

reviews from www.crimespreemag.com

AS DOG IS MY WITNESS

Jeffrey Cohen

2005

ISBN: 1890862436

Bancroft Press

With a breezy conversational tone, author, Jeffrey Cohen gives the reader a birds-eye view of freelance writer Aaron Tucker's somewhat frenzied life. A life that includes his good-natured wife, Abby, daughter Leah, humankind's best hugger, and son, Ethan whose approach to life is shaped by the fact that he has Asperger's Syndrome (AS). Ethan, a normal twelve-year-old in a lot of ways (think playing video games and defying one's parents) presents daily challenges precipitated by AS, a variant of autism. And, then there's the family dog, Warren, a beagle/basset mix who won't be denied. In this third installment of the series, Jeffrey Cohen's altar ego is up to his ears in looming deadlines, mundane family crises, and an old friend's job plight. Added to the mix are the imminent arrival of condescending in-laws and the demands of living in the coldest house in New Jersey. The only thing missing from Aaron's chaotic existence is being caught up in a murder investigation. But, before Aaron even realizes what his life is lacking, he is called upon to help Justin, a young man with AS who's been accused of shooting someone with an antique gun. Guns just happen to be Justin's passion and when the police seek out his expert advice during their inquiries, they find the murder weapon in his room. And to make matters worse, Justin quickly confesses to the crime. As more layers (both plot and clothing) are added and additional suspects emerge, the action intensifies until the reader feels only admiration and awe as Aaron juggles an assortment of suspects, clues and other whodunit balls in the air. The novel careens toward a whiz-bang ending but not before we learn which are the best bagels in New Jersey, that loving someone too much can be hazardous to your health, and that mob characters are people, too.

Jacqueline Rice

ASH & BONE

John Harvey

December 2005

ISBN 0151011397

Harcourt, Inc.

It's been a year of extremely strong police procedurals. Peter Robinson, Ian Rankin, Michael Connelly and Val McDermid are just a few of the seasoned veterans who've offered some of their best writing this year. "New Kids" Mark Billingham, Simon Kernick and Steven Sidor are just a sampling of the authors who are assuring that this sub genre has no fear of being forgotten.

John Harvey's December offering ASH & BONE is perhaps my favorite police procedural of the year. Like the good films the studio holds back for award considerations this book takes something that is being well done by a number of people and adds a little something extra that only a person with a true

knowledge of and understanding for the genre can capture in the written word.

A police takedown gone wrong, a policewoman stalked. A retired D.I. whiling away time, hiding from recent events with books and Jamison. The plotting is magnificent. Harvey is a successful writer for a reason. He takes chances where a lesser scribe wouldn't, sacrificing both characters and sentimentality to bring a ring of truth to the entwining storylines.

Frank Elder is at the heart of this story. The retired D.I. introduced in last year's FLESH & BLOOD is brought in by police to advise on a new case while trying to help daughter Katherine mend fresh wounds that may never heal. With police, Elder works on solving a crime that becomes more complex as the investigation begins to unfold. With his ex-wife Frank fights to save a daughter who has lived through events no one should have to imagine. Unforgettable characters are added to Harvey's already impressive pallet. A fascinating tale is told. And yes, Charlie Resnick again makes a cameo.

ASH & BONE is an ode to reality. No one can be safe in today's world but there will always be people who try to make it a better place. John Harvey is a master.

Ruth

BEHIND THE MYSTERY

Stuart Kaminsky / Laurie Roberts

2005

ISBN: 0975524526

Hot House Press

This is an oversized book of interviews by Kaminsky with eighteen of the best mystery writers working today. It also has wonderful candid photos from Laurie Roberts. It was started in 2001 which is evident from the pictures in Lawrence Block's apartment with the Trade Towers in the background. This book is wonderful, the interviews are terrific and the photos are amazing. There is something about authors interviewing other authors that tends to really bring out great material, and the fact that Kaminsky is a fan of the genre makes it even better. It's a bit bigger than the average hard cover and is truly beautiful.

BEHIND THE MYSTERY is a book every mystery fan should read and own.

Jon

A BITTER CHILL

Jane Finnis

2005

ISBN: 1590581938

Poisoned Pen Press

A BITTER CHILL IS solidly in the tradition of British mysteries featuring the atmosphere and style of the countryside away from London. However, Jane Finnis nicely varies the theme by placing her tale in first century Britain, when the Romans were still governing most of the known world. In a small wayside village near the city we now know as York, two sisters run an inn - providing bed and breakfast to passing travelers as well as a pleasant gathering place for the permanent residents of the area.

As they prepare for the late December feast of Saturnalia, hoping for a few days rest and recuperation, Aurelia and Albia must return to their roles as businesswomen when a large party arrives unannounced. Included in the party is an ailing father threatening an ever changing list of alterations to his will, a harridan of a mother terrorizing all and sundry, and a large contingent of servants, attorneys, and physicians. In fairly short order, three persons are murdered, innocent slaves are kidnapped, an unscrupulous businessman cheats the unsuspecting, and a band of petty thieves harasses the area inhabitants.

No classic British mystery would be complete without at least one love affair, and Finnis dishes up several. There are lovers who must keep their affection a secret, lovers whose passion will remain unrequited, and lovers whose hopes for a happy future together are threatened by the demands and expectations of family.

Finnis' main characters Aurelia and Albia proven themselves equal to their challenges and assist the investigators sent by local Roman governors to sort out what is going on. The first century setting is a refreshing variation on the traditional British country setting.

Woodstock

BLOOD TIES

Lori G. Armstrong

2005

ISBN: 1932815325

Medallion Press

A new book by author Lori Armstrong, BLOOD TIES offers a strong plot, and is set in South Dakota, an interesting area of the country. Working in the office of the Bear Butte Sheriff's office, gives Julie Collins some insight to the crime in the area. Her relationship with old friend Kevin Wells, gives her some work as a part time P.I. and that involves her in the death of a 16 year old girl. When Julie becomes part of the tragic life and death of the murdered girl, she discovers ties not only to her past, but to Kevin's as well. Sometimes the past should remain buried, and forgotten. Julie's background with alcohol, cigarettes and stupid boy friends leave her in some dangerous situations, and it would be better, if she didn't put herself in the position of being beaten up with alarming frequency. Solving the case leaves her in an awkward position with Kevin. But despite her black eyes and bruises Julie is a feisty woman, and she and Kevin might just make it back for an encore performance.

Karen Hildebrand

THE BUTCHER OF BEVERLY HILLS

Jennifer Colt

2005

ISBN:0767920112

Broadway Books/Random House

Looking at THE BUTCHER OF BEVERLY HILLS is an exercise in cognitive dissonance: the title suggests lots of blood and gore, perhaps a serial killer, while the hot pink cover with orange and white accents is much more accurate in conveying the chick-lit tone of the book. Kerry McAfee is

the right-handed, straight, straght-arrow twin while Terry is the left-handed, lesbian, Harley-riding troublemaker. Together, they are Double Indemnity Investigations.

Rich Aunt Reba has asked Kerry and Terry to help her friend Lenore Richling with a small problem. Seems Lenore's second husband, the hunky Mario, has absconded with jewelry and a wad of cash. Lenore has redeemed the gems but wants the money. The twins find Mario, get the money, and then people start dying... Mario, Lenore, another rich widow. Then there are the drugs, the mysterious "it" that some unknown man is hunting down, and perhaps the Russian Mafia. As one might imagine, the plot is convoluted.

While on the surface THE BUTCHER OF BEVERLY HILLS is a light and fluffy read, the plot is thicker than expected. Colt creates some great characters, many of whom I'd like to meet again. The various romantic entanglements, and there are many, are well-written and even the sex scenes are a hoot - because that's the way they are supposed to be, not because they are badly written. If you like Evanovich or Apodaca, then Colt should be on your list.

P.J. Coldren

THE CINNAMON KISS

Walter Mosley

2005

ISBN 0316073024

Little, Brown, and Co.

Easy Rawlins, a man of color, has a P.I. license. However, he has always been a rather reluctant, sporadic investigator, and he never advertises. After all, he is very content with his mundane job as supervisor of the custodians in the local school district. He owns his home, and he is reasonably happy with his significant other, Bonnie. Most of all, he dearly loves his two adopted children, Jesus and Feather. But, suddenly, Easy walks off the edge of this quiet life into a deep hole of fear and panic. His daughter will die unless he can pay thousands for some expensive, experimental care in Switzerland - thousands he does not have. His old friend, Mouse, offers him a job, but Easy knows working with Mouse (who's definitely a sociopath) often escalates into murder. And Easy really does not want to kill someone. Fortunately, another friend, P.I. Saul Lynx, offers him a job that might also pay big: tracking down liberal lawyer Alex Bowers and some sensitive papers he may have stolen. However, as Easy follows Alex's trail to San Francisco, which is in the flowering of the hippie movement, the investigation suddenly becomes even more deadly than being with Mouse.

In this eighth book in the series, Easy Rawlins continues to be one of the more complex heroes in detective fiction. He tries to avoid fights, preferring to trick or sneak around his opponents. Still, he has killed his share of men. He's extremely paranoid about his life, and he keeps his affairs as private as possible, confiding in no one. On the other hand, Easy is quickly drawn to the many women he meets, usually sleeping with them for a night or two. He definitely likes women. Yet, ironically, when his lover Bonnie uses her charms to get medical care for his daughter, Easy becomes very angry and refuses to forgive her. Women do bring a lot of

grief to Easy, but he causes them grief too. Still, no one can deny that Easy seems to truly love his children and the whole idea of family.

Other characters are equally memorable. Archie Bowers, the possible victim, has tried to rid himself of the enormous guilt he feels for his father's sins by offering free legal service, though he still uses and enjoys his father's wealth. Cinnamon Cargill, a sexy, chameleon-like woman, and the very competent and controlling Maya Adamant, easily manipulate Easy. The shadowy Robert E. Lee, who actually hired Easy, is a diminutive man, but he has an enormous ego. He is definitely a worthy foil for Easy. Jackson Blue, the computer genius, and Joe Cicero, the stone cold killer, are just a couple of the important characters. And his friend Mouse, of course, is incredibly loyal. However, having Mouse at your side is like carrying nitroglycerine.

Much of the richness in Mosley's mysteries also comes from his view of life as a black man. As a man of color, he lives in a world that few of us really know. And Easy moves smoothly and efficiently in this world among an important labyrinth of friends, enemies, and contacts, interpreting it for his white employers. However, it is noteworthy that when Easy suddenly finds himself among the hippies during the Summer of Love, he is a bit bemused, but he is also impressed by their genuine color blindness and freewheeling life.

Finally, the compact, interesting plot (what is in those hidden papers?) and the many vividly portrayed characters are beautifully intertwined with Mosley's rich, rhythmic style and powerful images of another time, another place, almost another world. This is a worthy addition to the series. Definitely recommended.

Bev DeWeese

THE CADAVER'S BALL

Charles Atkins

2005

ISBN: 0312342047

St. Martin's Minotaur

How far will people go to get back at someone? Peter Grainger is about to find out. His life is turned upside down after a personal tragedy and an old pal is helping him cope. But is his buddy really trying to help?

This book reads fast, mainly because you can't stop reading. It's devilishly clever and a bit twisted and highly entertaining. It's hard to talk about without revealing too much, but I was enthralled by this book.

Jon

THE CIPHER GARDEN

Martin Edwards

November 2005

ISBN: 1590582063

Poisoned Pen Press

Several years before the main thread of Edwards' story begins, Warren Howe was hacked to death with one of his

garden tools. The professional landscaper was a thoroughly unlikable guy, with the result that several of his family members, neighbors, girl friends and business associates had motive to see him dead and gone. But the police were unable to gather any evidence to speak of, and their investigation eventually languished in the cold case files.

When a series of anonymous notes begin to appear - sent to the police, to Howe's surviving family, and to others in the small community in England's Lake District, an ambitious Assistant Chief Constable instructs her staff to reopen the case. At first the investigating officers meet the same disheartening parade of dead ends. Edwards utilizes the repetitive rounds of interviews and visits to provide tantalizing tidbits of insight into his cast of characters, providing ample motivation to keep reading.

Heading up the investigating team is DCI Hannah Scarlett.

One of the local residents drawn into satisfying his own curiosity is retired Oxford professor Daniel Kind. These two are subtly drawn into a mutual attraction to one another.

Edwards keeps their interest in each other on a very slow burner, and this adds to the suspense.

More tragedy lies in wait for the small community. A retelling of one of the most famous of Greek tragedies, updated for the 21st century, THE CIPHER GARDEN is a satisfying read for those who prefer their mystery, tension and suspense to arise from human interaction rather than slam bang violence.

Woodstock

CITY FOR RANSOM

Robert W. Walker

2005

ISBN:0060739959

Avon Books

Robert W Walker has written a lot of books, I've read quite a few in his Instinct and Edge series and enjoyed all that I read. This latest novel is a bit of a departure for him. It's a historical set in Chicago in 1893 during the World Fair. The main character is one Alastair Ransom, a detective with the burden of catching a killer who wants to be noticed. The case is difficult enough, but due to interference from the chief of Police with his own political agendas Ransom has to work with a Dr. Tewes. Dr. Tewes is considered a bit of quack and Ransom wants rid of him. But things are going on that he is unaware of and Tewes may be his salvation.

Walker's research is highly evident throughout the book and was worth the effort. This book shines and lingers. It is fulfilling and yet left me wanting more. As it turns out, there are at least two more planned. The images still play in my head long after reading. This is a journey into a past that is fictional, yet could very easily be real. If this was baseball I'd say that Walker just pitched a no hitter, a perfect game.. If you haven't read Walker before, I suggest you start now. Right now.

Jon

THE CONCRETE SEA

John Dalton

2005

ISBN: 0954791320

Tindal Street Press (Available from Dufour Editions)

Don Avoca is a PI troubled by his past. He is on a case tracking the killer of college girl who was left dead in an abandoned industrial park. Helping him on this case away from his home turf is a local PI named Jackie.

As these things tend to happen he and Jackie hit it off, both sad and out of sorts they work the case together for different reasons, retribution, reassurance, atonement....

This sounds like a typical PI book, but it sure is anything but that. It's quirky, and gritty, full of unusual characters and an amazing sense of place. Dalton weaves words into prose the way Julia Child transformed food into gourmet meals. And this book is every bit as satisfying as a good meal.

Jon

CREEPERS

David Morrell

2005

ISBN: 159315237X

CDS Books

On a cold October night, five "urban explorers" enter the vast and crumbling remains of the Paragon Hotel.

The party consists of an aging history professor, a few former students, and a journalist who wants to chronicle the dangerous and illegal hobby of urban exploration—breaking into condemned buildings.

Ostensibly, they've come to explore this once luxurious hotel on the Jersey seashore, but two of the explorers have ulterior motives. Infested with rats, a three-legged albino cat, and architecture that threatens to collapse with the explorers' every step, the Paragon holds terrifying secrets and everyone is in for a long night of hell.

Written in real-time and unfolding over eight hours, from 9:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m., CREEPERS is endlessly entertaining, unpredictable, and one of the most brilliant works of fiction I've ever read. A perfect hybrid of suspense and horror, it's the kind of book the reader will down in one long sip. I defy anyone to pick CREEPERS up, read the first ten pages, and put it down. It simply can't be done. This is a masterwork by a writer working at full throttle, in total command of his craft. Don't wait until this book joins the canon of classic thrillers. Read it now.

Blake Crouch author of LOCKED DOORS

DUTCH UNCLE

Peter Pavia

2005

ISBN 0-8439-5360-8

Hard Case Crime

Harry Healy is not a good man. He's not even especially bright. But he knows that he's had enough of the inside of prison walls for a lifetime. If he can get the money together to get out of Florida and back to New York he may have a chance at a future. So when cell mate Leo asks Harry to make a drop for mutual acquaintance Manfred Pfister Harry sees a chance for a quick getaway from the Sunshine State. It goes badly. Harry ends up with cash and blow but also in a prime position to take the rap for a very new and not so natural death. In an act of preservation Harry tries to get to the bottom of the well executed set-up. Pavia takes us from Florida to New York and back to Florida again as Harry tries to escape from both good guys and bad, never enough ahead of anyone.

The Hard Case Crime imprint has quickly become a guarantee for a spectacular pulp read. Pavia's DUTCH UNCLE is an homage to everything right in this sub-genre.
Ruth Jordan

EVIL INTENT

Kate Charles

October 2005

ISBN 1-59058-200-4

Poisoned Pen Press

An outsider regarding a group of Anglican clergy in contemporary London might assume that they are all supremely confident in their chosen occupation and regard each other with respect. As Kate Charles compellingly portrays in her latest novel, nothing is further from the truth. Insecurities, jealousies, ambitions, intrigue and a host of other human frailties haunt this group as in any other small community world wide.

A staunchly conservative priest is found strangled on the floor of a London church. An immigrant from Africa, he had vociferously criticized some of the policies of the Church of England, to the point of interrupting religious services and stalking out of the sanctuary in indignation.

With a persistent tabloid reporter exposing every step in their investigation, London police are stymied in the attempts to identify the killer. Red herrings are in plentiful supply and almost everyone connected to the Anglican community has closely guarded secrets.

Eventually it's clear that the cruel manipulations of a bitterly frustrated person hold the key to the solution. A young priest newly assigned to one of the churches in the area stumbles on the secret and at long last gives the police the vital link they have been looking for.

Charles incorporates several issues straight from today's headlines. The aftermath of the ordination of women on both sides of the Atlantic and the continuing struggle to define the reaction of the church to Christians of varying sexual orientations are important threads in the plot but do not overwhelm it.

Woodstock

THE EXAMINED LIFE

Virgil Jose

2005

ISBN: 0-9741532-9-X

Fatcat Press, LLC.

Small gems are where you find them. **THE EXAMINED LIFE** is one of those gems that deserves being dug out of the tens of thousands books that are published each year. I have to admit that this book was not even close to my radar and I would have missed it had I not been asked to review this electronic book edition.

Gil Rodriguez is pretty much your average guy who seems content to mind his own business and run his small PI services for insurance fraud. The sudden death of his friend David Chang seems odd and at the request of David's family Gil reluctantly agrees to take a distant look. The more he digs the more complicated the case becomes and Gil needs all of his smarts to not only solve the case but to come out of the investigation in one piece.

THE EXAMINED LIFE slowly draws you into the story and Jose has created in Gil a person who would rather sit on the sidelines and read about the danger in the world instead of experience it first hand. However, the well drawn characters and convoluted plot lines create a pleasurable reading experience and keep you guessing as to who, where and when this crime will be solved.

If you are willing to take the plunge and read material that is not being published by the mainstream publishing houses I think you will find that there are a few diamonds in the rough among all the self-published and small house presses. I'm looking forward to the next Virgil Jose novel.

Aldo T. Calcagno

FEVER

Sean Rowe

2005

ISBN: 0316011746

Little Brown

FEVER is a great combination of a perfect caper story and a well done thriller. A spectacular debut novel.

Matt Shannon is about out of options. An ex FBI agent with his share of problems, Shannon takes a job working security on a cruise ship. However the chances of his problems being over are slim when his ex-con brother shows up with a plan that includes Matt.

Quick pacing and a triffic voice this is a book that should not be missed.

Jon

HOUR OF THE CAT

Peter Quinn

May 2005

ISBN: 1585675970

The Overlook Press

It's no easy task to sum up the plot of Peter Quinn's historical thriller, **HOUR OF THE CAT**. Although the main mystery concerns whether or not a man on death row has been framed for murder, there are several diverse plotlines, a countless cast of characters and plenty of historical details to absorb along the way. And Quinn shows no mercy for those

readers who aren't paying close attention as the action shifts between gritty New York locales to the offices and playgrounds of Nazi big shots during the late 1930's. In Manhattan, Fintan (Fin) Dunne, former cop turned private investigator, reluctantly agrees to help the death row inmate and soon becomes entangled in more sinister matters. In Berlin, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, the chief of German military intelligence, attempts to stay on the sidelines as Hitler's plans become increasingly grandiose. The "science" of eugenics, which espouses the belief that some forms of life are unworthy of life, becomes the link between the two storylines. Informative without being preachy, Quinn never talks down to his readers.

I found the character of Fintan Dunne very likeable. Although savvy and capable, he carries with him a touch of sadness that hints at a difficult early life. The author capably portrays other characters, ranging from politicians to hobos to journalists. And whether Quinn is describing "ramshackle lanes with tarpapered shacks" or "the warm repellant scent of grease, sweat, cheap wine, processed into piss," the writing is outstanding. It's not an easy read, but ultimately, it satisfies. And when all is said and done, this novel reminds us how interconnected we humans are and that our actions or apathy in response to world events can have far-reaching effects that reverberate for generations to come.

Jacqueline Rice

THE HUNT BALL

Rita Mae Brown

2005

ISBN: 0-345-46549-0

Ballantine Books

Its fall in central Virginia, and Sister Jane Arnold is Master of the Jefferson Hunt Club, and this keeps her busy through the season. She is also active with the local elite girl's boarding school, where she makes sure that some of the more talented riders are invited to the hunts. It's a bit inconvenient when some of the girls protest the school's collection of objects, many made by the family slaves, but then a teacher is killed, and *that* can't be turned into a "learning experience."

Hounds are one of the most talkative clans in the dog family, and it's not too far out to imagine them conversing with each other, so when one gives tongue at finding a scent she recognized, she cries "It's Target!" the reader can hear the cry in the words. All the animals are given opportunity to talk to each other, and they can understand the humans. It doesn't work the other way, the humans don't understand the animals, which was good. Knowing there were talking critters, I was a little concerned that it would be a bit precious. Thankfully, it stopped well short of that. The dialog flows naturally for man and beast, making the characters come alive; and there are quite a few characters to animate.

The story is rich in detail, but not so as to bog it down. And though it is the fourth in the series, it did not have that uncomfortable writing that makes it obvious the writer is pussyfooting about while skirting previous stories. The mystery isn't a strain to figure out, but it's Rita Mae Brown's characters who carry the story and keep the reader involved.

Kathleen Tromp

IMMORAL

Brian Freeman

Sept. 2005

ISBN 0312340427

St. Martin's

IMMORAL is a novel with broad appeal. Fans of Law and Order will like the way Brian Freeman plots. This police procedural goes from solving the crime to the courts and back to solving crime again. Fans of CSI will like IMMORAL as key evidence turns the case. Readers who want plot twists and turns, will like IMMORAL because, as in real life, some of the innocent are guilty, some of the guilty are innocent and moral certainty is a relative thing. Readers who want character development will like Immoral as even the secondary characters are drawn well enough that they could carry this novel. Red herrings, some action, some psychological suspense, all are present in this fast paced and believable debut. In Duluth Minnesota a young woman, Rachel Stoner, goes missing. Just a year before, her classmate Kerry Mcgrath, disappeared. That case remains open. Lieutenant Jonathan Stride, in order to assuage some of his own "Mcgrath" guilt takes the Rachel Stoner case from his detectives. It's Strides hope that the links between cases will now solve both. What's appealing is the way Freeman has Stride and his partner Maggie Bei working the cases, living their lives, moving on and yet, in Las Vegas, detective Serena Dial and her partner 'Cordy,' will have something to add. Brian Freeman can tell a story; one well worth reading.

Dave Biemann

THE INNOCENT

Magdalen Nabb

October 2005

ISBN: 1569474141

SOHO Crime

Magdalen Nabb's thirteenth excursion with Marshal Guarnaccia is the latest in one of the most gratifying and consistent police procedurals. Carabinieri NCO, Marshal Salvatore Guarnaccia begins a beautiful spring day in his adopted city of Florence like any other. He walks to work, taking in the sights and sounds of a bustling yet old fashioned city. He knows the city's people and its hidden places well. The discovery of a women's body in the Boboli Gardens, well off the beaten path for all put locals, is just a small jaunt from Guarnaccia's carabinieri's offices. The woman, found in a pool overrun with fish and lilies, cannot be readily identified. The fish have been hungry. Solving the immediate problem of her identity takes precedence with only the clothes on her back and one custom made shoe as indicators. The shoe leads to a local shoemaker, Peruzzi. Bereft of locals to carry on his name and skills, Peruzzi relies instead on the apprenticeships of Japanese students still eager to learn a trade. Guarnaccia bids his time in the artisan's quarter where the shoemaker, furniture restorers, and the local restaurant owner

are founts of information they are willing to disclose because of Guarnaccia bonhomie. He sits and quietly questions, gently prods then goes home to his wife and family to mull everything over and start again the next day. When he discovers the missing woman's name, then discovers her secret lover, the idyllic existence he has led clouds over. Lush, literate and bountiful in its humanity, THE INNOCENT will sate the senses and pique the mind.

Jennifer Jordan

JAR CITY

Arnaldur Indridason

Oct 2005

ISBN:0312340702

St. Martin's Minotaur

There are times when, instead of proffering one's own words about an authors writing, it is best to proffer the authors own words from the book in question. As you may well have guessed, this is one of those times.

I give you a passage from Arnaldur Indridason's JAR CITY in which his world weary yet compassionate protagonist Erlendur Sveinsson philosophizes about the brutality of the cases he's seen in his many years as a detective inspector in Reykjavik:

You think it won't effect you. You reckon you're strong enough to withstand that sort of thing. You think you can put on armour against it over the years and can watch all the filth from a distance as if it's none of your business, and try to keep your sense. But there isn't any distance. And there's no armour. No-one's strong enough. The repulsion haunts you like an evil spirit that burrows into your mind and doesn't leave you in peace until you believe that the filth is life itself because you've forgotten how ordinary people live. This case is like that. Like an evil spirit that's been unleashed to run riot in your mind and ends up leaving you crippled.

Everyone life touches upon a life in Iceland. Every crime has personal elements. The death of a lone man of sixty-nine years, head bludgeoned, note reading "I am him" on his chest, is approached with the meticulous and slow exploration of an entomologist with a new specimen. The victim, Holberg, had long ago been a perpetrator. Rapes of young women over thirty years before were attributed to him but the man slipped threw judicial fingers.

The note and the victims history are the only clues. They lead Erlendur to scratch surfaces long left ignored and a cold case sprouts from the dust. Victims from long ago tell their stories as if for the first time. From the victims are the seeds, the very essence of an old man's guilt and the genesis of his violent death. The answer lies preserved, found long ago and waiting to be found again by a detective tenacious and pedantic enough to find it.

JAR CITY is a beautiful and timeless police procedural wrought with rare skill and empathy.

Jennifer Jordan

LAST TO LEAVE

Clare Curzon

December 2005

ISBN 031231876

St. Martin's Minotaur

Clare Curzon is well known to fans of the English police procedural. Superintendent Mike Yeadings has lead readers to the conclusion of seventeen mysteries over the past twenty-two years. LAST TO LEAVE is the author's eighteenth title. And the lady still has the stuff. The Dellar family gathers and a fire breaks out. What at first appears to be an accidental blaze turns out to be arson. Yeadings and his team soon have murder to unravel. Is the family being targeted from outside or within? Perhaps both? With dogged investigation and with some happy accidents Curzon leads her reader through a tale that both entertains and works the whodunit cells.

Curzon is a writer who deserves a much wider readership here in the U.S. She is a master of the traditional. And on a chilly winter day there is nothing better than catching up with this series. It is always a pleasure.

Ruth

MADONNA OF THE APES

Nicholas Kilmer

October 2005

ISBN 1590581962

Poisoned Pen Press

Fred Taylor is a resident of Boston, more than a little enigmatic. On his own initiative and with his own funds - from some unspecified source - he has established a voluntary group home where other rootless men like himself seeking a way to fit into society or a way to manage estrangement from society reside. One evening he witnesses an encounter he interprets as presenting a threat to the safety of the men involved. Responding to an instinctive urge to prevent violence Fred intercedes.

From that point, the reader is led on a investigation into the exact nature of a painting discovered by one of the men involved in the threatening situation. Fit into the lid of a type of storage chest is a beautiful oil painting of the Madonna and child created in the style of Leonardo daVinci. Clayton Reed, the man who discovers the painting succeeds in purchasing it from the second man and with Fred's help he removes it safely to his home.

But others are also in search of the mysterious painting, and it may actually have been painted by Leonardo. Bodies begin to pile up, persons who may or may not be art critics, art brokers, or art experts arrive, everyone asserting a right to ownership of the purported treasure. Sensing an urgent need for security Fred offers himself to Reed to insure the safety of the painting until the two men are sure of the exact nature of their find.

Kilmer's story involves tax evasion on both sides of the Atlantic, Leonardo's biography and artistic philosophy, a crash course in forgery and deception and an increasingly dangerous game of cat and mouse, with the mysterious painting as a prize.

Kilmer's story does not rely on overt acts of violence, hectic chases, or frantic showdowns. Yet there is an ever increasing level of suspense and danger, presented in a skillfully subtle style which kept me fully engrossed.

Woodstock

THE MAN WITH THE IRON ON BADGE

Lee Goldberg

2005

ISBN: 1594143722

Five Star

Harvey Mapes could be me. He's a guy who reads a lot of PI novels, loves the old PI television shows and he thinks he can solve mysteries. The similarities are almost disturbing. However Harvey is fictional, and a bit more willing to take chances.

The book sets up nicely with Harvey working in his guard shack for a gated community in California. One of the residents makes a nice monetary offer to him in exchange for services, in short the old rich guy wants his wife followed. Harvey having read many books and seen many TV shows feels he's up to the job. What ensues is a wonderful story of the pitfalls of overestimating yourself, and what happens when you surpass your own expectations.

Goldberg has a knack for combining just the right amount of humor and realism with his obvious love for the PI genre and his own smart ass sensibilities. THE MAN WITH THE IRON ON BADGE is a terrific read and I for one would love to see this become a series. Goldberg is the real deal and should be on everyone's must read list.

Jon

THE MAYOR OF LEXINGTON AVENUE

James Sheehan

September 2005

ISBN 097674421X

Yorkville Press

THE MAYOR OF LEXINGTON AVENUE is the debut novel by Florida trial attorney, James Sheehan.

A vicious murder in south Florida with the wrong man convicted and on death row draws the attention of "the Mayor of Lexington Avenue" aka Jack Tobin. Tobin is a prominent civil attorney, wealthy, uptight and about to retire.

When he learns of the death of his childhood best friend, unresolved ghosts come back to haunt him. Yet he sees opportunities for some redemption through taking the death row case since the convicted is his best friend's son. Tobin gathers all of his resources, financial and supportive, and relocates to the small community to make all the appropriate appeals. What ensues is life altering for him and those around him.

THE MAYOR OF LEXINGTON AVENUE is an enjoyable story that keeps your attention.

Sheehan's strength is clearly the legal arena where his detail is accurate and informative. In other critical areas, the story expected the reader to make some leaps or, moved a little

less smoothly. Despite that, I believe the story and its characters are very interesting and you care about what happens to them, so you will want to keep reading. It is a fascinating book.

Sandi Loper Herzog

NIGHT LAWS

Jim Michael Hansen

January 2006

ISBN: 097692434X

Dark Sky Publishing, Inc.

NIGHT LAWS is the first book by Jim Hansen. Bryson Coventry is on the job as a no nonsense cop, who loves his coffee, respects his partner, the knockout Shalifa Netherwood, and knows his art. In the opening scene of the book Hansen drops you right in the middle of the action and cranks up the tension as you progress through the book. Coventry has arrived at Denver's high-power law firm of Holland, Roberts and Northway, LLC to interview and warn the upcoming star Kelly Parks of a seemingly unrelated murder. The connection, the killer called Park's cell phone after the murder. Another girl has been kidnapped and Coventry knows that the clock is ticking.

NIGHT LAWS contains many brilliant characterizations. As we get to know Coventry we get to see his humanity. This man is a hunter, has a strong moral purpose and may be the next "code hero" for a new generation. David Hallenbeck is the complicated serial killer. His meticulous planning to detail has made him difficult to track and the perfect opponent to match wits with Coventry.

NIGHT LAWS is face paced and well plotted. Hansen knows the territory well. Weighing in at over 300 pages, Hansen is able to keep you on the edge of your seat to see whether or not the hero will find our girl before time runs out. He plays fair, all the clues are there, but when the twist comes, watch out. While comparisons will be made with Turow, Grisham and Connelly, Hansen is a new voice on the legal/thriller scene. I recommend you check out this debut book, but be warned, you will need to set aside a few hours because once you start this book you are not going to be able to put it down.

Aldo T. Calcagno

NOW YOU SEE ME...

Rochelle Krich

October, 2005

ISBN 0345468120

Ballantine Books

Rochelle Krich has become one of the writers I wish could write faster. Her series featuring true crime reporter Molly Blume has everything good mysteries should have. There's an engaging heroine who believably steps into her criminal investigations. The police side-kick who is an exasperated friend is colorful in his own right. The husband who is supportive and not above helping when help is needed and in fact wouldn't be anywhere else if his wife may be in danger.

The crimes are topical and Krich writes peril in such a way that as a reader you feel it.

What makes this series special is the readers exposure to contemporary Jewish culture and Jewish history woven in amidst Krich's plot.

NOW YOU SEE ME opens with Molly in a good place both professionally (her latest book is doing well) and personally (newly and happily married to Zach). When Rueben Zastrow asks Molly for help finding his daughter Hadassah, Molly suspects there's more to the story than the man is admitting. Is this a simple case of a runaway daughter and internet romance? Or is something far more sinister going on? As Molly sifts through half truths in an attempt to find and rescue Hadassah she begins to further understand her return to the religion she has embraced. Molly's journey is one I hope to continue to read for a long time and Krich's skill as a crime fiction writer shouldn't be missed.

Ruth

A PRAYER FOR DAWN

Nathan Singer

2004

ISBN: 1932557040

BLEAK HOUSE BOOKS

With so many books fed into the ongoing glut of books one can choose from when hitting the bookstores or going on line, finding something, anything, with spark, power, balls is a task. Work. A struggle against shelves and shelves of "Meh," and "Ho-hum."

When you find a gem, shining in the dark, you hold on to it; sing its praises and pass it on to the next weary reader.

A PRAYER FOR DAWN is one of those rare, ultimately light-filled tomes that with all its dark and heavy reality is really an ode to the strength of the human spirit.

This book will have the reader prone and humbled amidst the muck and the debris of the street while looking at the few bright stars in the sky that manage to poke through the haze of bleak modern life. Flashing from aesthetic gutter-eye view to pained, over-wise teenage hopelessness, to fast-burning flame of righteous ranting to deep seated anger at a world always wrong to the ever watching eyes of a child nurtured by chaos looking for a hand to hold in the darkness that is that bad side of every town or city on America.

This book is peopled with people you don't want to share an elevator ride with and yet they are you. It is the story of people on the fast track to destruction with a touch of hope and it is your story. This book is harsh and raw and beautiful, reality pumping poetry and prose and rap through arties clogged with disdain and ignorance but still the heart never falters.

Very few writer's have the talent to mix narratives, follow multiple story lines from multiple characters changing cadence, vernacular, dialect – without losing the reader somewhere along the line. Singer more than succeeds. You'll crawl into this book, live on its pages and bemoan your fate when it ends. Raw, brutal, beautiful and potent writing. Here are the inevitable comparisons to authors of books past: Chuck Palahniuk, many of the Beat writers. But Nathan Singer is his own man with his own, singular voice. Well, not singular. There are, as is apparent by the many narratives in this book, many voices in Singer's head.

I'm chomping at the bit waiting for CHASING THE WOLF.

Jennifer Jordan

PRIEST

Ken Bruen

January, 2006

ISBN: 0593 055101

Bantam Press, U.K.

Ken Bruen's Jack Taylor is back. As always the author's words are razor sharp. There's a point in this tale where another character says to Jack, "you deserve some luck." followed up quickly by "I didn't say I was pleased, I said you deserved it. God knows you've never earned it." In Jack Taylor's world nothing ever comes without a price tag.

As **PRIEST** opens our protagonist is slammed back into sanity. He cannot forgive himself for the death of a child but he does not hide within himself any longer. Off the drink, and with new digs and a bit of an income things seem to be looking up. When asked by his mother's pastor, Father Malachy to look into the decapitation of a parish Priest Jack begins another descent into the slimy undercurrents of modern society. As Jack tries to find the truth behind the dead Priest's past and struggles with his own sobriety he meets Cody. A young man full of life who idolizes him and wants to go into business with him.

Bruen pours it all on the page in his books and **PRIEST** is another shattering tale. Using his three story arcs to draw parallels between the personal and societal ailments that are threatening modern society he has once again offered a narrative that will entertain, regale and haunt the reader as only an Irish story can. Priest will echo in your mind as only a book written by a poet possibly could.

Ruth

ROAD TO PARADISE

Max Allan Collins

Dec 2005

ISBN: 9780060540289

William Morrow

This is the third in a trilogy of stories which started in **THE ROAD TO PURGATORY** and was continued in **ROAD TO PARADISE** (now in Paperback). Michael Satariano is now an older man living in Lake Tahoe running a casino for the mob. He's come to terms with his past and just wants to live his life and do his job. But certain changes within the hierarchy of the people he works for puts him on the spot. They want him to make a hit on someone, and when Michael refuses things go badly. With his son lost in Vietnam, presumed dead, his family has suffered enough in the last year, so Michael takes a deal from the feds and goes into the Witness Protection Program.

Only he discovers the hard way that the protection isn't what it should be and now he and his daughter are on the run. Déjà vu from hell.

Collins is a true master of the genre and this book is one of his best. Fast paced action and wonderful dialogue blend together to make this a true noir adventure.

Jon

SAN FRANCISCO NOIR

edited by Peter Marvelis

2005

ISBN 1-888451-91-2

Akashic Books

And now, Frisco. The latest anthology by Akashic books is commendably edited by Peter Marvelis. Featuring stories from many of the area's writers, **SAN FRANCISCO NOIR** is a series of very strong short stories. David Corbett's **IT CAN HAPPEN** is a chilling tale of revenge.. Eddie Muller's **KID'S LAST FIGHT**, a tale of a meeting between a mom on the run, a would be thief and an ex-boxer is both sad and visceral, the words stroking the reader like the brush of a master captures the canvas. Kate Braverman uses Fisherman's Warf as the backdrop for **THE NEUTRAL ZONE**. Zoe and Clarissa are two people no one wants to know and yet the story is so wry it entralls. And this is just a taste. What Akashic has done for the short story is commendable. What their various editors are doing to capture the heart of cities is wonderfully unique, each time out and one city at a time.

Ruth

SIX FOR GOLD

Mary Reed & Eric Mayer

November 2005

ISBN 1-59058-145-8

Poisoned Pen Press

John the Eunuch, a Chamberlain in the court of the 6th century Byzantine Emperor Justinian, has been sent to Egypt by the Emperor to investigate a mysterious claim - that valuable sheep are slitting their own throats. A magician residing in the area of Egypt where the strange mutilations are occurring is challenging the local magistrate for control of the area, and by extension challenging the power of the Emperor as well.

Meanwhile back in Constantinople, John's reputation and life are at stake since he is being sought as the murderer of a prominent senator. His friends and members of his household follow a murky trail of evidence striving to clear John's name and bring the actual murderer to account.

Political maneuvering, religious fervor, superstition, extortion, deception, compulsive gambling, and betrayal are widespread in all of human history. The extensive research done by Reed and Mayer into the time and place for their story pays off in spades. Although separated by more than a millennium from the characters in the story, present day headlines and scandals seem close at hand in the pages of **SIX FOR GOLD**. Readers who enjoy a rich historical background for their mysteries will enjoy this installment in the continuing series.

Woodstock

SLIPPING INTO DARKNESS

Peter Blauner

January 2006

ISBN 0316098663

Little Brown

Twenty years ago, eager to prove himself, Manhattan Detective Francis X. Loughlin bent a few rules, broke a few more. As a result, seventeen-year-old Julian ("Hoolian") Vega got sent to prison for murder, and Frank became the darling of the detective squad.

Now, Frank is going blind. He's keeping it secret; his one hope is that he can hold on long enough to save his pension. He's had an exemplary career, and feels that he has more than redeemed his early indiscretions. But when Hoolian's conviction is vacated on a technicality, Frank is faced with letting "time served" be enough, pursuing a retrial, or actually admitting to a flawed investigation.

Complicating matters, there's a new murder all too similar to the one Hoolian was convicted of, and Frank sees a chance to end his career on a high - get Hoolian for both. After all, he just assembles the evidence, nothing personal. But new evidence is pointing elsewhere.

Meanwhile, Hoolian finds himself in a world in which he's become his own worst enemy. Smart and ambitious at seventeen, at thirty-seven he's clueless and painfully unable to drop the punk attitude he learned in prison.

Alternating between points of view, the story ultimately leads the two men to a confrontation which neither one of them can win, because they've both already lost so much.

In spite of a January release, *SLIPPING INTO DARKNESS* is certain to appear on a lot of end-of-the-year "Best of" lists. This is simply an incredible book.

Gary Shulze, *Once Upon a Crime*

ST. ALBAN'S FIRE

Archer Mayor

October 2005

ISBN 0-89296-816-8

Mysterious Press

Archer Mayor has one of the longest running and best "regional" series in Mystery. Set in Vermont this series has spanned decades and visited every region and season of the Green State. His newest book, *ST. ALBAN'S FIRE* continues the story of Joe Gunther, V.B.I. and his many associates with the aplomb only a seasoned veteran can maintain.

The book opens with teenage angst and a calf's birth but soon turns to horror as the barn ignites from every direction killing all the cattle and the future of a dairy family. These opening scenes are riveting and sure to draw any reader into the narrative.

When the fire is determined to be arson, Mayor's skills come into play. With a gentle pen he presents the story of a wrecked family and a dying industry. As Joe investigates a series of arsons in one of the nation's most rural areas, Mayor gives his readers an insight into the long tradition and precarious future of the New England family farm.

This history is wrapped in taut dialog and a spiraling mystery, making it vivid to any reader of the crime genre.

Returning readers will appreciate the forward movement of the series characters and new readers are sure to want to pick up the previous volumes of Mayor's ode to Vermont, mystery style.

Ruth

STEEPLECHASE

Jane Langton

November, 2005

ISBN 0-312-302-195-2

St. Martin's Minotaur

I am a fan of Homer Kelly, the rather boorish but always appealing scholar who is along with wife Mary the protagonist of Jane Langton's books. There's a great deal of the absent minded professor to him and always a touch of droll narrative to Langton's stories revolving around him.

STEEPLECHASE is a wonderful addition to this series.

Homer has despite himself landed atop the best-seller list, and his literary agent is clamoring for a sequel to *HEN & CHICKS*. As Homer and Mary chase down a forgotten church Langton writes a narrative in the time of the church's hey day. A sad story of the civil war and it's cost to New England communities. A story of love and death and redemption. Meanwhile can Mary and Homer find the church? Read and find out.

Ruth

STRANGER HOUSE

Reginald Hill

Oct 2005

ISBN 0060820810

HarperCollins

Stranger House does not have Dalziel and Pascoe in it, but this is vintage Hill. Australian Samantha Flood (Sam) is a vivacious, independent, brilliant math student on her way to study at Cambridge. But, since she believes one of her English ancestors was part of an infamous scam in which unwanted children were shipped to orphanages in Australia, she is going to undertake some genealogical snooping in a the tiny Cumbrian village of Ilthwaite. At the same time, Spanish Miguel Madero (Mig) has rejected his father's offer to run their wealthy wine business, intending to become a priest. But, when that does not work out, Mig decides to concentrate on his historical studies. He is particularly interested in tracking down a possible ancestor on his father's side, a young sailor who may have been shipwrecked on English shores. Officially, however, he is studying the life of a Catholic priest (Simeon Woollass) who worked in the late 16th century to help other Catholic priests escape the Protestant purges. And a Woollass family lives in Ilthwaite. Of course, Sam meets Mig, though they don't really care for each other at first. She is worldly and outgoing. He is a reserved virgin, with what he thinks are stigmata and terrible headaches. And he sometimes sees ghosts.

However, they are both looking for ancestors so their paths keep crossing. Sam finds concrete evidence that an earlier Sam Flood existed, even though the villagers say they have never heard of him or her. It is obvious that Simeon Woollass

had probably been in Illthwaite, but the current Woollass family is not disposed to show Mig the family records, at first. As the genealogical research continues, old family and village secrets slowly emerge and reveal some startling personal history for both Sam and Mig.

Stranger House has all of the usual Hill trademarks: a knotty, twisted plot spanning a couple of centuries that has to be unraveled by Mig and Sam, usually without the cooperation of the townspeople; a village full of idiosyncratic sometimes flaky, but usually likeable characters that reach out and grab you; and some very readable, but slightly esoteric backgrounds that include the child export scam, Catholic church history, and lots of Viking mythology, including numerous Edda quotations and a mysterious Wolf-Head Cross. The combination is suspenseful and very entertaining.

Though it is lively, the plot would takes pages to describe. And the same comment could be made about the many significant characters. However, to mention only a few, there is Thor, the metal-working craftsman who is a village history expert, who is also a flirtatious old geezer who comes on to Sam. Edie Appledore, the free-spirited manager of the Stranger House pub and rooming house, knows most of the village secrets, and she might even tell you a few if she likes you. Then there are the enigmatic, physically powerful Gowder twins, both called Laal. Once part of a wealthy, respected family, they have become silent, intimidating men. Frek Woollass is a teasing, lovely lesbian who might help Mig gain access to her family's archives. Even characters from the past are given full lives. Finally, Mig and Sam are full-bodied, intelligent, attractive characters, and the sexual chemistry between the two is delightful.

In summary, Stranger House is a rich concoction of an ingenious plot, vivid characters, masterful writing, and intriguing backgrounds, pungently flavored with wit and intellect. Highly recommended.

Bev DeWeese

SWASTIKA

Michael Slade

2005

ISBN:0143053256

Penguin Canada

Anyone who knows me is probably aware of the fact that I am a huge fan of Michael Slade's books. I've read them all. I think they are a perfect blend of historical background, police procedure, fast paced action with a dash of horror. This latest in the Special X series is no exception.

Inspired by archives of Flight Lieutenant Jack Clarke this book has the ultimate bad guys, Nazis. A series of murders with ties to the past are plaguing Vancouver and Special X is brought in to find the killer. Flashbacks to WWII and in particular SS General Ernst Streicher provide clues to what really going on. But will the clues be found in time to stop the killing in the present? Slade's skill at intertwining the past and present is uncanny. They flow together seamlessly while drawing you further and further into the story.

This book is a wonderful adventure with lightning fast pacing and an attention to detail that is unsurpassed. Michael Slade is quite simply a brilliant writer. I walk away from every book

having learned something new and inspired to read on the subjects further. Don't start this book unless you can finish it, because you won't want to put it down.

Jon

The Shooting Season

Steve Copling

October 2005

ISBN 1594143242

Five Star

Every July 24th, for the past three years, a serial sniper picks a city to terrorize. While the selection of cities appears to be random, the victim list is all too predictable: doctor, lawyer, judge, homicide detective. Always in that order. Twelve victims to date. As the story opens, a doctor has just been murdered in Plano Texas. It's July 24th, and homicide detectives Greg Rush and Rick Chinbroski are nervous. Once Rush and Chinbroski receive an anticipated piece of evidence - a shell casing bearing the thumbprint of Billy Ray Jackson - they know how this otherwise clueless spree will play out. One of them will die. What they don't know is that Plano, Texas, is the end of this murderous road. Has been all along.

This is a story about a grudge thirty years in the nursing. About flawed heroes pitted against an unstoppable villain. About how an act of betrayal between boyhood friends becomes a life-long obsession of revenge for one, and a haunting guilt for the other.

Artfully combining a poignant coming-of-age story with a gripping police procedural, THE SHOOTING SEASON is an entirely fascinating and inventive thriller.

Gary Shulze, Once Upon a Crime

THE COLORADO KID

Stephen King

October 2005

ISBN 0-84395584-8

Hard Case Crime

It's already late to review this book. I think everyone has already read this tale presented by Hard Case Crime and written by novelist Stephen King. It is a gem of a book for the mystery fan. Two older reporters talk about the mystery that haunts them to their apprentice. The problem? In the twenty years they've been looking into the death of The Colorado Kid there has never been a resolution to the story of how his body came to be found on an island off the coast of Maine. King uses his immense strength of revealing character through dialog to the point where you believe you are in their newspaper office with them. You come to appreciate the nature of mystery and the fact that the true mystery can never be solved. It is as I said a gem of a tale.

What it isn't is the kind of book I've come to expect from Hard Case Crime, that wonderful imprint resurrecting pulp fiction in all of its glory and with a respect for the history behind pulp. So I was momentarily puzzled. And then I realized the thing

about Hard Case Crime is they are going to continue to surprise us. And in this game that can only be a good thing.
Ruth

TIME OF DEATH

Shirley Kennett

Dec 2005

ISBN: 1594143099

Five Star

Opening the pages of the latest in the PJ Gray series is like sitting down to coffee with an old friend. In this case the old friends are PJ Gray and her partner Leo Schultz. Together they are part of an investigation team that utilizes virtual reality programming to help solve murders.

In this outing the case they are working is unlike any other they have seen. It could be two killers, or maybe one killer who extremely clever. Clues are hard to come by and every step forward the case makes is earned through hard work. Some major changes in PJ's life only make things more intense. Kennett writing is taut and unyielding and like great baseball pitchers she throws the curves fast and with uncanny accuracy.

She has a way with words that puts you right into the story.

Reading this book was like watching someone juggle plates while skateboarding down a steep hill, you aren't sure how it will end, just that it will be spectacular. I loved every minute of this book and look forward to her next.

Jon

TWISTED PERCEPTION

Bob Avey

2005

ISBN 1589822714

Bedside Books

Twisted Perception begins with the murder of Lagayle Zimmerman. Tulsa Police Detective, Kenny Elliott is put in charge of the case. But when he gets to the crime scene it is almost too much for him as it blends with his nightmares. Lagayle Zimmerman is found dead in her car with her necklace hanging from the rear view mirror. When Kenny was a teenager in Porter, Oklahoma, his best friend Johnnie and his girlfriend were found dead in Johnnie's car with Kenny's class ring on a chain hanging from the rear view mirror. Kenny was the only suspect in their deaths as they had a huge fight that night in front of a crowd and Kenny was also known for getting in trouble and having a temper. However, their deaths were ruled a murder suicide so Kenny was never charged and urged to leave town by the sheriff, who liked him, and his football coach. But now Kenny must go back to Porter to uncover old secrets to try to solve the murders occurring in Tulsa as the body count continues to rise and Kenny is looking more and more guilty.

This was a wonderful book full of twists and turns and lots of surprises. Bob Avey did a wonderful job with his character Kenny Elliott. I would highly recommend this book as it was quite the page turner.

Gina Metz

WHEN SECRETS DIE

Lynn Hightower

2005

ISBN 074346391

Pocket Books

Lynn Hightower's Lena Padget is an unforgettable Shamus. Hightower's latest mystery is a non stop read. Emma Mardsen is Lena's newest client. Accused of Munchausen by Proxy, Emma's story is a frightening one. One child is dead. Liver failure took Emma's little boy and now the state is threatening to take her teenage daughter. Emma objects to the practices of Clay's Mill Children's Clinic and now the physician in charge is using the Munchausen's allegation to destroy Mardsen's credibility.

Hightower uses WHEN SECRETS DIE to inform about some of the more abhorrent practices of modern medicine but she never forgets the genre she's writing in. The Mardsen case is immersed in intrigue and there's danger waiting for all the player's in Lena's latest outing. Nothing is as clear cut as it first seems and in the end the book becomes a race against time to save Emma's daughter.

WHEN SECRET'S DIE showcases all of Hightower's writing abilities and will engage the reader from first page to last.
Ruth

WHITE TIGER

Michael Allen Dymmoch

Dec 2005

OSBN: 0312323026

St. Martin's Minotaur

Dymmoch has an uncanny knack for writing intelligent books. This latest effort, WHITE TIGER is part thriller part mystery and all great.

John Thinnes and Jack Caleb are a cop and psychiatrist respectively, and both are vets of the Viet Nam war. Now a murder case in Chicago has them both reliving their past. Thinnes, originally assigned to the case is pulled of when a connection to the Vietnamese victim is discovered. The White Tiger, a ruthless killer during the war is now in Chicago and officially or unofficially Thinnes is going to get to the bottom of the killing.

This book was so good on so many levels. It goes beyond being a mystery thriller as it delves into the experiences of Viet Nam on a number of levels. This book will haunt you.
Jon

WOLF POINT

Edward Falco

October 2005

ISBN 1-932961-08-9

Unbridled Books

WOLF POINT is a character study. A man travels north hoping to escape his life. Outside of Syracuse he picks up two hitch hikers. "T." Thomas Walker knows better but he's bored and the young couple may prove a diversion. Lester and Jenny. From the beginning their story doesn't gel. When the

threesome arrives at the Thousand Island region of New York State the narrative takes on a surreal quality. All three of our lead characters have an agenda. All three are more than capable of lying, to each other and themselves. The meeting is volatile. Falco explores narcissism within a run down cabin and on the chilly waters of this part of our country.

Truth and tragedy are stripped away and then reintroduced in a plot as murky as the water surrounding our characters. Is there any hope for these lost souls?

While the writing is quite strong and the climax of WOLF POINT is chilling, getting to the end takes a perseverance. For while Falco's character study is extremely well done to get his reader there he throws in too much that is cliché and never allows himself the free reign that both these characters and his writing deserve.

Ruth

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

Gunnar Staalesen

2004

ISBN: 1900850583

Arcadia Books

When one Friday afternoon in February Judge HC Brandt, age seventy, was found dead in one of the better hotels in town, wearing nothing but flimsy women's underwear, rumours soon began to spread.

The dark and mordantly humorous first line sets the tone for THE WRITING ON THE WALL.

P.I. Varg Veum, fresh from the funeral of his ex-wife's most recent husband, encounters Sidsel Skagwatol, mother of 16 year-old daughter Torild. Torild is missing. Her mother eschews the help of the police.

Varg is soon haunting the locale de rigueur of out-of-school teenagers - Jimmy's, an amusement arcade. With backgrounds varying from rich to poverty stricken, the bored and disillusioned youth of Bergen, Norway gather, play and take Vice 101 courses from their elders. Prostitution borne of boredom and the desire for money to supply a drugs and clothes habit pushes disaffected girls to do things their mothers could not conceive. When Varg receives a death threat, he knows he's on to something.

When Torild turns up dead, it is confirmed.

Staalesen writing is like a river flowing fast from a winter thaw. The story is rife with tension as parents come to terms with their children's actions and local thugs try to keep these actions as the status quo. The translation is full of life and rich with the classic style of Marlow and Maconald.

Jennifer Jordan