

Royal Harlot

SUSAN HOLLOWAY SCOTT. NAL, \$14 paper (384p) ISBN 978-0-451-22134-6

As in her popular *Duchess*, about Sarah Churchill, Scott captures in her latest historical romance the brilliance and hard beauty of Barbara Palmer (Lady Castlemaine), the Merry Monarch's most famous and enduring mistress. A young but far from innocent Barbara marries rich but proper Roger Palmer, whose Royalist politics set them on the path that will make her a famous courtesan and favorite of King Charles II. Lusty, bawdy and cunning, she's a fine match for the king, whose reign is portrayed as fraught with great expectations that go largely unfulfilled. Both Charles and his court are pleasingly debauched, and Charles, though well-intentioned, proves himself to be "a very poor king as kings went." Charles's court is frequently depicted in this genre, but Scott finds a careful balance in Barbara, not salvaging her as a sinner, but giving her something of a heart under all that reputation. (July)

★ Lean Mean Thirteen

JANET EVANOVICH. St. Martin's, \$26.95 (304p) ISBN 978-0-312-34949-3

In her rollicking 13th Stephanie Plum adventure (after *Twelve Sharp*), bestseller Evanovich is in top, quirky form. Plucky, bumbling New Jersey bounty hunter Plum is reunited with her two-timing lawyer ex-husband, Dickie Orr, while doing a favor for the mysterious, sexy Ranger. But when Dickie disappears from his house leaving behind only bloodstains and bullet holes, Plum becomes the prime suspect in his alleged murder. Determined to clear her name, Plum and her on-again off-again Trenton cop boyfriend, the irresistible Joe Morelli, uncover Dickie's ties to a shady group of men involved in everything from money laundering to drug running. And when Dickie's jilted business partners decide Stephanie holds the key to the \$40 million they believe Dickie stole from them, she's in for a wild ride. With the author's usual cast of eccentric side characters—everything from a taxidermist with a penchant for bombs to a grave-robbing tax man—Evanovich proves once again that Stephanie Plum and her entourage are here to stay. (June)

MYSTERY**False Fortune:
A Pinnacle Peak Mystery**

TWIST PHELAN. Poisoned Pen, \$24.95 (292p) ISBN 978-1-59058-363-0

In retired trial lawyer Phelan's lively fourth Pinnacle Peak mystery, attorney Hannah Dain, barely recovered from the adventures of 2006's *Spurred Ambition*, takes on a case that leads her into abandoned mines and deep waters in the Arizona desert. While helping her older sister and fellow attorney, Shelby, gather evidence for a uranium pollution lawsuit brought by the local Indian tribe, Hannah rescues a woman whose car plunges into a lake. Following up on the woman leads to other questions, and a twist of circumstance finds Hannah appointed lead prosecutor for the case. Meanwhile, she's having second thoughts about her ex-boyfriend, Cooper Smith, and her fondness for her recently discovered young half-sister, Anuya, further jeopardizes her shaky relationship with Shelby. Vivid descriptions of the desert provide a dramatic backdrop to the increasingly dangerous investigation as Hannah inches closer to the truth. Phelan has created a swiftly moving tale of corporate corruption and tangled, touching family relationships. (Sept.)

**Capitol Offense:
A Nik Kane Alaska Mystery**

MIKE DOOGAN. Putnam, \$25.95 (304p) ISBN 978-0-399-15431-7

In veteran Anchorage journalist Doogan's uneven second Nik Kane mystery (after 2006's *Last Angel*), a wealthy widow hires Kane, a disgraced former Anchorage cop turned PI, to help defend a promising Native Alaskan state legislator, Matthew Hope, against the charge of murdering an aide to conservative senator O.B. Potter. The first half of the book reads like a traditional detective novel, with a tough, troubled protagonist, mysterious client, unjustly accused suspect and reluctant informants, including Kane's estranged son, Dylan. Kane even acquires a sarcastic sidekick, Tlingit cab driver "Cocoa" Paul. The story eventually falls apart as Kane,

working by instinct, suffers threats and beatings en route to an unsatisfying conclusion. Though most books set in Alaska take place in the glorious and forbidding wilderness, almost all the action is in the state capital, Juneau, a city that seems carved out of ice and rocks. Unfortunately, strong writing and evocative descriptions can't save a predictable plot and a hodgepodge of stock characters. (Aug.)

★ Fingerprints and Facelifts

RICK COPP. Kensington, \$23 (288p) ISBN 978-0-7582-0962-7

Full of retro-fab fun, this smokin' first in a new series from Copp (*The Actor's Guide to Greed*) introduces the L.A. Dolls, three gutsy (and still very hot) retired female PIs. For seven years in the '80s, the Dolls made Charlie's Angels look like mere pussycats. Their lives have taken divergent paths since: tough Dani Mendez is now San Francisco's assistant chief of police; sweet Claire Walker-Corley is a

**A Motive
For Reading.**

The Three Motives for Murder



Michelle Perry
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[Q&A]

PW TALKS WITH DOUGLAS GREENE

Rescuing Classic Mystery Authors

In 2002, Douglas Greene, the editor and cofounder of Crippen & Landru, started a line of Lost Classics, devoted to authors of the past who wrote traditional mysteries. The 23rd entry in the series is *The Grandfather Rastin Mysteries* by Lloyd Biggle Jr. (Reviews, May 14).

What led you to start Crippen & Landru?

In 1994, my wife, Sandi, and I started Crippen & Landru because most large publishers shy away from publishing collections of short stories. The purest form of the detective story is the short story, developed by Poe and perfected by Doyle. The invention of a problem for the sleuth to solve, the process of investigation and the surprising climax—these are what created the form.

Why the name Crippen & Landru?

They were two early 20th-century murderers. Sandi later pointed out that both were wife killers, but I was already committed to the name.

You've done story collections by such major contemporary writers as Marcia Muller, Bill Pronzini, Peter Lovesey and Lawrence Sanders. Who are some of your Lost Classics authors?

Some authors are, or at least were, very well known. For example, we're publishing a series of collections of Erle Stanley Gardner's pulp stories. Others are unaccountably obscure. Who, for instance, has heard of Peter Godfrey or Joseph Commings? But they wrote marvelous stories which we're happy to collect.

How do you select titles for Lost Classics?

We're interested almost entirely in whether the stories deserve to be put

in book form, and only secondarily whether the author has "name recognition." We just signed a contract for a book by Vincent Cornier, to be edited by Mike Ashley. Cornier has been almost completely forgotten, but his tales about Barnabas Hildreth, written mostly in the 1930s, are bizarre and challenging. The best may be the story about a bullet fired 250 years ago that almost kills a modern victim.

Do you have a favorite

Grandfather Rastin mystery?

Yes, "The Phantom Thief," in which someone steals a broach, a Bunsen burner, a slide rule and \$68 in cash. I like odd bunches.

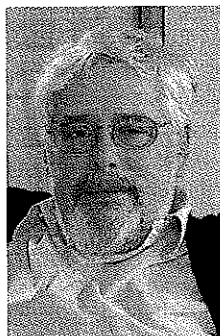
What's the most challenging part of the job?

Trying to estimate the market for an author. With rare exceptions, we don't publish a long series of books by an individual writer, so we have little guidance about what sales to expect.

What obscure writer are you proudest of publishing?

Probably James Yaffe, well known as a playwright and chronicler of Jewish life, but also author of an ingenious series of mysteries featuring "Mom," who solves crimes for her policeman son over dinner. *My Mother the Detective* was one of our earliest books and still one of my favorites.

—Leonard Picker



happy suburban wife and mom; and glamorous Tess Monahan-Cardoza is a wealthy widow. Then drug kingpin Benito Coronel is released from prison; Claire's son, Zak, is attacked after a bachelor party; Dani's PI son, Bowie, barely escapes a bullet during a routine investigation; and Tess's stepdaughter, Bianca, is almost kidnapped. The L.A. Dolls must set aside their differences and reunite to protect their kids and put Coronel back behind bars. Copp's thrill-a-minute pacing, vibrant style and likable characters make an unbeatable team. (July)

The Blackpool Highflyer

ANDREW MARTIN. Harcourt, \$14 paper (360p) ISBN 978-0-15-603069-4

Set in 1905, Martin's second Jim Stringer mystery (after 2004's *The Necropolis Railway*) starts slowly but builds a head of steam like the monster locomotive Jim stokes for "Lanky," the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway. A passenger dies when a huge grindstone on the tracks derails a train carrying the owner of Hind's Mill on an excursion to seaside Blackpool. Jim begins to suspect class warfare when a young socialist distributes tracts in Jim's hometown of Halifax, urging workers to shun holidays organized by mill owners. A fallen tree on another rail line further suggests conspiracy, as does the disappearance of smartly dressed Clive, the engine driver on Jim's next run. Lanky management's paltry £5 reward hardly seems likely to garner much information, so newlywed Jim turns to comely Lydia, a mill clerk he simply calls "the wife," for much needed help. Getting used to Jim's chatty Cockney narration takes time, but as the suspense rises, readers will be captivated. (July)

**SF/FANTASY/
HORROR****The Dust of Wonderland**

LEE THOMAS. Alyson, \$24.95 (320p) ISBN 978-1-59350-011-5

Stoker-winner Thomas (*Stained*) delivers an interminably eloquent supernatural tale reminiscent of Peter Straub's *Ghost Story*. Kenneth Nicholson returns



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