



BiblioFiles

By Ruth Freeman

Readers' Advisor @ the Rowayton Library

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Mysteries

My enthusiasm for the mystery genre started at a young age with Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys. Ever since I raced through those series I have been hooked on motives, murder and mayhem and the clever sleuths who solved the puzzles. In the hands of a skilled author there is no more diverting entertainment. This article will review some recent favorite mysteries, as well as ones that may have escaped your attention.

Don Winslow's 'The Dawn Patrol' features Boone, a San Diego based, surf mad private investigator. The plot centers on an unsolved missing child crime, which haunts like no other kind. Boone and his surf buddies make up the dawn patrol of the title; the background on the formation of Boone's early morning wave riders is fascinating. The dark side of the California dream is the undertow beneath the beautiful surface of this ocean. The villains are a diverse and truly creepy group. Full of surf "lingo" and facts this book is both a satisfying mystery and a cold hard look at the evil men do and the ability of loyal friends to face it down. California settings also provide the backdrop for our favorite books by T. Jefferson Parker, Robert Crais and Michael Connelly. These authors really know how to use the West Coast lifestyle and sometimes peculiar priorities to shine an original light on crime.

'The Virgin of Small Plains', by Nancy Pickard is an excellent dissection of small town family tensions, murder and generations of secrets. The characters are detailed and sympathetic and the Kansas setting is an intriguing change of pace. The virgin in the title is an unidentified murder victim from 17 years ago whose grave has become a shrine of sorts to the townspeople. Without giving too much away let's just say the past does not stay buried. Pickard is an excellent writer with a real knack for character development.

Peter Robinson writes about Inspector Alan Banks and his detective sergeant Annie Cabot. They expertly solve murders in Yorkshire, England. 'In a Dry Season' is one of the earlier books in the series and a memorable introduction to the tightly written, guess again series. Inspector Banks is introspective, loves music and loves to challenge the system his superiors have created.



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Peter Spiegelman is a local author who is currently working on the fourth in the series featuring Manhattan based Private Investigator John March. 'Black Maps', 'Death's Little Helpers' and 'Red Cat' are the first three and they are a wild ride through the canyons of Manhattan, with diverting side references to Wilton, CT. The local color is an entertaining adjunct, and the pace of the books is electrifying. Spiegelman knows his territory, having worked on Wall St. for 20 years.

'Absolute Zero' by Chuck Logan is perfect reading for a hot day as the bulk of the initial action takes place on a canoe trip through a blizzard. Ely MN based Private Investigator Phil Broker is an ex-cop, a loner and veteran outdoorsman. The complicated criminal motivations of the crew he takes canoeing provide enough twists and violent action to keep the pages turning quickly. We highly recommend 'The Big Law' to new Broker fans as well.

'The Dancer Upstairs' is Nicolas Shakespeare's finest book. He is a fantastic writer who took the real life hunt for the head of the Peruvian anarchist group the Shining Path and transformed it into a riveting suspense novel set in an unnamed South American country. Agustin Rejas is the detective, and the dancer is his daughter's ballet teacher. The corruption and terror that dominated Peruvian politics for so long are masterfully woven into the personal story of the detective and his family. This is a hard book to put down and really makes you think about the choices people face.

'The Strangler' is set in Boston in 1963. William Landay's mystery is really the story of the Irish American brothers Daley. The trio comprises a lawyer, a bent cop and a thief. They all have a role to play in this take on the famous Boston Strangler case. The novel explores the themes of family honor, truth and justice and crime and punishment. There are multiple twists as the novel races to a surprising conclusion. The brothers and their women are a memorable addition to the lore of the Strangler and there is some welcome humor to balance the bloody scenes. Landay is a skilled writer who makes the period come alive.

These are just a few of the spine tingling choices at the Rowayton library so come in and explore the stacks and share your favorites with us.

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