



One For The Money

by Janet Evanovich; Penguin 1994; 290 pp; \$12.95.

Two for the Dough

Janet Evanovich; Penguin 1996; 301 pp; \$19.95.

In the vulgar world of crime fiction, bounty hunter Stephanie Plum is as loud and brassy as the lime green and hot pink packaging of these books. A retrenched lingerie seller for a down-market store Plum comes to bounty hunting not by choice but by sheer necessity; she needs to pay the rent. She quickly decides, however, that toting a gun, mace spray and handcuffs is more enjoyable than slapping pancake makeup onto shoppers in a department store. Unfortunately her dotting suburban family can not understand why she would choose a life of adventure and danger over a life of mediocrity in the malls of New Jersey. Plum's relationship with her family is as integral to these stories as her relationship with Joe Morelli, vice cop and would be lothario. In *One For the Money* Morelli, who is wanted for murder, has skipped out on his bail and it is Plum's job to bring him in. In *Two for the Dough* both Plum and Morelli are seeking out Kenny Manusco who has skipped town after shooting his best friend.

In Plum, Evanovich has created a character who is at turns smart talking, naive, extravagant and generous. A character who will spend her last cash on a pair of 'to die for' shoes, and describes a particular outfit as being better than mace on a blind date. A character who develops an involuntary twitch in her eye every time she re-enters the parental home, and considers a hamster a suitable substitute for an ex husband and potential kids. Plum is witty and likeable and her encounters with Morelli are littered with double entendres and irony. Evanovich's description of the burbs is frightening. Any place where the entertainment of choice is attending viewings at funeral homes is clearly to be avoided and its seamy underbelly of drugs, gun running and murder is almost refreshing. Despite Plum's liking for shoes and

sarcasm she is no powder puff and the novels contain enough blood, guts and plot twists to keep the reader's attention throughout. As Plum herself might say this is not Dostoevsky but what the hey. Grab a daiquiri or a cold beer sit down and enjoy. ● AM

Famous Mugs: Arresting Photos and Felonious Facts for Hundreds of Stars Behind Bars

Cader Books distributed in Australia by Penguin 1996; 138 pp; \$12.95.

More vacuous than *Who Weekly*, *Famous Mugs* is a series of brief descriptions of police charges against mainly US 'stars'. The book is divided into chapters according to themes such as Acting Up, Kiddie Crime and Family Affairs.

A number of the descriptions are accompanied by actual mug shots. None of these are captioned and many appear on a different page from the relevant story which is very confusing if the offender is not as famous as the publishers would like to think.

The cover has hopeless Hugh on the cover and indeed most of the stories in *Famous Mugs* need little retelling: Johnny trashing a hotel room, Sean thumping a journo etc.

Scariest of all is the invitation at the beginning of the book to download a tasty mug: 'Grab your own electronic mug shot, and other special treats, at our new web site. I can hardly bear to think what their idea of a special treat is. Palpitate. Palpitate.

As bad as it sounds. At least *Who* only costs \$2.80. What were the good people at Penguin thinking? ● FW

The Point of Murder

by Margaret Yorke; Warner Futura 1996; 217 pp; \$13.95.

The Point of Murder was first published in 1978 and it certainly shows! The characters are rigidly grounded in the

social attitudes of the 60s and 70s. Female stereotypes and sexist attitudes dominate the storyline and destroy any legitimate character development.

The accidental rape and murder of a young woman is used as a platform for commentary on female sexuality and morality. The plot is predictable; drama and suspense are replaced by voyeurism and female ridicule.

I found the tone of the book irritating, the storyline too simplistic, and the social commentary alienating. RS

Advocacy in Court, A Beginner's Guide

by Keith Evans; Blackstone Press Ltd, London, 1995; 2nd edn; 206 pp; \$30 softcover.

Advocacy in Court, A Beginner's Guide is a 'how-to' manual for baby barristers. Keith Evans is a Middle Templar of the London bar as well as holding admission as an attorney of the State of California. He has a relaxed, confiding style as he constructs a path through the trivia and minutiae of the advocate's craft for every new barrister/solicitor advocate.

It is true that becoming a professional advocate is very much a process of trial and error (all puns intended). In the long process of acquiring skills in the courtroom every practitioner commences as an amateur. The speed with which those skills can be acquired depends on the types of matters in which a new advocate becomes involved. This in turn depends on the kind of work available to the tutor and drawn from the floor on which the barrister reads. Evans has attempted to cover areas which should be a basic part of each pupil's tutelage but which he recognises as often overlooked. The book also serves as an insider's review for the emerging solicitor/advocate who may not have the guidance of a year as pupil or reader to provide training in the nuances of style and conduct in the courtroom.

The book commits several basic errors of the 'where I write he read she as well' type in the course of attempting to be gender neutral and failing dismally. It is also full of instruction on the quirkier side of proper British courtroom etiquette which thankfully does not apply in Australia. Nevertheless, its basic insights are valuable and pleasantly accessible. SP.

BITS was compiled by Annemaree McDonough, Susan Phillips, Rita Shakel and Frith Way.