



## BOOKSELLERS

1323 S. Rangeline Rd  
(in the Carmel Walk plaza)  
Carmel, IN 46032

317-705-9711  
tollfree: 800-643-6737  
fax: 317-705-1402

staff@themysterycompany.com  
www.themysterycompany.com

### Hours

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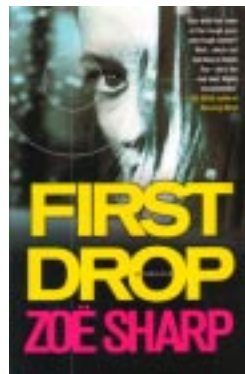
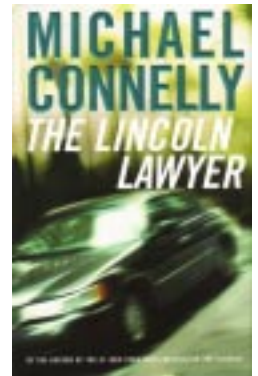
On a mystery bookseller's discussion list last week, one bookseller said that year in and year out, he recommended a favorite book by telling his customers: "If you don't like it, stick your head in the oven and turn on the gas — life has lost its joy for you." If you ever needed an example of what makes the independent mystery bookseller different from other booksellers, this is a good one. This language may be a little more extreme than what you normally hear from us at The Mystery Company — even when we're talking about a book as wonderful as that bookseller's year in and year out favorite, *Thus Was Adonis Murdered* by Sarah Caudwell — but we are just as passionate about what we do here.

We find joy in many different ways in mysteries, and in our work here in the store. Sometimes, it's in unpacking a shipment of a new book by an old favorite, and in putting copies into your hands. This week, Sue Grafton's eighteenth Kinsey Millhone novel, *S Is for Silence* (Putnam, \$26.95) goes on sale. About this new installment in this beloved series, Austin writes:

"I've been constantly impressed with the Kinsey Millhone series. Eighteen books that have kept my attention with unique narratives and subtle ways of revolutionizing the series. Sue Grafton adds something new in *S is for Silence*: flashbacks of a cold crime. As in most cold crimes, the outcome isn't as important as the idea of closure. With Daisy Sullivan, she has no idea if her mother, Violet, is dead, alive or just gone. The answer is anything but clear. In a series that has been centered around an engaging first person narrative, *Silence* adds insightful third-person flashbacks that turn out to be quite satisfying. Now that's a title: S is for Satisfying."

As much as we like to see our favorite characters returning, we are also delighted to see our favorite writers succeed at something new. The verdict on **Michael Connelly's latest, *The Lincoln Lawyer*** (Little, Brown, \$26.95), has been unanimous. Reviewers, friends, customers and readers everywhere are consistently citing this as one of the best of the year. Austin writes:

"After fifteen mysteries, most featuring Los Angeles police detective Harry Bosch, Michael Connelly has written a legal thriller. Now that statement alone will convince many people to buy the book, but for those who are hesitant I shall continue. Connelly has broken away from the clichéd protagonists you usually see in a legal thriller and created a new hero, Mickey Haller, who is searching for innocence in a job where he relies on rap music to understand most of his clients. He finally gets a high-paying client when a Beverly Hills playboy hires Haller to defend a charge of attacking a woman he picked up in a bar. As the flap notes, Haller believes that this is the easiest case of his career. But the book is cleverly riddled with unexpected plot twists, and the trial is one of the best in the genre."



Discovering new voices is, perhaps, the most exciting part of our job here. I first heard about **Zoë Sharp** a couple of years ago from a foreign mystery bookseller; this year, Sharp's Charlie Fox series arrived in the US with the publication of *First Drop* (St. Martin's, \$23.95) — not the first in the series but the first to be published here and a great place to start. Charlie Fox's new career is bodyguard. Circumstances have thrown her on the job quickly; she arrives from England and finds herself at a Florida amusement park watching the son of a computer programmer. She's a fish out of water; she doesn't know a lot about the boy or his father, and she doesn't know a lot about Florida. She does know that she's not enjoying the roller coasters, and that her charge isn't enjoying being watched. Then all the sudden, people start shooting at them. The balance of the nearly 300-page story has Fox and Trey eluding lethal pursuit while trying to figure out what's going. The book is a nice combination of action and deduction, with well-drawn and colorful characters (even the teens, which isn't easy to do) and a twisty plot. It's all exceptionally well done. We have a few signed copies of *First Drop* in stock. (I'm also looking into importing the other titles in this series from the UK, but I enjoyed this one thoroughly even without having read the others.)

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Another mystery bookseller recommendation is **Mark Schweitzer's "Liturgical Mystery" series**, the most recent of which — and the first I've read — is *The Tenor Wore Tapshoes* (St. James Music Press, \$12.95 — that publishing company name alone is a clue that this is something different). *Tenor* is a charming, slapstick novel of smalltown life and church politics. Hayden Konig is the town's full-time chief of police, part-time Episcopal choirmaster and an

aspiring hardboiled novelist (who's visited by the ghost of Raymond Chandler). Sprinkled throughout the book are chapters from Konig's new manuscript, the sort of prose that's not out of place in the Bulwer-Lytton atrocious writing contest. There are three books in this series: *The Alto Wore Tweed* (\$12.95) and *The Baritone Wore Chiffon* (\$12.95) precede *Tenor*.

Sometimes, it doesn't take long for a new acquaintance to become a dear friend. That's the experience we've had with **Jacqueline Winspear's Maisie Dobbs**. The first two novels in this series, *Maisie Dobbs* (Penguin, \$14) and *Birds of a Feather* (Penguin, \$14) were nominees for the Mystery Booksellers' Association's Dilys Award (presented to the book we "most enjoyed selling") for 2003 and 2004. Winspear's new novel is *Pardonable Lies* (Henry Holt, \$23). Here's what Jaci has to say about this series:

"Is it history or a mystery? That seems to be the question as you read Jacqueline Winspear's novels. One thing you won't question is if you like the books. You will.

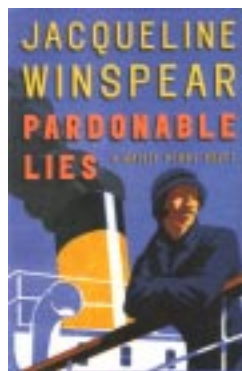
"In *Maisie Dobbs*, Winspear introduces an intelligent young woman who comes from a meager background. Through the intervention of a wealthy benefactor she receives an education. When war is declared she trains to be a nurse, is shipped to the front and faces many obstacles. Her life is dramatically altered. When she returns home she sets up her own investigative service, using both traditional and psychological methods of investigation. Life isn't easy for a woman in the post war era and Maisie finds herself embroiled in a situation involving not only returning war veterans but also eventually the love of her life.

"Winspear follows Maisie as she continues her career in her second book, *Birds of a Feather*, in which Maisie searches for the daughter of a wealthy but difficult man. Her third book, *Pardonable Lies*, finds Maisie being plunged back into the nightmares of 'the war to end all wars' as she searches for evidence of a man believed killed in the war.

"Winspear combines history, the hardships of being a single woman in a man's world mystery and intrigue in each book."

I keep talking about books that other mystery booksellers are recommending. What I am recommending this year?

There are several spiffy gift items for mystery lovers in the store right now. We now have the third volume of **Leslie S. Klinger's New Annotated Sherlock Holmes**, perhaps the ultimate gift for fans of the Great Detective. We talked about this last year when the first two volumes, covering all of the short stories, were published (WW Norton, \$75.00 — a cool slipcased set). The third



volume includes all the novels (Norton, \$49.95). Klinger stopped by to sign the copies we have in the store.

Another very spiffy gift item is *Behind the Mystery* (Hot House Press, \$29.95). The book consists of 17 interviews conducted by Stuart Kaminsky with top mystery writers, including folks like James Lee Burke, Sara Paretsky, Tony Hillerman, Michael Connelly, Sue Grafton, the late Ed McBain/Evan Hunter, and Faye & Jonathan Kellerman, plus lots of photographs by Laurie Roberts that by themselves tell a story. It's a great way to learn more about your favorite writers, and it's an attractive book that you'll enjoy either having or giving as a gift.



My top choice for gift-giving this? It's an easy one: **Terence Faherty's In a Teapot** (Mystery Company, \$18). Yes, this is self-serving: I'm the publisher in addition to being the bookseller on this title. But I'm only the publisher because I like this series and this story so much. When Terry Faherty gave me a copy of the manuscript for this 23,000 word novella featuring his Hollywood private eye Scott Elliott, neither of us expected it to lead to this. But here we are, with what I think is an elegant package for an elegant story, about a 1948 effort to film Shakespeare's *Tempest*.

## Friends & Neighbors

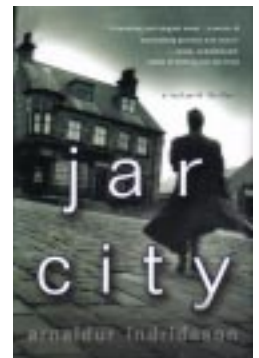
*Mystery Company Members can get an early look at forthcoming books through our Friends & Neighbors program. We offer a selection of advance reading copies of new mysteries. You may borrow one ARC at a time without charge. All we ask is that you return the ARC with your comments about the book and that you allow us to use your comments in the store, on the web and in our newsletter.*

### *Jar City* by Arnaldur Indridason

St. Martin's Press, \$21.95

The only question is why it has taken Indridason and his Icelandic detective, Erlendur Sveinsson, so long to hit US bookstores; both are the real deal. Erlendur empathizes with his victims, carrying "a weary expression that had witnessed all the worst dregs of human filth." In this case, the body of an older man who has been bludgeoned to death with an ashtray is discovered in his apartment. Erlendur searches for motives in the past because of a cryptic message that he finds at the scene. Indridason delivers a gripping, literate police procedural set in contemporary Reykjavik, reminiscent of the Tolstoy quote, "All happy families resemble one another; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way." He explores themes of families, their linkages and sorrows. He also weaves the themes of messages and their meaning throughout the narrative, including the secret messages that our bodies reveal about the past. With the bonus of a solid sense of place, *Jar City* may represent the most tightly constructed narrative I have read in years. Not a word is wasted.

— Bob Bennett



# 2005 YTD bestsellers at The Mystery Company

You won't be the only person to think that the most fun we have is selling lots of copies of a title. In fact, we rarely sell big numbers of anything (only three titles topped 100 copies on this list). What makes our bestseller list fun isn't the sheer numbers, but the quality and diversity of the titles themselves. We are proud to sell every one of these books.

This list covers sales through 11/27. We've grouped together all of a writer's books that ended up in our top 25 in YTD sales.

**1 • Jeff Stone, Tiger: Five Ancestors #1 (Random House, \$15.95)**

**2 • Monkey: Five Ancestors #2 (Random House, \$15.95)**

We've been talking about Jeff Stone's terrific new series all year — and so have you. These action-packed books, first and second in a series set in 17<sup>th</sup> century China are published for younger readers but are being enjoyed by readers of all ages. Fast-paced and filled with wonder and adventure, these books are also setting us on a path of discovery, asking questions about identity and upbringing as we follow five orphaned boys who must search out the secrets of the past in order to find their future.

**3 • Terence Faherty, In a Teapot (Mystery Company, \$18)**

**4 • Confessions of Owen Keene (Crippen & Landru, \$17)**

**5 • Kill Me Again (Mystery Company, \$14)**

Terence Faherty is among the finest writers in the genre, a two-time Shamus Award winner and a two-time Edgar Award nominee. Our Mystery Company edition of *In a Teapot* is my top choice for a holiday gift this year — not just because I published it. I published it because it's a lovely and elegant story, about an effort to produce a film version of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in Hollywood in 1948, that I think we've managed to package into a lovely and elegant little book. Also part of my publishing program is *Kill Me Again*, first in the Scott Elliott series. Both are especially good for movie buffs. Faherty's other new 2005 title, *Confessions of Owen Keene*, is a strong collection of stories about his original series protagonist.

**6 • Brenda Stewart, Power in the Blood (Sterling, \$12.95)**

Indiana writer Brenda Stewart's first novel takes advantage of her experience as a forensic artist specializing in facial reconstruction, and of the book's Hoosier locations.

**7 • Sharan Newman, Real History Behind the Da Vinci Code (Berkely, \$15)**

Medievalist Sharan Newman is uniquely qualified to write a book on Dan Brown's bestselling novel. Not only is Newman a respected scholar, she's also a novelist, author of ten medieval mysteries set in 12<sup>th</sup> century France, which we recommend. First in her series is *Death Comes as Epiphany* (\$15.95).

**8 • Jeanne M. Dams, Body in the Transept (Avon, \$5.99)**

**19 • Winter of Discontent (Forge, \$24.95)**

**25 (tie) • Crimson Snow (Perseverance, \$13.95)**

Jeanne Dams' Dorothy Martin series is a treasure, cozy mysteries in the classic tradition, about a Hoosier who moves to England and finds a new life for herself after the death of her husband. *Transept* is the first in the series, a ten year old novel that we recommend so often that it's still a top-10 bestseller. *Winter* is the most recent, another strong series entry. *Crimson Snow* is the latest in Jeanne's South Bend-based Hilda Johansson series, this one based on a real 1904 crime.

**9 • Tony Perona, Second Advent (Worldwide, \$5.99)**

**10 • Angels Whisper (Five Star, \$25.95)**

Tony Perona writes appealing mysteries about an Indiana you'll recognize, with characters who are facing family and work issues just like you and I do. The opening scene of *Angels*, in which stay-at-home dad Nick Bertetto describes the carpool ride home with Melissa the Motormouth, is especially well-done, and the rest of the book lives up to the promise of its first chapter.

**11 • Phil Dunlap, Call of the Gun (Avalon, \$21.95)**

**18 • Death of Desert Belle (Avalon, \$21.95)**

Phil Dunlap's novels set in the American West are short, sweet and to the point, bringing to life a place and time that he paints with warm nostalgia. *Gun* is a standalone; *Desert Belle* is the first in a series featuring Marshal Piedmont Kelly. We're looking forward to the next book by this Carmel writer.

**12 • Larry Sweazy et al, Texas Rangers (Berkely, \$5.99)**

This anthology edited by Gorman & Greenberg was a big seller for us because of Larry Sweazy's story, "The Promotion." This story won a Spur Award, given by the Western Writers of America for best short story of 2004. The story also appears in the brand-new anthology *The Adventure of the Missing Detective and 19 of the Year's Finest Crime and Mystery Stories* (Carroll & Graf, \$16.95), an attractive and over-stuffed volume.

**13 • Carols Ruiz Zafon, Shadow of the Wind (Penguin, \$15)**

Perhaps the best novel I read this year, and among the best I've ever read, this is a wholly engrossing story of a young man's obsession with a book and its author, and with books in general. What book-lover can resist a book that begins in the "Cemetery of Forgotten Books"?

**14 • Alan Gordon, Thirteenth Night (Mystery Company, \$14)**

Alan Gordon's medieval mystery is so clever, inventive and delightful that we recommend it (successfully) even to folks who don't like medieval mysteries. This book is first in a series that images that all fools belonged to a guild that operated like a Middle Ages CIA, meddling in affairs. It's a dazzling concept, and Gordon gets the most out of it. Great fun!

## The rest of our top 25:

**15 • Susan Wittig Albert, Dead Man's Bones (Berkely, \$23.95)**

**16 • Michael Z. Lewin, Eye Opener (Five Star, \$25.95)**

**17 • J.K. Rowling, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince (Scholastic, \$29.99)**

**20 • Nero Blanc, Crossworder's Delight (Berkely, \$10.95)**

**21 • (tie) Brian Freeman, Immoral (St. Martin's, \$22.95)**

**21 • (tie) Sara Paretsky, Fire Sale (Putnam, \$25.95)**

**21 • (tie) Colin Cotterill, Coroner's Lunch (Soho, \$24; now in paperback at \$11)**

**24 • Sara Hoskinson Frommer, Death Climbs a Tree (St. Martin's, \$23.95)**

**25 (tie) • Rex Stout, Some Buried Caesar (Bantam, \$6.50)**





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## Calendar

**Saturday, December 10, 3 pm**

**Masters of Mystery** discussion: **Phil Dunlap on *The Thief of Time* by Tony Hillerman**, a 1988 novel featuring Navajo police officers Joe Leaphorn and Jim Chee, about skullduggery at an Anasazi site dig. Phil Dunlap's 2004 first novel, *The Death of Desert Belle*, is a historical police procedural set in Arizona. Dunlap's second novel, *Call of the Gun*, came out in May. (Note: we'll be taking a month or two off with the Masters series and will resume in February or March. We're working now on putting together our 2006 lineup for this discussion series.)

**Tuesday, December 20, 7 pm or**

**Thursday, December 22, noon**

Discussion: **Food mysteries**. Something a little different for our discussion groups this month. We're asking each of you to pick a mystery that involves recipes. Make the dish and bring it in (leaving out any poison, etc.), and come prepared to talk about the book you choose and the role of food in the story. Need help picking a book? We have lots of possibilities that we can show to you.

**Tuesday, February 7, 7 pm**

**Michael Koryta** visits to talk about his second novel, *Sorrow's Anthem*.