script writer for the Mission Impossible and Avengers TV series, has created a novel very much like a modernist CRIME AND PUNISHMENT with a twist of noir. He paints a bleak yet vivid painting of a society that has lost its humanity championed by a man only recently made aware of his own soul. Vadim is mordant, keen and empathic lead made to overcome vices he hopes will drown him as he looks with open eyes at the black world around him. MONSTRUM is a dark and enthralling story written with well-honed, insightful skill.

Jennifer Jordan

MURDER OF A SMART COOKIE

Denise Swanson

2005

ISBN: 0451215842

Signet Mass Market Paperback

One sitting. That's what it took for me to read this book. I sat down and planned to get a start and ended up reading the whole thing straight through. The Scumble River series become part of my regular reading diet and Swanson is writing at the top of her game in this latest installment.

It's summer and Skye Denison has the summer off from her gig as a school psychologist. She plans to work through the summer so she can make enough money to secure her living arrangements once and for all. After a series of event totally out of her control she ends up working for a woman named Cookie who runs an antique store. However Cookie is not exactly an honest business woman and Skye calls her on it. In need of a job once again she finally ends up working for her Uncle, the mayor. Her job? Supervise the towns participation in a giant rummage sale along route 66.

Between her new job, and her parents bickering and a number of other distractions it's all she can do to keep from going full goose bozo crazy. Unfortunately the death of Cookie Caldwell is just going to make matters worse...

This book was such fun to read, in no small part due to Swanson's ability to write such real characters. There are people in this book that I wanted to throttle with my bare hands, others I would love to buy a beer and talk to for hours. Swanson knows what makes people tick, and she knows put it on the page perfectly. She also wrote a mystery that kept me guessing right to the end. Witty, funny, suspenseful and tight. Denise Swanson has it all.

Jon

PAINKILLER

Will Staeger

July 2005

ISBN: 0060765860

William Morrow

Wow. Another incredible debut novel. I can't remember the last time I've seen so many great new authors in one year. And Staeger has written a thriller that moves like a bobsled on perfect ice.

Cooper is a semi-retired CIA operative. He lives in the Virgin Islands and spends his just trying to enjoy life on the beach. But when the local law enforcement ask for help looking into a murder, his leisurely paced life is put on hold. He is drawn into the case and the only clue is a tattoo. Meanwhile, an analyst at Langley notices something strange going on in China and other places. She too is drawn towards a case she knows she should stay away from. Before long Cooper and Julie Laramie are working together as seemingly unrelated events come together.

Staeger writes great action and does a superb job creating tension. This is truly a page turning and I look forward to what he does next.

Jon

POISON HEART

Mary Logue

August 2005

ISBN: 0345462246

Ballantine Books

For those us who are urban denizens, the idea of small town life in the Midwestern USA is, more often than not, a rather idyllic image -- replete with notions of a simpler way of life where there's not only more natural beauty, but also friendlier neighbors, more safety and security, and, of course, less crime. These are the places where folks still feel no need to ever lock their doors.. or is it?

For fans and soon-to-be-fans alike, POISON HEART marks the welcome return of Deputy Sheriff and County Investigator Claire Watkins, who's the sole female deputy in one such seemingly placid place, St. Antoine, Wisconsin. Ninety minutes from urban hustle and bustle, it's a pleasant drive on a golden autumn day from the Twin Cities. With a sharp eye for detail, the author brings us up to date with the widowed Claire, a big city transplant, who's come to seek refuge in the smalltown peace and quiet, as well as to find a better life for herself and her pre-teen daughter Meg. She's moved in with her love interest, Rich, and all seems well, until...

At a community gathering in the local coffee bar, which brings together the friendly locals for a regular chat session, Claire is urged to speak with Margaret Underwood, a rather nervous local woman, whose octogenarian father lies in grave condition in a nursing home following two recent strokes. Walter Underwood's recently remarried a woman twenty years his junior, Patty Jo. Seems that Patty Jo is intent on selling off the family farm to the rich city-slicker living in 'the big house', while Margaret, his only child, has been cut out of the new will. This, however, is only the beginning as our investigator is challenged to make sense of a series of suspicious arsons, the bizarre shooting of a prize elk, and the rather hurried efforts to auction off all of Farmer Underwood's worldly goods. Can these events be related? And if so, how?

This was my first time reading Mary Logue and I've very much enjoyed her style, the weaving together of the sub-plots, attention to detail -- particularly of the physical settings, and her well-drawn characters and their interactions. I'm planning to

scout for the four earlier books this series. This was a very satisfying read, and I believe *Crimespree* readers who try this series will agree.

Annie Chernow

THREE CAN KEEP A SECRET

Judy Clemens

July 2005

ISBN 1-59058-184-9

Poisoned Pen Press

Stella Crown is a young single woman running a dairy farm in Pennsylvania, with the assistance of only two part time employees. After the death of her beloved foster father who lived on the farm with her and was a full time partner, Stella finally admits she needs a hired hand. When a young woman responds to the help wanted notice, accompanied by her young daughter, Stella is at first skeptical. But Lucy Lapp's skills are impressive, and Stella gives her the job.

But gradually it's apparent that Lucy carries some dark secrets with her. Stella's farm is vandalized by graffiti artists who leave obscene slogans on the walls of outbuildings. A child welfare worker appears to investigate Lucy's ability to care for her daughter. Stella receives threatening phone calls late at night.

As these events unfold, some of Stella's friends are also besieged by ominous events. Lenny and Bart run a motorcycle sales and repair shop. Vandals strike there, too, in one incident Bart is severely wounded. As a parallel to Lucy's untold secrets, Lenny's previous life has returned to haunt him, with violent repercussions.

With the assistance of an understanding cop and the supportive friendship of a wide circle of neighbors, Stella sorts out both sets of secrets - Lucy's as well as Lenny's.

Woodstock

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

Angela Henry

2005

ISBN:583146075

Bet Books

I was afraid to start this book. It sat, staring at me, for several days until I got the nerve to just start reading. Why? Because it has one of the simplest, yet coolest covers that I have seen in a long time, and I was afraid to judge the book by it. Once I started reading, I resented every interruption Kendra is a young African-American woman, working two jobs and with a close-knit family life. Her life is rather average and routine. Until girlfriend Bernice's boyfriend turns up dead. The police can only see one suspect: Bernie. But Kendra sees and hears things the police don't, and aren't interested in knowing. Why bother detecting when there's a perfectly good suspect at hand? Unless, of course, they decide that Kendra is an even better suspect.

Ms. Henry is a refreshing new voice and her protagonist is fresh and fun, but not silly. Her characters were the sort of people one meets every day, and Kendra stands out as an enterprising young woman with a sensible head on her shoulders. I liked hanging out with her. Please, Angela Henry, keep writing!

Kathleen Tromp

THIS DAME FOR HIRE

Sandra Scoppettone

July 2005

ISBN: 034547810x

Ballantine

She's BAACK. I'm delighted. I've missed Sandra Scoppettone.

Welcome to New York City, 1943. A vital town where the life of one young woman has been snuffed out and our female detective has stumbled into her first murder investigation.

Claudette West was a young lady of privilege who played by the rules sometimes but also went to her grave with secrets that may explain her untimely death. Faye Quick is the secretary turned licensed P.I. whom the Wests entrust to find the answer to their daughter's death.

Scoppettone is the force that puts the story together. She delves into wartime New York like she walked the streets personally. She introduces us to a protagonist Claudette Colbert was born to play and Mike Hammer would have fled from. And she brings us a new Scoppettone plot. Timely, insightful and good plain fun. Her new protagonist may indeed be Quick but she ain't Faye. A must read for all fans of pulp. She's back and I'm delighted.

Ruth

TO THE POWER OF THE THREE

Laura Lippman

July 2005

ISBN 0-06-050672-5

William Morrow

When the call comes, it's horrific. A school shooting. A locked room. One friend dead, one alive, and one somewhere in between. What happened in the bathroom at Glendale High on Friday morning.

Using her twenty plus years as a reporter Laura Lippman uses crisp prose to unweave a tale from Suburbia. As TO THE POWER OF THE THREE unfolds and reveals itself it is her decade as a novelist that takes over.

A story of friendship and community is haunted by the mores of today's society. Parents want the best for their children and friends see the best in one another. High school remains as dramatic as the one we all remember but in today's faster world childhood pacts can soon dissolve into adult disappointment.

Police interviews, flashbacks and third person continuing narrative tell the story of Josie, Perri and Kat. Ms. Lippman tells a tale of a world where the purest of motives can lead to the the most dire consequences.

Laura Lippman has long been a favorite read amongst the Mystery community. Beginning with BALTIMORE BLUES the talent has been apparent. With each successive novel more of that talent has come to the page. This is why Ms. Lippman has a shelf full of critical awards to go with an immense popularity. TO THE POWER OF THE THREE is another step of evolution in a writing career matched by far too few.

Ruth

THE TORMENT OF OTHERS

Val McDermid

St. Martin's Minotaur

May 2005

ISBN 0-312-33919-4

Though Detective Chief Inspector Carol Jordan has apparently recovered from a savage, job-related rape, she is worried about returning to work. Can she still deal competently with the brutal crimes without trembling? Can she still command a group of tough cops, while ignoring their pitying looks? Assigned to a special crimes unit, supposedly a less stressful position, she is immediately involved with two disturbing cases. A young boy has disappeared, probably kidnapped and murdered. These cases are never easy for any cop. Then a dead prostitute is found, sexually and savagely mutilated. Interestingly, the method of murder is just like the deaths of four other prostitutes. However, that murderer was captured, convicted, and is now in jail. Is this a copycat? But how does this second murderer know how to duplicate the very strange M.O. of the first one?

Readers know serial murderers, rapists, and pedophiles are a big part of McDermid's turf. Her team of DCI Carol Jordan and psychologist profiler Dr. Tony Hill are accustomed to investigating the dark, violent side of the human psyche. Though other authors use these same materials, McDermid is still the master of intricate plot manipulation. And here she has included even more diabolically clever, unique twists to make this a real page-turner. Even her shifts in points of view is more original than most.

However, carefully constructed plotting is not the only plus in this book. McDermid skillfully creates a whole cadre of vivid, believable characters. Virtually every cop has an intriguing back story which influences how that cop investigates crime and

how he/she deals with suspects and peers. Possible suspects are equally well developed so that a number of people have motive and opportunity, but the murderer is still a shocker. And the love/hate relationship between principals Tony and Carol remains fascinating. Each is a brilliant, flawed human being. Tony is a socially inept loner, but he is empathetic and kind. Carol is an outstanding, driven detective, though some of her subordinates call her the Ice Queen. Yet outsiders don't understand either of them well. But McDermid makes readers think they do. In fact, McDermid has a gift for making us understand the dormant evil within each of us.

A clever, compelling plot, fully drawn characters, masterful writing, and a perceptive view of the dark side of humanity make this another winner for McDermid.

Beverly DeWeese

TROUBLE SHOOTER

Gregg Hurwitz
September 2005
ISBN 0-06-073141-9
William Morrow

Tim Rackley is fast becoming a favorite fictional cop. TROUBLE SHOOTER begins with a breath taking prison break. It expands into a tale of international terrorism, super drugs, and murder. Hurwitz grabs on to this story of California bikers and the cops who've got to catch them like an experienced rider aboard a V-twin ride. A deft foot on the clutch takes the reader through the personal, political and frightening with a speed that will make you wish you had a helmet on.

Hurwitz is thriller disguised as police procedural. Hurwitz is police procedure disguised as thriller. Hurwitz is a name to remember the next time you go book shopping.

Ruth

TWO TRAINS RUNNING

Andrew Vachss
June 14, 2005
Pantheon
ISBN: 1400043816

For old Vachss fans, this book is a sure thing, and for readers unfamiliar with Andrew Vachss many books, this is a great place to start. TWO TRAINS RUNNING is a raw, complex story of a city set in 1959, where everybody wants a piece of the pie. Royal Beaumont is the current King of Locke City, with a lock on vice he has no intentions of sharing. The New York Mafia show up, followed by the local black militants, and finally the Irish Mob with their claim to Kennedy, and his plans for the White House. This all ties together in a seamless narrative, with a large cast of characters, violence, love, death and atonement.

Karen Hildebrand