

# I LOVE A MYSTERY®

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5460 Martway, •Mission, KS 66205•(913) 432-2583

www.iloveamystery.com

## IT'S THE MOST WONDERFUL CRIME OF THE YEAR

It's that time of year—time for our annual list of holiday gift ideas!

- ☒ **New!** We are proud to be the only local source for **Raven's Brew Coffee® (The Last Legal High)**. Raven's Brew Coffee's roastery is located in the town of Ketchikan on an island in the southeast panhandle of Alaska. Special holiday season blends, **Santa Caws™** or **Hanukkah Java™**, have a delectable body, a sweet, spice-like floral bouquet and a superb finish. Guaranteed to bring people together in good cheer, as well as good taste!



Other delicious Raven's Brew blends: **Wicked Wolf®** (*Grannie's Gone, But the Coffee's On*), **Resurrection Blend®** (*In Constant Quest of the Supreme Bean™*), **Skookum Blend®** (*Halo Wawa, Muckamuck Kaupy® --Shut up and Drink the Coffee®*) and our personal favorite, **Deadman's Reach®** (*Served in Bed, Raises the Dead*). 14oz bag, \$9.95.

- ☒ **New!** Putumayo music and various other titles, specially selected by our staff. If you like what you hear in the store, why not take a cd home? Our staff selections include Rod Stewart's ***Stardust: The American Songbook, Vol. III*** (\$18.98), ***Genius Loves Company***, Ray Charles (\$18.98) and ***Crime Scene, Space Capades, Christmas Cocktails, Part 1*** and ***Christmas Cocktails, Part 2*** from the Ultra-Lounge series (\$11.98 each).
- ☒ **I Love a Mystery mugs**, \$6.99. Combine one of our ILAM mugs, a package of Deadman's Reach coffee and a Putumayo ***Music from the Coffee Lands*** compact disc (\$15.98) to make the perfect gift for any coffee-loving mystery fan. Add an I Love a Mystery tote for a gift "wrap" that will be used all year long (natural canvas with black trim, \$18.95; frosted plastic with red trim, \$12.95).

- ☒ Custom-designed **gift baskets** or **gift-filled totes**. Choose an ILAM tote or a holiday basket to fill with books for a special gift. You select the books, or we can choose for you.
  
- ☒ ***Benni Harper's Quilt Album: A Scrapbook Of Quilt Projects, Photos & Never-before-told Stories*** by Earlene Fowler & Margrit Hall (C&T Publishing, paperback, \$27.95). For fans of Fowler's popular Benni Harper mystery series, this collection presents 12 traditional-style quilt projects based on the first six books of the series, as well as never-before-published Benni Hall stories, photos and more. Full color. (Add some Benni Harper mysteries by Earlene Fowler or a couple of other quilt mysteries, ***Murders on Elderberry Road: A Queen Bees Quilt Mystery*** and ***A Murder of Taste*** (Kansas City Star Books, \$14.95), both by local author Sally Goldenbaum, for a quilt-lover's gift basket.)
  
- ☒ ***CSI: Crime Scene Investigation Companion***, by Mike Flaherty & Corinne Marrinan (Pocket Books, paperback, \$24.00). Fans can go behind the yellow police tape in the official companion to TV's most-watched drama, featuring fifty of the most explosive episodes. (Add several CSI mysteries by Max Allan Collins for a CSI gift basket. Paperback, \$6.99).
  
- ☒ ***The Stupidest Angel: A Heartwarming Tale of Christmas Terror***, by Christopher Moore (William Morrow, \$14.95). Moore's work has been described as twisted, profane and vulgar; also side-splittingly funny. We haven't read this, but it sounds like it might be just the gift for someone on your list (probably not for Mom, Grandma or Aunt June, though). Here's what a fellow Book Sense bookseller had to say about the book: "In ***The Stupidest Angel***, Moore presents a reunion of some of his kookiest characters for an unforgettable holiday tale. An endangered fruitbat, a warrior princess, a stoned constable, and a truly thick (but beautiful) angel have a hair-raising adventure that will make you laugh out loud and enjoy Christmas in a new way." --Eric Robbins, Apple Valley Books, Winthrop, ME.
  
- ☒ ***Sugar Cookie Murder: A Hannah Swensen Mystery***, by Joanne Fluke (Kensington Publishing Corporation, \$16.00). More cookbook than mystery, this book features a short Hannah Swenson story, lots of recipes and a great holiday cover.
  
- ☒ **A signed first edition mystery:** these are three of our newest, but we have many others: ***Metro Girl***, by Janet Evanovich (HarperCollins, \$26.95); ***Skeleton Man***, by Tony Hillerman (HarperCollins, \$25.95); ***Rumpole and the Pence Bungalow Murders***, by John Mortimer (Viking, \$24.95).

- ☒ The brand new arrival by one of KC's favorite mystery writers: *A Midsummer Night's Scream: A Jane Jeffry Mystery*, by Jill Churchill (William Morrow, \$23.95).
- ☒ Last, but not least—make it easy on yourself by giving an **I Love a Mystery gift certificate!**

### **And....Some gifts for the kid-lings on your list**

- ☒ *SantaKid*, by James Patterson, Michael Garland (Illustrator), (Little, Brown, \$18.99). After Christmas and the North Pole are taken over by the gigantic Exmas Express company, Santa slips into depression. When the big day rolls around, the Exmas Express trucks get stuck in the snow, a despondent Santa's gained too much weight to fit into the sleigh, and it's up to his daughter Chrissie to save the day.
- ☒ Music for kids: one of our all-time favorites: *Philadelphia Chickens*, by Sandra Boynton (\$11.98); and another by Boynton, *Rhinoceros Tap* (\$11.98); two great Putumayo Kids' cds--*Sing Along with Putumayo* and *World Playground* (\$15.98 each).

## **Reading Group News**

**New members welcome in all groups, but please call (913) 432-2583 to confirm date, time and scheduled book (in other words, everything's subject to change).**

- **100 Favorite Mysteries of the Century Reading Group**--December 16<sup>th</sup>, January 20<sup>th</sup>, February 17th & March 17th at 7 p.m. (third Thursday) at I Love a Mystery

Books scheduled for discussion: December—*A Merry Little Murder*, by Shelley Freydon; January—*The Concrete Blonde*, by Michael Connelly; February—*Old Bones*, by Aaron Elkins; March—*Deadlock*, by Sara Paretsky.

- **Agatha Christie Reading Group**—usually meets on the fourth Monday of the month at 7:00. Call or ask at the store for details. January meeting is at the store, 7:00 p.m., January 24th, to discuss *Postern of Fate*.

**Our Mission: We do our best to meet each customer's needs**

*Please let us know how we can best meet yours.*

## Notes and News

★ Anonymous Rex fans mark your calendars! The long-awaited ANONYMOUS REX movie will premier on the Sci-Fi channel on Saturday, December 4th at 8:00 CST. In honor of the release of this movie, Penguin has reissued the first two books of the series in a new trade paperback edition: the *ANONYMOUS REX/CASUAL REX OMNIBUS*, by Eric Garcia, \$15.00.

For those of you who have not been persuaded by my raves about Eric Garcia's "REX" series, you don't have to take my word for it. Here's just a sample of the reviews for ANONYMOUS REX (the book):

>>>“A detective thriller featuring a velociraptor PI and a secret society of dinosaurs disguised as humans?... Awesomely funny.... Vincent Rubio has a washed-up Los Angeles detective agency, lousy credit, and a dead partner—on top of an addiction to basil and a hard time keeping his tail tucked away in his latex human suit. A routine arson investigation promises to get him back on his (clawed) feet, until the case sends him to New York, the scene of his partner’s suspicious death by runaway taxi. Witty, fast-paced detective work makes for a good mystery, but the story’s sly, seamlessly conceived dinosaur underworld contains all the elements of a cult classic.”— Entertainment Weekly

>>>“Debut novelist Eric Garcia pulls off this parallel dino world to a T (rex). [His] descriptions are delicious... inventive and imaginative. He cleverly avoids what could have been a one-joke book with charm, sly humor and a terrific narrative pace.”—USA Today

>>>“Audacious and imaginative. You might not believe any of this 30 seconds after you close the covers, but while it’s going on you’re going to be dazzled by Garcia’s energy and chutzpah.”— Publishers Weekly

★ Another movie made from a cult classic: *Lemony Snicket’s A Series of Unfortunate Events*, coming December 17th. There are several websites related to Lemony Snicket and the movie (including [unfortunateeventsmovie.com](http://unfortunateeventsmovie.com) and [lemonysnicket.com](http://lemonysnicket.com)), but the most fun, in our book (pun intended), is [www.countolaf.com](http://www.countolaf.com).

>>> “Just in time to ruin Christmas 2004, a major motion picture starring Jim Carrey, Meryl Streep, and Jude Law will expose millions to the unbearable circumstances described in *The Bad Beginning*, *The Reptile Room* and *The Wide Window*. Unless you have a taste for dark rooms, sticky floors, stale popcorn, and unhappy endings, steer clear of the movie”—lemonysnicket.com

★ The publication date for *Confessions of a Teen Sleuth*, by Chelsea Cain (Bloomsbury, \$15.95) has apparently been postponed until April, 2005 (it was originally scheduled for this November, 2004). This delightful parody would have been a perfect Christmas gift for everyone who ever enjoyed reading the Nancy Drew series (see Karen’s staff picks in the October newsletter). Bah Humbug.

★ **Killer Books**, the new monthly list of mysteries recommended by the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association, has already attracted the notice of the publishing industry, with an article about the list in a recent issue of *Publisher’s Weekly*. Way to go, IMBA! Check out the November and December **Killer Books** lists at the end of this newsletter.

## Calling all Gift Cards

We are sorry to announce the impending demise of the current version of the I Love a Mystery gift card. If you have an ILAM card that you haven't used, you will receive a bonus equal to 20% of the value of the card if you redeem it at I Love a Mystery by December 31, 2004. That means that if you have a card with a balance of \$5.00, we'll redeem it for \$6.00 worth of merchandise, now through the end of the year. After that time, cards can still be redeemed for their actual value.



Not to worry—even though we are not selling plastic gift cards during this holiday season, we have plenty of our popular I Love a Mystery gift certificates for your gift-giving needs!

### Staff Picks

#### Becci's Staff Picks—

★ *The Romanov Prophecy*, by Steve Berry (Ballantine Books, \$24.95). This is Steve Berry's second historical novel (the first was the *Amber Room*). I have enjoyed both books. This book is another look at the possibility that a member of the Romanov family may have survived the brutal massacre of Nicholas II's family. What makes this new story different is the idea that present-day Russia has voted to return the Romanov heir to the position of Czar of all Russia. Since the entire Romanov family line was reportedly murdered during the Russian revolution, the search is on for the closest Romanov decendent. I especially liked the way Steve Berry was able to tie the historical facts into a credible fictional story.

★ *Fall Guy*, by Carol Lea Benjamin (William Morrow, \$23.95). I didn't know much about Carol Lea Benjamin's books, so I was pleasantly surprised by this seventh book in a gritty New York series featuring Rachel Alexander, who

is a therapist and private investigator. Rachel has a dog named Dasheill, but unlike some fictional pets, Dasheill does not talk or do silly tricks. He does, however, have all the qualities which make dogs good companions. When an acquaintance of Rachel's—a member of her 9/11 survivor support group—dies in an apparent accident with his service revolver, Rachel tries to unravel his death and the life leading up to the accident. I highly recommend this book for an enjoyable read.

#### ★ Karen's Quick Pick ★

★ *Convenient Disposal*, by Steven F. Havill (St. Martin's, \$23.95). Eleventh installment in the New Mexico police procedural series featuring Undersheriff Estelle Reyes-Guzman. A father returns home to find his daughter severely beaten and left for dead. On the same day, the girl's next door neighbor—a busy county employee—leaves for lunch and never returns. Estelle is certain that the two cases are related, but who was the intended victim?

#### Linda's Staff Picks—

★ *In a Dark House*, by Deborah Crombie (William Morrow, \$23.95). **Signed copies available.** Deborah Crombie's latest mystery continues the story of Duncan Kincaid and Gemma James. This time they are teamed by chance as they investigate a series of missing women and a serial arsonist in London. With the adoption of Kincaid's biological son as a background story, Crombie sails along with a series of clues that keep the reader guessing: Is it the fireman? The women's shelter worker? The woman confined to a wheelchair? With plenty of characters to enjoy—including a young woman learning the art of fire investigation—this latest from Crombie (a favorite of our staff) is a great read.

★ *Absolute Friends*, by John LeCarre (Back Bay Books, \$13.95). Now available in paperback, this latest book by veteran author John LeCarre is a terrific study of two spies before, during and after the Cold War. The reader learns the art of spying and the art of living. Along the way the changing relationships between the men also

## Staff Picks cont'd)

becomes the story of the relationships between their countries. LeCarre's talent for building suspense through the actions of seemingly ordinary men is in full force here. We follow the main characters to Berlin, Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the Middle East. Ever adept at presenting the big picture, Le Carre tells a story worth reading with a theme worth thinking about: the state of our world and the prospects for peace.

### Janis's Staff Picks—

★ *Murder on Monday*, by Ann Purser (Berkley, \$5.99). Lois Meade cleans houses in the quaint village of Long Farnden, where she avoids gossip and is respected by her clients. When a local spinster is brutally killed, Lois puts her detective skills to work, since her job is tailor-made for snooping. This book has a strong plot and believable characters. A thoroughly enjoyable book as you become acquainted with Lois's family and the people in the village.

★ *Terror on Tuesday*, by Ann Purser (Berkley, \$5.99). Lois Meade is back again, cleaning houses for a living and solving mysteries on the side. Taking a little break from her duties, Lois decides to relax in the peaceful atmosphere of a small chapel. She doesn't relax for long, however, before she discovers a dead body in a suit of armor. Lois polishes up

her sleuthing skills and is determined that the killer will be found. This is a delightful British mystery.

★ *Dark Water Dive*, by Kathy Brandt (Signet, \$5.99). The second book in this series has Homicide Detective Hannah Sampson leaving the Denver police scuba team and heading to the British Virgin Islands to use her underwater diving skills with the Tortola Police Department. A tourist reports her husband missing, and another investigation leads to shark fins being illegally harvested to be sold for large sums of money. The description of the islands will make you want to go there soon for a vacation.

★ *The Last Song Dogs*, by Sinclair Browning (Crimeline, \$5.50). This is the first in a series about cowgirl Trade Ellis, who owns an Arizona ranch and is also a licensed PI. A twenty-fifth high school class reunion is about to take place, when three of the former class cheerleaders are found dead. Two of the remaining cheerleaders hire Trade to investigate the murder. The author gives a wonderful description of Arizona and weaves several stories together about Trade Ellis' background and life as a PI.

★ *The Chocolate Cat Caper*, by Joanna Carl (Signet Books, \$5.99). This book is a delightful cozy about Lee McKinney, who is divorced and moves to Michigan to keep the books for her Aunt Nettie's luxury chocolate business. When wealthy Clementine Ripley places a big order for custom chocolate truffles, Aunt Nettie sends some extra truffles for Clementine to sample.

After the truffles turn out to have been poisoned and Clementine dies, it's up to Lee to figure out who murdered Clementine and save her aunt's chocolate business. You'll want to be sure to have some chocolate truffles handy when you read this book, because your mouth will water as you read about the chocolate business.

### Caitlin's Staff Picks—

★ *The Belles of Solace Glen*, by Susan S. James (Berkley, \$6.50). This charming mystery (first in a new series) unfolds when Flip Paxton, the forty-two year old cleaning woman of Solace Glen, is asked by a dying woman to give some Civil War letters to her niece. Those letters stir up trouble in Solace Glen and reveal everyone's true character. Flip must discover the secrets of the past as well as the secrets of her fellow citizens before it's too late.

★ *Mum's the Word*, by Kate Collins (Signet, \$5.99). The life of Abby Knight isn't quite what she thought it would be. After flunking out of law school, she buys her hometown flower shop, Bloomers. Everything is going fine until someone hits her vintage Corvette convertible. After enlisting the help of a former cop, she realizes that her problems are bigger than she thought. Now she has to work her way out of a mess of road rage, harassment and police corruption.



### *Does Someone Need a Gentle Nudge?*

Would you like us to help your loved ones remember what to get you when that holiday or special occasion rolls around? Or do your loved ones need a reminder that there even IS a special occasion coming up? We can help. Fill out a gift registry list at **I LOVE A MYSTERY** and tell us who to notify. We'll take it from there.

### *Our Customers Recommend*

- ***Faceless Killers***, by Henning Mankill (Vintage Crime, \$13.00). **Place:** Sweden **Time:** Present. After reading tons of “chick-lit”, this book was a refreshing change. The underlying theme seems to be “sparse and cold”, from the brutal weather outside to the trouble relationships the main character has with those who are most important to him. A rather dark police procedural with a very imperfect protagonist. This is the first book in the Kurt Wallendar series. **Recommended by Pam S.**

*We're* always looking for customer recommendations that we can use in our newsletter and on our web-site. Each month, we will give away a free \$10.00 **I LOVE A MYSTERY**® gift certificate to one of the customers who submits a recommendation. Here are the rules: the books you recommend must be in print and the recommendations must be on the form we provide. You can obtain a form and the complete set of rules at the store, by calling us at (913) 432-2583 or by emailing [kas@iloveamystery.net](mailto:kas@iloveamystery.net).

### **Did you pick up this Newsletter at the Store?**

You can subscribe to the newsletter by email: send your request to [news@iloveamystery.net](mailto:news@iloveamystery.net). Or, for a \$25 annual membership fee, join our Gold Dagger Club, receive 10% off of all your purchases and have the newsletter delivered to your home. Gold Dagger Club Members also receive free copies of *The Drood Review of Mystery*, a \$5.00 birthday gift certificate and an invitation to a special members-only holiday party.



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**Mysteries to die for, selected monthly by IMBA,  
the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association**

Who better to pick the best mystery books of the month than the people who run mystery bookstores?

Each month, the 60 quirky stores that make up IMBA submit their favorite recent reads to a rotating editor who then trims the list to five. The general rule is that the book must be published within a three month period. However, since mystery booksellers don't really like rules, they created a category called "the one that nearly got away" to include books that fall outside that period. Every selection is a gem that otherwise might have gotten lost among the more than 100 mysteries published each month.

**VOLUME I, ISSUE 2, NOVEMBER, 2004**

***Bitch Creek* by William Tapply** (Lyons, \$23.95).  
**Recommended by Kate Mattes, *Kate's Mystery Books***  
**(Cambridge, MA)**

Tapply, a frequent contributor to fishing and hunting magazines, has also written several books on these topics. I've long been a fan of Tapply's Boston-based Brady Coyne series featuring a lawyer whose clients are Brahmins who don't want the police involved in their problems. In *Bitch Creek*, Tapply has combined his gift for strong plotting and character development with his love for the outdoors and fly fishing. His lean, poetic prose communicates a strong sense of small town life in Maine. Thankfully, this is the beginning of a series, each installment of which will be named for a fly tie.

Stoney Calhoun has recently settled in Maine, starting a new life in his middle age. He has a steady income, although he isn't sure why. His past is not clear since he was struck by lightning and remembers very little since waking from a coma. He *does* know the government knows his past and doesn't want him to remember it. As a result, he tries to keep any memories to himself (and us, thankfully). His own identity is a mystery I suspect we shall learn more about as the series develops.

Stoney has taken a job working for Kate, the owner of a fish and bait shop where he ties flies and takes tourists fishing. He has found a nice little house with a creek running through his back yard and has a dog named Ralph. When a man from Florida comes into the store wanting a fishing guide to help him find an old fishing site, Stoney takes a dislike to him and gets his best friend to go with him. When neither return, Stoney and the police start searching for them. We learn how to "read" the land as they walk through wilderness (how to tell what a fence was built for, how to read a topographical map, very

cool things). Eventually they find the guide. It looks like the guy from Florida killed him but where did he go? And who was he? As Stoney begins asking questions, we prowl the backwoods like pros and meet some members of their small community who would make Maine proud.

One of my favorite books this year. A great gift for the landlocked fisherman or armchair detective in your life.



***Bye, Bye Love*** (Harper Collins, \$25.00) by **Virginia Swift**  
**Recommended by Barbara Peters, *The Poisoned Pen***  
**(Phoenix, AZ)**

I've loved history professor Swift's smart and sassy folk singer/professor/sleuth Sally Alder since *Brown Eyed Girl* (\$6.99). Raised in the state, Sally spent years at UCLA before returning to the U of Wyoming to direct its Dunwoodie Center for Women's History...and find a poetic murder. The NY Times discovered her in *Bad Company* (\$6.99). *Bye, Bye Love* is a craftily-plotted tale fusing "Mustang"--it's her car, but also her temperament--Sally's joy in the music of her youth and of the gorgeous southern Wyoming countryside with her relentless need to scratch the detection itch. Sally's never shaken her worship for Thomas "Stone" Jackson, an indestructible music star despite his bad-boy years. And now he sits in her office, asking her to bring the Millionaires and open a benefit concert in Laramie being organized by his fabled ex, Angelina Cruz (think Joan Baez). Stone, next to Harrison Ford Wyoming's major Hollywood rancher, has bought the Busted Heart spread while Nina, retired from LA, owns the more modest Shady Grove near Albany.

So Sally, who likes Nina, heads to Shady Grove in the face of the season's first killer blizzard to find that a killer has struck. But it's deer season, so maybe Nina's shooting was an accident. Then again, Nina's household is under high stress, quarrel-some, and features not just a kind of rat pack but members of Wild West, a do-gooder group of animal rights activists. Altruism and greed, what a combination, just the kind of thing to excite Sally and make her live-in lover Hawk worry.



**The Castlemaine Murders, by Kerry Greenwood** (Poisoned Pen, \$24.95). *Recommended by Tom & Enid Schantz, Rue Morgue (Lyons, CO)*

Phryne Fisher is the free-spirited daughter of a baronet who early on fled her domineering father to strike out on her own, with a healthy trust fund to smooth over life's rough edges and enable her to indulge her tastes for elegance and luxury. After many adventures, including a stint as an ambulance driver in World War I, she's settled in St. Kilda, Australia, with her two adopted daughters, a faithful maid, and her lover Lin Chung. Now her younger sister Eliza has joined the household to escape an unwelcome arranged marriage.

But Eliza is not the sweet girl that Phryne remembers from their childhood. She's aloof, condescending, and terribly unhappy, with two great secrets that eventually come out in the open. Phryne has little time to deal with any of this, however, after she discovers a mummified corpse while they are at an amusement park and her investigations into its history put her and her whole family into unexpected danger.

Meanwhile Lin has been charged by his family with settling a blood feud going back to the Australian gold rush of the 1850s, and both he and Phryne end up in Castlemaine, once the site of the great gold fields that drew fortune hunters from the world over. The two story lines converge neatly, each hinging on the general lawlessness of that colorful period in Australia's history. The history and treatment of Chinese immigrants in the 1850s and 1920s is especially well detailed.

This is the thirteenth book in an exceptional series that has been very popular in Australia and is now being made available to American readers by this enterprising small press. The success of Jacqueline Winspear's Maisie Dobbs books may help pave the way for Phryne Fisher, who is an equally unforgettable character, with a heart as big as her pocketbook, a fine disregard for convention, and an insatiable appetite for life.



**Good Morning, Midnight, by Reginald Hill** (Harper Collins, \$24.95). *Recommended by Karen Spengler, I Love a Mystery (Mission, KS)*

For those literary snobs who disdain detective fiction, I quote Reginald Hill's fictional Detective Superintendent Andy Dalziel, "Don't be daft!" D deservedly called the "sorcerer of style" by the New York Times Book Review, Hill writes with an intelligence and wit that make him, in my opinion, possibly the best crime writer of our day. Only fellow British author Jill McGown comes close to Reginald Hill's ability to keep a series fresh by varying the plot structure with each book.

**Good Morning, Midnight** is based on the classic locked-room mystery convention, with a twist. D. I. Peter Pascoe finds himself investigating the apparent suicide of Pal McGiver, found dead in a locked room in his family's Yorkshire estate. The death is an exact re-enactment of the suicide of Pal's father, the elder Pal McGiver, ten years before, right down to the book of Emily Dickinson poems found at the scene. Can there be any doubt that the gunshot wound was self-inflicted? Superintendent Dalziel, who investigated the earlier death, is satisfied. Pascoe, however, is concerned about his superior officer's objectivity, especially given the cozy relationship that Dalziel seems to enjoy with the elder Pal's widow.



**Hot Plastic** (Hyperion, \$13.00) by **Peter Craig**. *Recommended by Carolyn Lane, Murder By the Book (Portland, OR)*

A wonderful, 21st-century noir novel whose characters meet their fate in time-honored fashion - but not exactly - **Hot Plastic** is tailor-made for lazy-day reading. Old-fashioned hustler Jerry and his teenage son Kevin run various con games across the country, but when they partner up with smart, sexy Collette, the scams become more elaborate and more reminiscent of Robin Hood. Craig's writing is beautiful, with characters who are funny and quirky and with a plot that leaves you smiling-even while you check on your wallet.



**VOLUME 1, ISSUE 3, DECEMBER, 2004**

**Queer Street, by Curt Colbert** (Uglytown hardcover, \$24.95). *Recommended by Bill Farley, Seattle Mystery Bookshop (Seattle, WA)*

Uglytown is a small publisher of mostly-noir, mostly-excellent crime fiction. In the manner of a bygone era, each book is prefaced by a notice of WHAT THIS MYSTERY IS ABOUT. The one for Queer Street is too good to paraphrase or describe, so I quote: "WHAT THIS MYSTERY IS ABOUT... A murdered female impersonator caught with her skirt up...

Seattle's most exclusive gay cabaret... love and deceit... a suave and patient spider... the tangled web we weave... a missing 12th Century Saracen dagger... dungeons and secret passages... a butler in the wings... missing fingers and diamond rings... hinky hoodlums and star-crossed lovers... what money can't buy you... bent genders on a twisted street... racy photographs... mirrors and illusions... near-naked nymphs... big game hunters... J. Edgar Hoover... fighting commies and other undesirables... blackmail and payoffs... flying fists and velvet gloves... hypocrites and heroes... too much - too soon - too late... the third degree... coming clean... and ain't love strange?"

This is the third adventure for wisecracking Seattle P.I. Jake Rossiter and his secretary (in the first book, **Rat City**), understudy (in the second, **Sayonaraville**), and now full-fledged assistant, the redoubtable Miss Jenkins. The year is 1949, the dialog is suitably snappy, and the material is somewhat stronger than you might expect for that era if you weren't around then, and maybe even if you were. (November 2004 release)



**The Coroner's Lunch, by Colin Cotterill (Soho; \$24.00).  
Recommended by Dean James, *Murder by the Book*  
(Houston, TX)**

This wonderfully quirky first novel is set in a location sure to sound exotic to American readers: Laos in the mid-1970s after the Pathet Lao have taken over. Most members of the educated class fled Laos after the Communist takeover, but Dr. Siri Paiboun remained. The French-trained physician is one of the few remaining in Laos, and he is appointed coroner over his objections that he is ill-trained for such a job. The bureaucrats who chose him, of course, probably did so because they thought he would do very little of import in his job, but they soon learn, to their cost, that Dr. Siri has an independent spirit and a most inquisitive mind. He also has little tolerance for fools, a trait that is likely to get him into trouble as well.

Dr. Siri has several odd cases on his plate in his debut, and he is determined to find the truth in all of them. He is unable to let the cases go unsolved, because he has begun to have visions connected with each of the deaths. He is visited by the shades of those whose deaths he is investigating, and each of these visions tells him something about the case.

**The Coroner's Lunch** is perhaps not to everyone's taste, because of its unusual mix of mysticism, violent death, and gently satiric humor, but I found this book utterly charming. Dr. Siri Paiboun is one of the most delightful characters I've encountered in mystery fiction in recent years, along with Maisie Dobbs and Precious Ramotswe. If you enjoy the truly original, don't miss this one! (December 2004 Release)



**Last Seen in Aberdeen, by M.G. Kincaid (Pocket, \$6.50).  
Recommended by Robin Agnew, *Aunt Agatha's* (Ann Arbor, MI)**

M.G. Kincaid embroiders on her successful first effort, **The Last Victim in Glen Ross**, to write an even more compelling and disturbing narrative this time around. Set in Scotland, these are police procedurals of the first order - her main character, Seth Mornay, is an ex-Marine, who has some demons in his past, many of which are explored in this fine book. But like the best practitioners of this particular subgenre this isn't a writer who messes around. There may be an emotional subtext but the police investigation is the thing. In this novel, the story opens around the disappearance of a ten year old boy, but the plot also involves smuggling, an 18 year old Lady of the Manor who wants to raise her exotic sheep in peace, and the turmoil of a woman Seth may or may not have impregnated who lies in the hospital, deathly ill. This novel is emotionally richer, more ruthless, and more believable than the first. If you are a fan of the British police novel, don't miss this one. (November 2004 release).



**The Surrogate Thief, by Archer Mayor (Mysterious Press, \$24.95) Recommended by Karen Spengler, *I Love a Mystery* (Mission, KS)**

Veteran Vermont cop Joe Gunther returns in the 16th book in this classic crime series. When the gun used in a deadly standoff turns out to be the missing murder weapon from a thirty year old cold case, Gunther is forced to revisit his own past and re-open some old wounds. As a young detective, he had been assigned to investigate the beating and robbery of Klaus Oberfeldt, an unpopular local grocery store owner. When Oberfeldt died six months later, never having regained consciousness, no one except his wife really mourned his passing. Distracted by his own wife's losing battle with cancer, Gunther never solved the case. Now Gunther's desire to seek justice for the Oberfeldts is tempered by his reluctance to relive the devastating death of his young wife. (October 2004 release)



**Death by Discount, by Mary Vermillion (Alyson Books \$13.95). Recommended by Terri Bischoff, *Booked for Murder* (Madison, WI)**

**Death by Discount** is a traditional mystery that has social issues woven throughout - corporations vs. small business, the death of small communities in the midwest and hate crimes. Vermillion presents all sides very well and refrains from becoming preachy.

Mara returns to her small hometown in Iowa to bury her Aunt Zee's lifelong partner, Glad. While the police are ready to write off the murder as a hate crime, Mara doesn't believe it. Zee and Glad owned and ran the only radio station in town and were leading the charge opposing the potential opening of a Wal-Mart in town. Will a Wal-Mart provide jobs for all the out of work mothers and fathers? Or will it force the downtown, family-owned stores out of business? Everyone seems to have a personal stake in the outcome and secrets to hide. Was Glad killed because of her opposition to a superstore? Is Zee in danger as well? Could it be someone Mara grew up with? Can Mara solve this mystery without stepping on too many toes? When someone else is murdered, Mara realizes she needs to come up with some answers fast. Good thing she has a beautiful rookie cop to help her. (October 2004 release)