

# The Book Rack Newsletter

*It just makes sense to buy your books at The Book Rack!*

Vol 9, #2

February 2016

4764 Elmore Ave, Davenport

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*Store Hours: 10:00 - 6:00 Monday - Sunday*

<http://www.thebookrackqc.com/>  
[BookRackQC@Gmail.com](mailto:BookRackQC@Gmail.com)

## Reading Trivia for February

What writer and friend nicknamed T.S. Eliot "Old Possum?"

See below for the trivia answer

### Did you know?

Sinclair Lewis was a janitor and Fyodor Dostoevsky was a military engineer before they became famous.

**Monthly Drawing Winner for January:**

*Linda & Liu Lipe*

**Congratulations!**

**February Holidays and Events at The Book**

## Rack:

February is American Heart Month – Take care of your heart! I speak from experience!

- Black History Month – Check out our display of books
- Creative Romance Month – We have many “creative romances” for you!

2 - Groundhog Day

6 – Lame Duck Day

7 – Superbowl Sunday

9 – Fat Tuesday

12 – Abraham Lincoln's Birthday

14 – Valentine's Day

15 – President's Day – **The Book Rack will be OPEN!**

22 – International World Thinking Day

28 – Oscar Night

29 – Leap Day

## Featured Local Author:

**Free Verse** is a regular, monthly, feature by one of our wonderful Quad Cities area local authors. Each month we enjoy writing by a different talent. These articles and poems are on a variety of topics bound to be of interest to many of our readers. Please help spread the word by forwarding the newsletter to others. Give these folks as wide an audience as possible, please.

***WHERE ARE YOU GOING? WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? PROMPTS FOR WRITERS FROM SMALL QUIET PLACES***



Ann Boaden

*He was in the Express check-out line at Hy-Vee. An elderly man, lean in a way that suggested deprivation rather than design. A little stooped. His clothes weren't quite warm enough for the frigid weather: quilted vest with thinned padding, the color of pea soup. Faded jeans fringed in ragged white strings. Scuffed brown boots. No hat. Thin hair. A single age spot marked his cheek like a spill of tea. And yet he wasn't scruffy. There was something indefinable but real of the old-fashioned "gentleman" about him.*

*He had three items in his grocery cart: three sheafs of cut flowers from the floral department.*

Writers are curious people (in all senses of the word!). They notice their world and ask questions about it. And those questions turn into the things they write.

The little piece above is something I saw on a quick grocery run. It piqued my curiosity because of the questions it raises. Why would an elderly man who didn't have much money, use that money on flowers? Not on a plant, but on cut flowers that would last a few days at most? Why wasn't he buying food? (I discovered that in describing him I had used images of food that would warm a winter day—soup, tea—the things that should have been in his cart!)

Reflecting on this little oddity, I found I could imagine several possible explanations for it. And in that act of imagining lie the germs of a story, piece of creative nonfiction, or poem.

It's fun. It's personally enriching to store your mind and heart with such questions. But it's also our obligation as writers.

We need to be vigilant. We need to observe carefully, to notice those things about our lives that often go by so quickly or so unobtrusively that they can escape us. And in a culture that seems increasingly to prize and reward the largest gestures (no matter how outrageous) and the loudest noise (no matter how meaningless), writers need to provide the alternative of this close, careful, reflective observation. To call attention to the quiet nuances of human experience that charge and change lives. Maybe even societies. Remember Shelley? "[Writers] are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

So here's a Heartfelt suggestion for February: let's make it a point to look, really look, at the world around us. To notice small details of human behavior. To be especially alert to things that puzzle or intrigue—things that don't fit predictable

scenarios, that break cliché. Like an elderly man buying nothing but flowers on a cold winter day.

And then ask questions. To focus these questions toward form, we could do a lot worse than follow the example of God's angel in Genesis 16:8 and inquire, as he did of the fleeing Hagar,

*Where are you going? Where have you been?* Somewhat unfortunately these intriguing queries have been coopted by the 1966 Joyce Carol Oates story about a serial killer. But originally they demonstrated God's interest in a desperate slave girl. Not a king, not a hero, not a prophet, not even a man. Unpredictable. Intriguing.

So, to the gentleman in the grocery story with the flowers: *Where are you going? Where have you been?*

Here's another jotting from my writer's journal (make sure, by the way, that you write down your observations, or they'll lose their vividness and edge):

*The two women sitting across from each other in the booth at the Village Inn had that kind of defined, settled beauty that can come to elderly faces. Neat silver hair, not over-teased to look detachable or spuriously youthful. Just set—professionally—with firm grace. Immaculate sweatshirts in pale pastels, one blue, one pink. They drank their coffee and later ate their French toast with a concentrated peace. They didn't linger; my friend and I were still pouring more coffee and talking as if we didn't see each other every day (which we do), when they left. One of them, the one in the blue sweatshirt, used a cane. The other walked ahead of her.*

*Throughout their time together they didn't speak. At least, the one I could see, the one facing me, in the pink sweatshirt, didn't speak. She didn't nod or shake her head or smile. She looked neither sullen nor angry. Simply and purely serene. If the other woman said anything, she spoke so softly that her voice was lost, even though the restaurant wasn't crowded or unduly noisy.*

What, I wondered, was going on with these people? Where were they going, where had they been?

Now, if you'd like it, here's a little assignment: try using these observations as prompts for your own imaginings. What stories, poems, or pieces of creative nonfiction might you make of them as you start to ask the questions they raise? And then I'd love it if you'd send me what you come up with: [annboaden@augustana.edu](mailto:annboaden@augustana.edu). Maybe Bob will let us feature a few in this newsletter!

Happy writing!

Ann Boaden is a part-time instructor in the Department of English at Augustana College and the author of the book "Light and Leaven: Women Who Shaped Augustana's First Century" available at [The Book Rack](#).

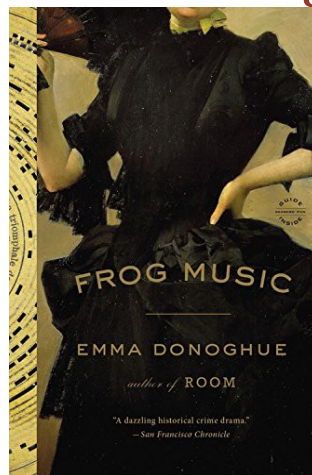
**Bob says: I'd love to include them in the newsletter!**

**Comments on Reading by Claudia:** I recently read a Wall Street Journal opinion piece by Christopher B. Nelson about the joys of rereading books. Yes, there are new books coming out all the time, but I cannot realistically read them all. Nelson says that rushing from one book to another seems “disrespectful”, because he thinks of them as friends. He states that the first reading of a book is a pressure reading – one wants to know what’s going to happen, and may read quickly, missing the detail and nuances. He writes, “... the most familiar books reveal more about themselves when we attend to them anew. And our growing experience allows us to approach our favorites from different angles. In a sense, rereading the same book produces new insights because the reader is a different person. Indeed, a good book is very much like a mirror: The glass is the same year after year, but the reflection in it changes over time.” I recently reread two of my favorite books by Mary Doria Russell, *The Sparrow* and its sequel, *Children of God*, and found Nelson’s words so true. So, read new and different books, but don’t feel guilty about reading your favorites again; you may find the books have more to offer than in your first reading.

## **Book Reviews:**

Our first book review is by Jodie Toohey and first appeared August 12, 2015 in Jodie's blog, <http://bookreviewsbyjodiet.blogspot.com/>.

### **FROG MUSIC by Emma Donoghue**



*Frog Music* is historical fiction based on a murder that occurred in the sweltering summer of 1876 in San Francisco, California. I found it on Amazon with a keyword search involving American historical fiction and

murder while doing a comparison for marketing my own historical fiction book, *Taming the Twisted*.

The story is told in the present tense from the third person limited point of view; the main character is Blanche. The book grabbed me violently in the first few pages with its description of the brutal murder which immediately sets up the mystery I wanted to keep reading to solve. It goes back and forth in time with essentially two chronological starting points. It starts at the murder and also a few weeks prior when Blanche meets the murdered person, Jenny. The story switches back and forth between these two times, though they are both moving forward until, toward the end of the book, when the first story line (the meeting) catches up with the beginning of the later story line (the murder). I found this way of storytelling interesting and both kept me engaged. I had not trouble orienting myself in the story's time.

Given the main character's profession, the number of sex scenes shouldn't come as a surprise, and they are told as tastefully as can be. And unclichéd, with which I find many authors tend to struggle.

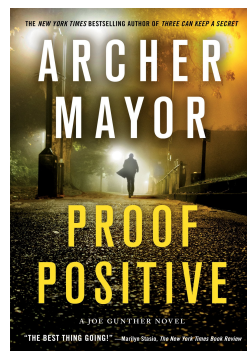
As mentioned, *Frog Music* is based on a real murder and the real witnesses who testified at the inquest about the murder. The characters are authentically human with both good and undesirable qualities. I found it difficult to completely love or completely hate any of them which testifies to their dynamics. Ultimately, *Frog Music* is a story of love between a mother and her child and how it overtakes the mother, even if at first she doesn't want it to.

The book was obviously well-researched and I liked the Afterword that talked about the real people and the way San Francisco appeared in 1876.

I read this book within a little less than a week. So, on a can't-put-it-down-scale of one for I couldn't even finish it to ten for I was up until the wee morning hours, I give it an eight and a half.

Source: Donoghue, Emma. 2014. *Frog Music*. Back Bay Books: New York, NY.

## Proof Positive



## **Proof Positive: A Joe Gunther Novel by Archer Mayor (Minotaur Books, \$25.99, 304 pages)**

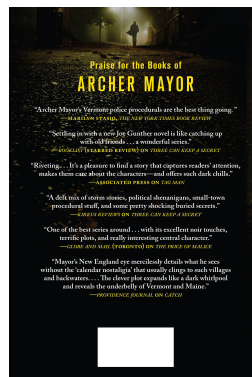
*Proof Positive* is Archer Mayor's 25th novel (*Three Can Keep A Secret*). Mayor uses his expertise as Vermont's medical examiner to paint effective pictures of good guys and bad guys and the setting in which they take place (i.e., Vermont).

The opening line of the novel is excellent: "It was the time of year when New England wobbles between fall and winter, as prone to Indian summer as to sudden, short-lived snowstorms." The story is enticing from the start. The introductory pages are arguably the greatest strength of the book. Some of the writing that follows is less consistent ("Neil's body collapses like a dropped sack of laundry," p. 213, comes to mind).

Ben Kindall is a Vietnam vet and a hoarder, which is significant because it provides for the circumstances that mask the real causes of his death. Ben's cousin, medical examiner Beverly Hillstrom, alerts Vermont Bureau of Investigator and her flame, Joe Gunther, of Ben's death. The mystery of missing negatives uncovers a trail of dead bodies and a list of potential targets. The suspense builds as a senator and hit men are discovered to be involved.

As is common in many crime novels, dialogue is the convention of choice, and the degree to which this is effective depends on the reader's preference.

Fans of the series will be happy to know that immediately upon the conclusion of *Proof Positive* comes the first two chapters of novel 26, *The Company She Kept*, meaning that the next Joe Gunther fix is just around the corner.



### **Well recommended.**

Dave Moyer

*A review copy was provided by the publisher. "...a smoothly plotted and absorbing mystery."* Publishers Weekly "The best thing going!" Marilyn Stasio, The New York Times Book Review  
Dave Moyer is an educator and the author of *Life and Life Only: A Novel*.

***This review originally appeared on the Joseph's Reviews site:***

**<http://josephsreviews.wordpress.com/>**

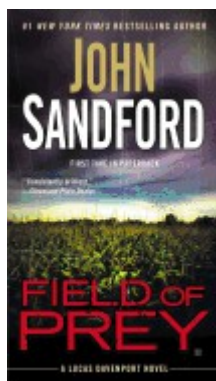
## The next 2 reviews are by Claudia:

***The Indian in the Cupboard*** is a children's book written by Lynne Reid Banks in 1980.



Having just read it for the first time for a book club (our members range in age from 12 to 7 decades) I realize that I have missed a great book I could have discussed endlessly with my children. The story is centered on Omri, an English boy who receives an old medicine chest-like cabinet for his birthday. He finds a key in his collection that fits the cabinet's lock and finds that when he locks his plastic toy Iroquois Indian inside, the brave comes to life. While exciting to have his own live miniature Indian, Omri learns quickly that there is much responsibility involved: What does the man eat? How does one protect him from being crushed underfoot or eaten by a rat? Should Omri show others... and what would be the results? Is it right to "keep" another human being as a pet, away from his own people and time? Omri tackles several practical realities as well as the moral implications of this spectacular event. I'm looking forward to the questions our precocious youngest book club member asks and the insights she shares. This is a great book to read and discuss with your youngster.

**Fields of Prey** by **John Sanford** is the 24<sup>th</sup> book in the popular murder series featuring Lucas Davenport.



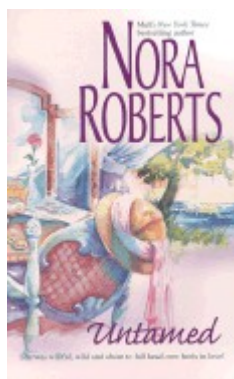
Discovery of an apparently overgrown cistern on an abandoned farm that contains a number



of bodies brings the members of the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension to work with rural police forces. When realization that the bodies have been deposited over many years, and messages come to a local female cop who fits the profile of the murdered women in the cistern, the race to find the killer reaches fever pitch. The story line keeps the reader engaged, and includes concurrent events involving other characters in Lucas's life introduced in earlier books. Quite an exciting page turner about people the reader cares about. If murder mysteries are a good escape for you, or if you're a Sandford fan, this book shouldn't disappoint.

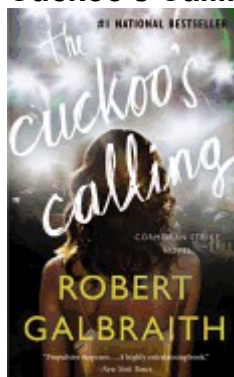
## The rest are by me:

### Untamed by Nora Roberts (1983)



Jo Wilder had the heart of a lion and the temper of a wildcat. And when Keane Prescott crossed her path, she bared her claws. Jo was certain her charming new boss imperiled everything she cared for, but she couldn't deny the attraction between them. Though Keane's kisses left her breathless, it was his tenderness that threatened to tame her heart. Set in a traveling circus, Jo Wilder, works the big cats in the show and demonstrates an independence and fierceness akin to theirs in dealing with Keane. An early Nora Roberts title, it is still a very good romance in an interesting setting. It's another example why Roberts has been and continues to be a wildly successful author. I give it a B and recommend you give her an audition, if she's not already one of your regular authors.

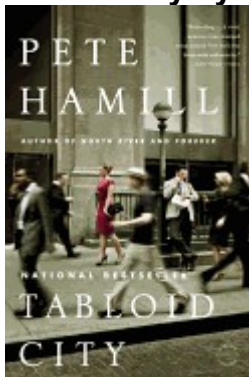
### Cuckoo's Calling by Robert Galbraith aka J.K. Rowling (2013)



When a troubled supermodel falls to her death from the balcony of her London home, it is assumed that she has committed suicide. However, her brother has his doubts and calls in private detective Cormoran Strike to investigate. Strike is a war veteran – wounded both physically and psychologically – and his private life is in disarray. The case gives him a financial lifeline but it comes at a personal cost: the more he delves into the young model's world, the darker things get and the closer he comes to terrible danger.

I have somewhat competing feelings about this book. The story line is interesting and well conceived. The characters fit really well into their roles and the writing is generally top notch. However, at 578 pages it was longer than I think it needed to be and the extra pages were mostly the result of excessively long dialogues when Strike was interviewing witnesses and suspects. Most private investigators and detectives in their respective books get the information they need in an interview in a page, or so, but Galbraith may take 3-4 pages, without adding much additional meaningful content. This made the book a slow read for me. As a result, I give it a B. Don't pick it up because you loved Harry Potter. It bears no resemblance and you're setting yourself up for disappointment. Do give it a try if you enjoy mysteries, like those of Elizabeth George, Charles Todd or Lisa Lutz, you will likely enjoy Galbraith.

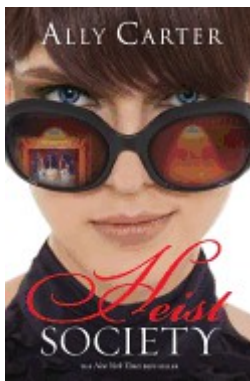
#### **Tabloid City by Pete Hamill (2011)**



On a wintry night in a stately West Village town house, a wealthy socialite and her secretary are murdered. In the twenty-four hours that follow, their shocking deaths generate a storm of activity. It's "murder at a good address," the kind of story that always leads the paper, and the gruff editor of the city's last afternoon tabloid stops the presses. Meanwhile, an NYPD detective investigates the killings. A bold young reporter chases the scoop. A disgraced hedge fund manager tries to flee the country. An Iraq veteran seeks payback. A desperate immigrant turns to her last resort. And an angry extremist plots a deadly attack. Sweeping and propulsive, *Tabloid City* moves from the swank Upper East Side to a Brooklyn tenement, from the legendary Chelsea Hotel to the glossy new nightclubs of the Meatpacking District, to trace the paths of men and women whose lives collide on this night and day. For them, New York City is many things: a decadent carnival, a palimpsest of memories, the culmination of their worst fears, or the launching point of all their dreams. At the midnight hour, many lives with loneliness and loss.

Dave Moyer had reviewed this book in a previous edition of the newsletter and when I saw it in audio book format I picked it up and "read" it. It is everything Dave said and I, too, highly recommend it to you in whatever format you prefer.

#### **Heist Society by Ally Carter (2010)**

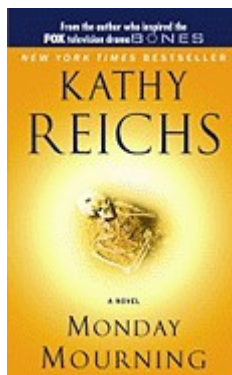


Young Adult fiction.

When Katrina Bishop was three, her parents took her to the Louvre... to case it. For her seventh birthday, Katrina and her Uncle Eddie traveled to Austria... to steal the crown jewels. When Kat turned fifteen, she planned a con of her own – scamming her way into the best boarding school in the country, determined to leave the family business behind. Unfortunately, leaving “the life” for a normal life proves harder than she'd expected. Soon Kat's friend and former co-conspirator, Hale, appears out of nowhere to bring her back into the world she tried so hard to escape. But he has good reason: a powerful mobster's priceless art collection has been stolen and he wants it back. Only a master thief could have pulled off the job, and Kat's father isn't just on the suspect list, he is the list. Caught between Interpol and a far more deadly enemy, Kat's dad needs her help. For Kat there is only one solution: track down the paintings and steal them back. So what if it is a spectacularly impossible job? She's got two weeks, a teenage crew, and, hopefully, just enough talent to pull off the biggest heist in her family's (very crooked) history – and with any luck, steal her life back along the way.

Heist Society is a fun read, especially, I believe, for the target audience. Young people doing impossible things, in spite of the best efforts of adults to thwart them. It was a quick, easy read and it kept my attention. I give it a B. If you like Jennifer Lynn Barnes, Janette Rallison or E. Lockhart give Carter a try.

### **Monday Mourning by Kathy Reichs (2004)**



Temperance Brennan, forensic anthropologist for both North Carolina and Quebec, has come from Charlotte to Montreal during the bleak days of December to testify as an expert witness at a murder trial. She should be going over her notes, but instead she's digging in the basement of a pizza parlor. Not fun. Freezing cold. Crawling rats. And now, skeletonized remains of three young women. How did they get there? When did they die? Homicide

detective Luc Claudel believes the bones are historic. Not his case, not his concern. But when Tempe examines the bones in her lab, she established approximate age with Carbon 14. Further study of tooth enamel tells her where the women were born. If she's right, Claudel has three recent murders on his hands. Definitely his case. Detective Andrew Ryan is acting mysteriously. What are those private phone calls he takes in the other room, and why does he suddenly disappear just when Tempe is beginning to hope he might be a permanent part of her life? Looks like more lonely nights for Tempe and Birdie, her cat. As Tempe searches in both her personal and professional lives for answers, she finds herself drawn deep into a web of evil from which there may be no escape. Women have disappeared, never to return... Tempe may be next.

Kathy Reichs, like Temperance Brennan in her book, is a forensic anthropologist for North Carolina and Quebec and her extensive personal knowledge of the field and the settings are very evident in the book. The story line is gripping and she delivers a first-rate product. I give it a B+ and recommend it to you. Not read Reichs? I you like Jefferson Bass, Patricia Cornwell and Karin Slaughter you'll like Reichs.

## Reading Trivia for December

What wirtter and friend nicknamed T.S. Eliot "Old Possum?"

Answer: Ezra Pound

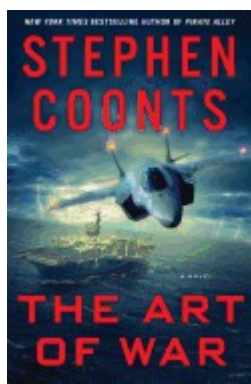
## Upcoming New Releases:

Check out the prices following the title of the book. The price is the publisher's price. The **Book Rack** price is normally 20% lower. When you pick it at the store there is no shipping cost, though we can also ship it to you. Order now by calling one of the stores or stopping in. We do ask for prepayment on all special orders. **You can also add any of these titles to your request list.** Some will come in soon and others may take a while, but most will get to you eventually. The genre follows the price.

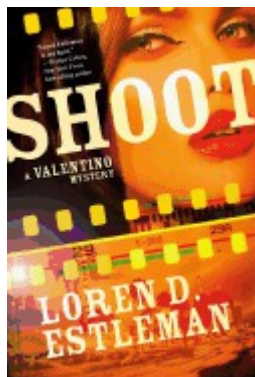
## Hardcover and Trade Paperback

Meg Cabot – Remembrance, A Mediator Novel – 15.99

Stephen Coonts – The Art of War – 27.99

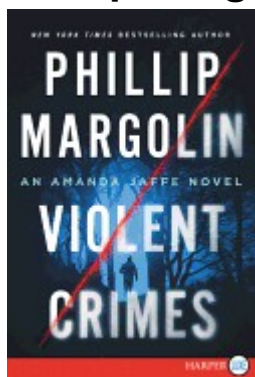


**Loren Estleman – Shoot, A Valentino Mystery – 25.99**

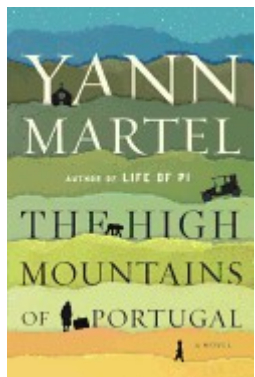


**Lisa Gardner – Find Her – 26.95**

**Phillip Margolin – Violent Crimes – 26.99**



**Yann Martel – The High Mountains of Portugal – 27.00**



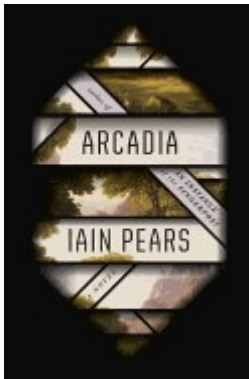
**Carla Neggers – The Spring at Moss Hill – 26.99**

**Jo Nesbo – Midnight Sun – 23.95**

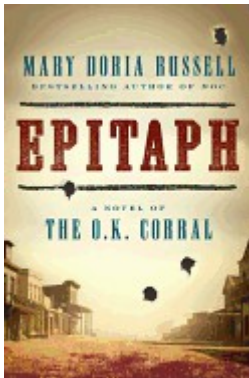


**James Patterson – Alert, A Michael Bennett Novel – 15.99**

**Ian Pears – Arcadia – 27.95**

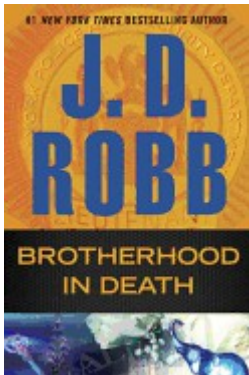


**Maria Doria Russell – Epitaph, A Novel of the OK Corral – 16.99**



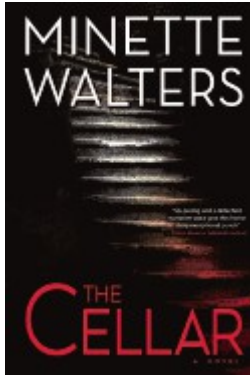
**Danielle Steel - Blue – 28.95**

**J.D. Robb – Brotherhood in Death – 27.95**

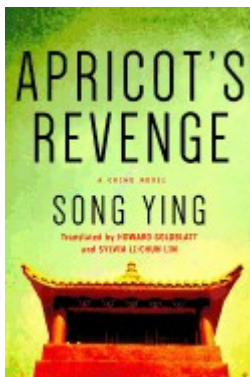


**Charled Todd – No Shred of Evidence – 25.99**

**Minette Walters – The Cellar – 24.00**



**Song Ying/Howard Goldblatt - Apricot's Revenge, A Crime Novel  
– 25.99**

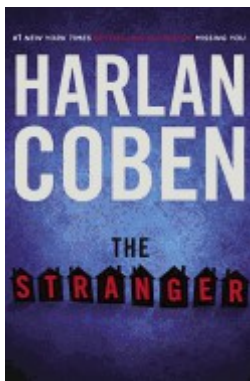


## **Mass Market Paperback**

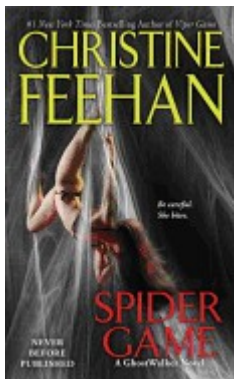
**VC Andrews – The Forbidden: Sage's Eyes – 7.99**

**Harlan Coben – The Stranger – 9.99**





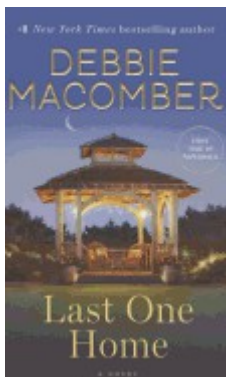
**Christine Feehan – Spider Game – 7.99**



**William Johnstone – Sixkiller; US Marshal – 7.99**

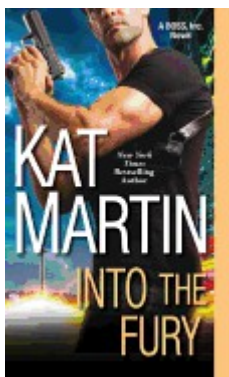
**Jonathan Kellerman – Motive – 9.99**

**Debbie Macomber – Last One Home – 7.99**



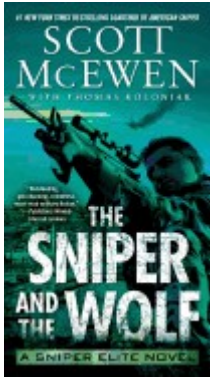
**Susan Mallery – Evening Stars – 7.99**

**Kat Martin – Into the Fury – 7.99**



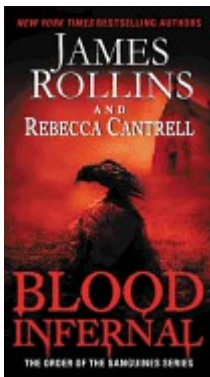


**Scott McEwen – The Sniper and the Wolf – 9.99**



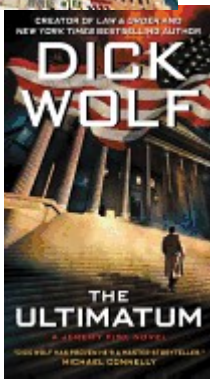
**James Patterson – Private Vegas – 9.99**

**James Rollins – Blood Infernal – 9.99**



**Lisa Scottoline – Come Home – 8.99**

**Randy Wayne White – Cuba Straits – 9.99**



**Dick Wolf – The Ultimatum – 9.99**