



## Cat Scratchings

August 1, 2007

Hello!

I can't believe that August has arrived. Where has the summer gone?? In Rochester, NY, where I lived for 20+ years, back-to-school was the day after Labor Day and signaled the end of the summer for me and my kids. Seeing the children here go back to school in the middle of August seems to make the summer shorter.

Many of you have said that the publishers need to spend more time listening to readers. A few paragraphs in *Shelf Awareness* (a daily email for the book trade) on July 10 indicates that publishers just might agree with you.

"'Nobody knows anything. But everybody, it turns out, may know something,' James Surowiecki concluded in his Financial Page column for the *New Yorker*. Citing Simon & Schuster's decision to partner with *Media Predict* to 'use the collective judgment of readers to evaluate book proposals,' Surowiecki examined the current state of publishing in relation to other media businesses.

'The deal drew scorn from many,' he wrote, 'who saw it as evidence that publishers, in an era of stagnant sales, had so lost confidence in their own judgment that they were reduced to the methods of 'American Idol.' Asking readers to weigh in on a book's commercial prospects was a recipe for mediocrity, and the experiment was 'doomed to fail.'

Surowiecki acknowledged, however, that 'even the idea's critics recognized that it was a response to a real problem: most books today are not economically successful, which means that much of the time and money that publishers invest in projects is wasted.' He also suggested it might be more sensible to seek consumer feedback to anticipate how books will sell rather than 'predict which manuscript will get a book deal, which requires predicting the decisions of a small number of editors.'"

Now if we can just get publishers to keep all of the books in a series in print.... With print-on-demand, if I understand it correctly, they should be able to provide those earlier books. Margaret Frazer, who writes the wonderful Sister Frevisse Medieval Mysteries, commented recently on the DorothyL email list that currently her publisher has kept some of her backlist in print with no consistency about which ones they've chosen.

Speaking of the DorothyL email list -- I recommend it highly for book news, reviews -- anything to do with mysteries. You can find out more about it at [www.DorothyL.com](http://www.DorothyL.com). In addition to that list, there is a great list for historical mysteries at Crime Through Time. The information to join and a wonderful list of books can be seen at [www.crimethrurtime.com](http://www.crimethrurtime.com). I do have to warn you that reading these lists is hazardous to your checkbook! I find way too many books that I want to read. Now if I could just find an extra 8 hours or so in the day for reading..... Does anyone know of similar lists for science fiction and/or fantasy? Please let me know if you do -- I'll add them to the next newsletter and to the [links](#) section of our web site.

One of the subgenres I like is historical fiction. At one point in a historical mystery I was reading, one of the characters had to get in touch as soon as possible with another character. My mind does tend to wander at times and I immediately thought that a cell phone would be the way to resolve the problem -- but but then I realized the story was set in the 15 century so that was not an option. I think the reason for the thought was an article in the New York Times I read on cell phones and historical novels. You can read the article at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/25/books/review/Wagner2.t.html?ref=review>.

In our 'brick and mortar' store, there was a small section of books that we thought of as "Now for Something Completely Different...." -- books that really didn't fit into any of the genres that we carried. One new book that fits into that now virtual bookcase is **Blame It on the Weather** (*Harper Paperbacks, trade paperback, !13.95*) by Laura Lee. She presents an intriguing look at how atmospheric conditions have affected a range of historical events, while acknowledging that other factors were important as well. It's one of those books that you can pick up and wander through a chapter or more depending on how much reading time you have. I carry books like that in the car to read during time spent in waiting for appointments.

New books have been added to the [Killer Books](#) web site.

See you again next month,

Deb

## An Appalachian mystery.....

### **Old Wounds**

by Vicki Lane

(Dell, paperback, \$6.99)

Many of you know that I highly recommend Vicki's books. The series is set in the Appalachians and evokes the spirit of the mountains and the people so very well. **Old Wounds** is the third in the Elizabeth Goodweather series and, after being out for just a week, has gone to a second printing.

Elizabeth is a widow who lives in the Appalachian mountains and throughout the books, it's clear that she has great affection for the area and its people. The language and stories of the mountains weave in and out of the books. The characters are complex and interesting and pull the reader into the story and the surrounding emotions.

In this third book of the series, Elizabeth's daughter, Rosemary, an Assistant Professor of English at UNC-Chapel Hill, returns home to solve the riddle of the disappearance of her best friend, Maythorn Mullins which

occurred when the girls were ten years old. The investigation will lead Rosemary and Elizabeth into confronting a complex web of relationships which include magic and Cherokee legend.

The first two Elizabeth Goodweather books are **Signs in the Blood** (Dell, paperback, \$6.99) and **Art's Blood** (Dell, paperback, \$6.99). You can read more about Vicki and the series at [her web site](#). The web site includes excerpts from each of the books in the series.

## The end of The Company?

### **Sons of Heaven**

by Kage Baker

(Tor, hardcover, \$25.95)

Kage Baker's Company series is one that I have really liked. I haven't had a chance to read the newest book in the series but Publisher's Weekly's weekly said:

This convoluted conclusion to Baker's Company novels (after *The Machine's Child*) explores the events leading up to July 8, 2355, the moment when the Silence falls and all future contact is cut off for the immortals and cyborgs who travel through time collecting human artifacts on behalf of the profit-hungry Dr. Zeus Inc. As the Silence draws near, splinter groups begin jockeying to benefit. A human cabal plots, somewhat hilariously, to take out the cyborgs with poisoned chocolates. The cyborg Lewis, desperate to warn others of the injury done him, lies wounded in a burrow, telling disoriented stories to a woman with strange powers. On a deserted island, Mendoza bears two children to her husband, Edward, and gives them the minds of her ex-lovers, Alec and Nicholas, proving that cyborgs are capable of creation. The intertwining stories all come together in an explosive denouement that heralds the end of the Company, but the beginning of something strange and new. (July)

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## Geocaching....

### **Why Casey Had to Die**

by L. C. Hayden

(Five Star Mystery, hardcover, \$29.95)

L. C. Hayden has a new entry in the Harry Bronson mystery series. She sent the following information:

"I had a wonderful time writing this book. I wanted to write about something new, something different. I had just gotten involved with geocaching--that's a form of treasure seeking or as they say in their website "the sport where you are the search engine." I thought why not incorporate geocaching in my book? The end result is **Why Casey Had to Die**, a 2007 Agatha Award Finalist for Best Novel.

Here's a glimpse of the story: Retired Detective Harry Bronson thought he had solved his first case, but now twenty years later, new evidence surfaces and Bronson is forced to start a journey filled with terror--one that places not only him in mortal danger, but also his beloved wife, Carol. Bronson, in order to save Carol, must race against time to solve a series of

geocache puzzles. If he fails, Carol dies. But before he can do this, he must figure out **Why Casey Had to Die**. You can read an excerpt of the novel at L. C.'s [website](#).

## Canadian Book Award

Rendezvous Crime is pleased to announce that Barbara Fradkin has won the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Novel 2007 for her novel **Honour Among Men** (Napoleon Publishing, trade paperback, \$13.95). Her achievement is all the more remarkable because it is the first time than an author has won for two consecutive books. Barbara also won the same award in 2005 for her previous novel, **Fifth Son** (Rendezvous Press, trade paperback, \$1.95).

The Arthur Ellis Awards are sponsored by the Crime Writers of Canada and represent the best in Canadian crime writing. You can see all of the awards at <http://crimewriterscanada.com/cwc/index.html>

For further information on Barbara Fradkin and her novels, visit the Rendezvous Crime website at [www.napoleonandcompany.com](http://www.napoleonandcompany.com). You may also visit the e-card about **Honour among Men**. Embedded in the e-card is information about the book as well as both the author and the editor talking about the novel: <http://www.transmedia95.com/ecardHAM/ecardlaunch.html>.

Rendezvous Crime has done several of these e-cards for their releases and they are always interesting.

## A museum can be a dangerous place....

### **Wilder Rumors**

by Molly MacRae

(Five Star, hardcover, \$25.95)

Molly MacRae has written the first in a new series set in Tennessee. I received the following from her about the book:

"A shady museum curator, a small Blue Ridge Mountain town, burglary, rumors, and murder . . .

**Wilder Rumors** is the first in a new cozy series featuring Lewis Wilder who thinks he's found an uncomplicated life when he takes the job as curator of the history museum in tiny Nolichucky, Tennessee. Poor Lewis, he's wrong in so many ways.

I was the museum curator in Jonesborough, Tennessee, home of the International Storytelling Center, and a town full of tales, tall and otherwise. While tending the history there, it seemed only natural to turn my hand to writing my own tales. Seven stories in *Alfred Hitchcock's Mystery Magazine* are the result, so far, and **Wilder Rumors**, which *Kirkus Reviews* calls 'an intriguing debut sure to hold the reader's attention from start to finish.'"

To read more about Wilder Rumors and Molly MacRae, visit her website at

## Outstanding follow-up

### **Poltergeist (Greywalker Book 2)**

by Kat Richardson

(Roc, trade paperback, \$14.00)

*Publisher's Weekly* has the following to say about this sequel to Greywalker:

Harper Blaine was your average small-time PI until she died-for two minutes. Now she's a Greywalker-walking the thin line between the living world and the paranormal realm. And she's discovering that her new abilities are landing her all sorts of "strange" cases.

In the days leading up to Halloween, Harper's been hired by a university research group that is attempting to create an artificial poltergeist. The head researcher suspects someone is faking the phenomena, but Harper's investigation reveals something else entirely-they've succeeded.

And when one of the group's members is killed in a brutal and inexplicable fashion, Harper must determine whether the killer is the ghost itself, or someone all too human.

## Thursday Next is back.....

### **First Among Sequels**

by Jasper Fforde

(Viking Penguin, hardcover, \$24.95)

While I enjoyed the Nursery Crimes books, **The Big Over Easy** (Viking Penguin, trade paperback, \$14.00) and **The Fourth Bear** (Viking Penguin, Trade Paperback, \$14.00), I have to admit that I'm very glad Fforde is back to writing about Thursday Next. In this book Thursday must find the serial killer on the loose in Bookworld and, at the same time, deal with Goliath Corporation who is trying to deregulate book travel. All this and a teenaged son, Friday, makes for interesting -- and funny -- reading. Oops, almost forgot about the Cheese Enforcement Agency trying to bust Next for smuggling killer curd and the malicious apprentice who begins making classic works of literature into reality book shows (Pride and Prejudice becomes The Bennets).

When reading the Thursday Next books, the reader needs to throw out any semblance of belief in reality. There is quite a bit of literary humor but Fforde sets it up well enough that even those who haven't read the book in question at the time will get the joke.

And don't forget to check out [Ffordes's website](#). It's one of the most creative websites that I've seen for an author. It's a marvelous place to spend time -- probably more time than you originally planned. And you can see the UK cover which I like so much better than the US cover. Wonder why we don't get the good ones?

## Murder in the Upper Class

### **Her Royal Spyness**

by Rhys Bowen

(Berkley, hardcover, \$23.95)

Rhys Bowen writes two series that have done very well -- the Molly Murphy series set in early 20th century New York and the Constable Evans series set in Wales and now she has written the first in her new series which features Lady Victoria Georgiana Charlotte Eugenie, 34th in the line for the crown. The story is set in the 1930's -- both England and Lady Georgiana (Georgie) are in dire need of money. So Georgie sets out to earn money without allowing her acquaintances in the nobility know that she is flat broke which leads to some interesting consequences and a murder.

**Her Royal Spyness** is a [Killer Book](#) for August.

## Thriller and police procedural all in one book.....

### **Cut to the Bone**

by Shane Gericke

(Pinnacle, paperback, \$6.99)

A book from a relatively new author who sent this information:

"Shane Gericke follows his national bestselling debut, **Blown Away** (*Pinnacle, paperback, \$6.99*), with a serial-killer-meets-the-electric-chair thriller called **Cut to the Bone**. It's the second in a series starring police detectives Emily Thompson and Martin Benedetti, and draws the highest praise from such *New York Times* bestsellers as Lee Child, John J. Nance, Douglas Preston, and Gayle Lynds, who enthuses, "Shane Gericke writes with the clear eye of hard-nosed reporter and the sweet soul of an artist. His power is visceral and unforgettable.

A steel-eyed killing machine known as the Executioner loves to draw sharp blades across innocent throats. A dozen souls are gone, yet the monster wants more. Police detectives Martin Benedetti and Emily Thompson have just seven days to hunt and destroy him before he slices apart his next victims: Marty and Emily.

I loved writing this book because it's the ultimate expression of good and evil. Brave cops who face a horrible death, a sinister killer wanting to inflict it, all eyes on the upcoming electrocution. Plus, good cop jokes!"

With warmest regards to your readers,  
Shane Gericke

Visit [Shane's website](#)

## A new entry in the Marsh and Daughter series.....

### **Murder and the Golden Goblet**

by Amy Myers

(Severn House, hardcover, \$28.95)

Amy writes a series starring which wheelchair-bound Peter Marsh - a former policeman invalidated out of the force - and his daughter Georgia base their investigations into unsolved past murders. She sent the following about the newest entry in that series:

"My Murder and the Golden Goblet due out from Severn House in July is the fourth in my Marsh & Daughter series - Peter and Georgia are operating in today's Kent in England, but their cases stem from Kent's past. And King Arthur is quite some way in the past. He's usually associated with the west or north of Britain, but not Kent, and that's probably what drew me to the story in the first place. There's a legend, with quite a bit of substantiating evidence (and isn't that what we crime writers like?), that Sir Gawain died in King Arthur's presence in the church at Dover Castle.

Peter and Georgia work on a 'fingerprints on time' basis, the theory that savage crime or injustice can imprint itself on the atmosphere, and in Murder and the Golden Goblet this centres on a golden goblet from which Sir Gawain might have drunk. A goblet that is mysteriously bound up with the loss at sea of a local man, Laurence Venyon, in 1961. When father and daughter investigate, however, the danger is firmly in the twenty-first century and all too close at hand."

## Goblins and ogres....

### **Goblin Hero**

by James C. Hines

(DAW, paperback, \$6.99)

Jim Hines has written a sequel to the delightful **Goblin Quest** (DAW, paperback, \$6.99) and sent this about the new book:

"The lovable underdog from Goblin Quest returns in Goblin Hero, by Jim C. Hines. Jig the goblin is now called Jig Dragonslayer, to his great dismay. And when an ogre comes seeking help against an unknown enemy, the goblins turn to Jig and his pet fire-spider Smudge. This time, Jig will have the help of a large, exceptionally dumb warrior, a crotchety nursery worker, and a muckworker determined to become a true hero, even if it kills her . . . and everyone around her. Like its predecessor, Goblin Hero continues to turn fantasy conventions upside down as Jig faces the ogres' magical enemy and the plotting of his so-called friends.

So where did the idea for Jig come from? 'I've always been fond of underdogs,' says Hines. 'These aren't the first stories from a monster's point of view, but usually you end up with a monster who's big and strong and misunderstood, like Shrek. I say if you're going to write the

underdog, why not go all the way? Goblins are small and weak, and Jig's the runt of the lair. But he's clever, and I believe brains can conquer brawn nine times out of ten. For that tenth time, well, Jig has a pet spider who can set things on fire. What more do you need?'

Speaking of Shrek, the manuscript for *Goblin Quest* was finished four months before *Shrek* came out in theaters. At one point, Dreamworks was actually discussing the possibility of a *Goblin Quest* movie. In the end, they decided to stick with *Shrek* rather than try another monster-centric film. So if ogres get a bit of a raw deal in *Goblin Hero*, you know why.

Described by Ed Greenwood as 'even greater and funnier than the first,' *Goblin Hero* is a fun read for all ages. The first chapter is available as a free download from the author's web site, at <http://www.sff.net/people/jchines/GH/>"

## Sequel to an award winner.....

### **Reduced Circumstances**

by Vincent H. O'Neil

(St. Martin's Minotaur, hardcover, \$22.95)

This came when I sent an email to DorothyL which asked authors to give me information for the newsletter:

"I read your message on DorothyL asking to hear about authors' next books. My newest book is called **Reduced Circumstances**, and will be published by St. Martin's Minotaur in July of this year. **Reduced Circumstances** is the sequel to my debut novel, **Murder in Exile** (St. Martin's Minotaur, hardcover, \$22.95), which won the St. Martin's Press Malice Domestic Award in 2005 and was published in 2006. (The first chapters of both books, along with the *New York Times* review of **Murder in Exile**, are posted on my [website](#)."

Both books follow amateur sleuth Frank Cole, a bankrupt northerner trying to restart his life in the Panhandle town of Exile, Florida. In **Murder in Exile**, Frank was asked to review an insurance claim for a hit-and-run fatality that was no accident. When someone leaves a threatening message on his kitchen table, Frank realizes that he has to find out what happened in that hit-and-run before something similar happens to him.

In **Reduced Circumstances**, Frank has taken a second job as the night dispatcher for a local taxi service. One of the drivers tells him about giving a lift to a nervous teen aged boy near the site of a police drug bust, and then the driver disappears. Right after that, suspicious people begin coming by the cabstand asking Frank about the ride, the teenager, and the driver. In other words, Frank is once again forced to find the answers when he doesn't even know the questions.

I got the idea for both books while working in a bank in Providence. *Murder in Exile*, with its back story of a ruinous bankruptcy, came from my financial services training, while *Reduced Circumstances* was inspired by a group of flamboyant taxi drivers that I saw each morning as I walked to work. The series is told in the first person singular, from Frank Cole's perspective, because I wanted to show that Frank, as an amateur, is frequently wrong in his initial impressions but never gives up until he gets it right."

## An archaeological thriller...

## **On the Fifth Day**

by A. J. Hartley

(Berkley, paperback, \$7.99)

I am a fan of archaeological mysteries and was pleased to find out that A. J. Hartley has written another exciting thriller:

"**On the Fifth Day**, like my first novel **The Mask of Atreus** (Berkley, paperback, \$7.99), actually began as at least two separate stories which some how turned out to be the same story! I really wanted to write something involving the archaeology of the Roman sites at the foot of Vesuvius, Pompeii and Herculaneum, places I had visited as a kid and which had been crucial to my subsequent fascination with ancient cultural monuments.

But I was also trying to write a Da Vinci code-esque mystery which turned a lot of the assumptions of that particular sub-genre on their heads. As a literature professor and as a writer I get depressed about the reduction of any art work to a code which contains a single, secret meaning. For me, the meaning of art is very much in the eye of the beholder, and always has been, which is not to say that it can simply mean anything and serious thought or investigation is therefore pointless. I wanted to tell a story in which the very uncertainty about what a piece of art meant was the core of the narrative, where the villains were those who insisted upon a certain and singular meaning.

I retraced my steps through southern Italy, specifically in the Naples area, and the place began to dictate changes to the story, both in terms of plot and in terms of atmosphere. The key moment was when I stumbled (during on-line research) on an ancient underground cemetery where human skulls were stacked floor to ceiling. It was closed to the public, but I managed to reach someone involved in an engineering project to render the place safe. 'I am Fulvio of Naples,' he wrote to me. 'I will lead you under the earth.'

Even thriller writers couldn't make up a sentence like that. How could I not go?"

## **Murder in the 13th Century**

### **Justice for the Damned**

by Priscilla Royal

(Poisoned Pen Press, hardcover, \$24.95)

A ghost haunts ancient Amesbury Priory, and the monastery's prized Psalter, a work by the famous Sarum Illuminator, is in danger.

Prioress Eleanor has returned to her beloved childhood home in 1272 for the May Feast of Saint Melor. Her body weakened by a near-fatal winter fever and her soul exhausted from its battle with lust, she seeks peace and strength from her loving aunt. Accompanying her is Brother Thomas, silently grieving over his father's recent death, yet sent by his spymaster to trap a thief before the Psalter is stolen.

Neither Death nor the Prince of Darkness will grant the pair mercy, however, and join hands against them. The ghost turns murderous, and a man is decapitated near the River Avon where the grim figure walks. As others fall victim to the vengeful spirit, Eleanor struggles to put a face on the restless phantom, while Brother Thomas seeks a thief but finds instead that his own demons have taken on a very human form.

Corpses grow in number. Death dances with glee. All hope of sweet Spring begins to die, and even love takes on a somber hue.

## This and That

[Lauren Carr's](#) new book, **A Reunion to Die For** (Five Star Mystery, hardcover, \$25.95) is out on bookstore shelves. She sent the following information about it: "*Hancock County's newly elected Prosecuting Attorney Joshua Thornton is a man of integrity with a determined sense of justice. When seemingly innocent cheerleader Grace Henderson is murdered, Josh's memories fly back to high school and to the freakishly similar way his dear friend Tricia Wheeler had committed suicide. Re-opening the investigation into Tricia's death while simultaneously conducting Grace's,* Thornton must use every ounce of his integrity, ingenuity, and tight circle of close friends while he scrambles to solve the two murders that has nearly everyone around him becoming either suspect or victim -- including himself!

According to [Aileen Baron](#), her new book is a mystery, titled **The Gold of Thrace** (Poisoned Pen Press, hardcover, \$24.95). "It is an archaeological mystery, centering on the fraud and deceit in the antiquities trade. When a member of the staff of the excavations at a site in Turkey is murdered, and a mosaic floor is stolen from the site, the consequences lead through Bulgaria and as far afield as The Hague. Archaeologist Tamar Saticoy, one of the directors of the excavation plunges into a web of danger and intrigue that takes her to Switzerland in her attempt to recover the mosaic as other members of the staff are murdered and her own life is endangered."

**Fire Prayer** (Poisoned Pen Press, hardcover, \$24.95) by [Deborah Turrell Atkinson](#) explores the long shadow cast by violence, and how festering hatred continues to destroy everyone it touches. When Storm Kayama goes to Moloka'i to help an old friend, she finds that Tanner Williams has bigger problems than he let on. Ten years ago, he participated in a Hawaiian protest that killed a man. Upon Storm's arrival, Tanner's ex-wife is murdered and his young, diabetic son disappears. One of the protesters is a killer, desperate to prevent Strom from learning too much

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