



The Burning Wire

Jeffrey Deaver
Hodder & Stoughton, 2010
ISBN: 9780340937297
RRP: \$32.99

Fans of the Lincoln Rhyme crime fiction novels by American author Jeffrey Deaver will be delighted by the publication of *The Burning Wire*, the ninth title in the series. Lincoln Rhyme is a brilliant forensic expert and quadriplegic who consults for various law enforcement agencies on particularly complex and baffling crimes.

In *The Burning Wire*, attacks are being made on New York's electricity grid, possibly by political or ecoterrorists trying to shut down the city's power supply. These result in a number of very grisly deaths by electrocution and of course a range of crime scenes for Rhyme's personal and professional partner, Amelia Sachs, to investigate.

Deaver's novels are well paced. Frenetic action is interspersed with detailed descriptions of forensic methodology and, in *The Burning Wire*, some fascinating information about the killer's weapon of choice, electricity, which is invisible and devastatingly lethal.

Lincoln Rhyme's personal journey is advanced in this novel but his relationship with Amelia Sachs is oddly disconnected, which may disappoint Deaver's long-time fans. Nevertheless, *The Burning Wire* has that 'can't put down' factor and races to

its conclusion with twists and turns that keep the reader engaged and entertained to the last page.

Suzanne Lewis

slewis@nscchahs.health.nsw.gov.au



Damaged

Alex Kava
Sphere, 2010
ISBN: 9781847443397
RRP: \$29.99

Damaged is the eighth novel by Alex Kava featuring FBI profiler Maggie O'Dell. In the waters of Pensacola, Florida a cool box is found containing body parts sealed in plastic bags. At the nearby Naval facility soldiers are dying horribly from unknown causes. And Hurricane Isaac, on a direct course for Pensacola, is being upgraded from a Category 4 to a Category 5.

Maggie O'Dell finds herself in Pensacola investigating the body parts. USAMRID investigator, Colonel Benjamin Platt is sent to the Naval base to look into the soldiers' deaths. Neither knows the other is there. Neither knows of the other's case. Into this is thrown Search and Rescue swimmer Liz Bailey, her brother-in-law, local funeral director Scott Larsen, and handsome stranger, Joe Black. People are disappearing.

Kava's characters are well drawn and engaging. The mounting drama of disappearances and the approaching hurricane is blended to create a tangible tension. This is an enjoyable thriller – and yet I was left wanting more. I found the ending somewhat abrupt and dissatisfying. I wanted those loose ends explored rather than neatly tied. I wanted a touch more drama to those cliff hanger moments. Nonetheless, I will be reading another Kava soon.

Cathy Johnston

cathy.j1569@yahoo.com



How Frogmouth Found Her Home

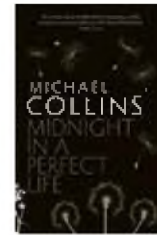
Ambelin Kwaymullina
Freemantle Press, 2010
ISBN: 9781921696015
RRP: \$24.95

This Indigenous creation story is complimented through the brilliantly vibrant illustrations, and has been dedicated back to the Frogmouths. Frogmouth isn't like other birds; she decides there's more to life than living in the trees with her grandmother. She travels the land searching for a nesting place while helping others along the way to find their true homes. One day she meets Moon who offers a resting place during the dark hours. Frogmouth becomes the first star, a guiding light for other Frogmouths flying in the night. A wonderful way for children to learn and read about Australian animals and

Indigenous culture.

Colette Stapleton

cstapleton@trl.nsw.gov.au



Midnight in a Perfect Life

Michael Collins
London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2010.
ISBN: 9780297859888
RRP: \$32.99

As disturbing as it is to see ugliness reflected, holding a mirror to contemporary society is one of the functions of literature. Collins has done so here with cameo portraits of characters, in a hopeless and seedy world that reminded me of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*. Ostensibly a novel about the downward economic spiral of a novelist, *Midnight in a Perfect Life* relies on a sense of the carnivalesque for its impact. In jagged prose with disjointed rhythms, the text is pared back of linkages and exposition. The main character displays an emotional detachment not unlike the protagonist of MJ Hyland's *This Is How*. His on-again, off-again marriage is symptomatic of his general ineffectiveness. Women are defined by their reproductive roles—his wife Lori, attempting IVF in a desperate quest for motherhood; his dying mother, sequestered in a nursing home; the exploited immigrant daughter of the landlord. The one person our writer is at all truthful with is Fennimore, the unseen novelist for whom he ghost-writes. Pieces of autobiography hidden in the writing of both men begin to identify the underlying subplot. The problem of fatherhood emerges as the real focus, circled by the themes of surrogacy, infertility, and personal creativity.

Julie Thorndyke

julie.thorndyke@ridbc.org.au

Queen Victoria's Underpants



Jackie French & Bruce Whatley
Angus & Robertson, 2010
ISBN: 9780732288228
RRP: \$24.99

The latest offering from two of Australia's favourites, Jackie French and Bruce Whatley, is *Queen Victoria's Underpants*. The story gives children a fun glimpse into Victorian days when it was unusual for a woman to wear underpants.

My friends Zoe (nearly 7 years old) and Sascha (almost 4) both liked the book because it was a book about undies AND it was funny – particularly the suggestions that the Queen's underpants should be made out of bagpipes!

So, as far as target demographic is concerned, this book hits its mark!

Kathryn Cass

kathryn.cass@gmail.com



The Integrated Library Management Solution for your library!

- Proven ILMS solution for 500+ school, special and public libraries
- Built in Australia and supported locally
- Full system functionality and a user-friendly interface

For 40 years, libraries have combined effort and ingenuity through the global OCLC cooperative to make library service more efficient and economical. Be a part of it by choosing Amlib®.

Learn more:

www.amlib.net.au or
sales-amlib@oclc.org



Book Reviews



The Japanese lover

Rani Manicka

Hodder & Stoughton, 2010

ISBN 9781444700312

RRP \$32.99

Colour and prejudice provide the frame for this novel of the mystical east. Sri Lankan Parvathi's life never seems hers to control – her father sells her to a wealthy expat in Malaya; her husband expects certain standards; her children demand of her; her brothers exploit and defraud her. Only Maya the medicine woman and cook provides succour. She also specialises in unlikely revelations of deep spiritual truths. When the spirit world moves out of alignment, then life gets messy.

The different races – Indians, Japanese, American, Malays – of this polyglot tale are described in terms of their relative skin colours. But colour proves an unreliable predictor of virtue. Parvathi's predecessor is upheld as the epitome of beauty – light skinned – yet she left her husband for the decadent west and a lover. The Japanese lover hides Parvathi's dark skin under a geisha's white paint, so that inner beauty is matched by an acceptable appearance.

The paradox of becoming lover to the civilised commander of the brutal Japanese occupying forces illustrates the deceitfulness of prejudice. By secretly and unnecessarily sacrificing herself to save her stepdaughter, Parvathi finds a love, albeit short-lived, surpassing the stiff embraces of her much older and now dead husband.

Malaysia's post war power struggles for independence provide the backdrop against which Parvathi's dysfunctional family hastily rush through their lives. A curious, philosophical work that intrigues but doesn't engross; the resolutions through death seem too contrived, if karmic.

Bronwyn McLoughlin

rbmsgmcl@ozemail.com.au

The Legacy

Kirsten Tranter

Kirsten Tranter

Fourth Estate, 2010

ISBN: 9780732290801

RRP: \$32.99

A debut novel from an Australian author, and the promise of an "unputdownable mystery" with blatant parallels to *Portrait of a Lady* assured a riveting read. Unfortunately in this ponderous novel with poorly drawn characters, "mystery" is really "extremely obvious plot devices" and the "compelling meditation on the nature of art" becomes "pseudo-intellectual adolescent drivel".

The story follows Julia, a character whose intelligence never makes up for

her insipidity, with an unexplained pull on men as unlikely as it is boring. She meets and has a massive unrequited crush on Ralph, a decidedly camp but confused individual who is deathly ill, lazy, boorish, and extremely rich, and immune to Julia's charms. Ralph's estranged cousin Ingrid arrives from Perth and proceeds to enrapture everyone around her with her height, blonde hair, and Mona Lisa smile. Ralph's father leaves her scads of cash and she proves a complete idiot, falling in love with and marrying an abusive New York art dealer. Ingrid disappears when the towers fall on 9/11 but is she really dead? Good luck sticking around to find out in this slow-moving retrospective of adolescent

crushes and intrigue. It's not worth your, or your patrons', time



Naomi Doessel

naomidoessel@gmail.com

The Passage

Justin Cronin

Orion, 2010

ISBN: 9780752897851

RRP: \$35.00

At a secret facility in Colorado a US Army scientific team is testing a new South American virus. This brew is an agent that could slow the ageing process and increase physical robustness. The subjects being tested are twelve inmates from death row. Of course, the experiment fails.

Now a hundred years later, in this futuristic fable, an apocalyptic plague of vampires rules over the remnants of civilisation. "It seemed like a good idea at the time," the head scientist said.

The passage is a weighty tome that is written well enough, but the plot wanders all over the place. It's a little like reading Michael Crichton, Stephen King, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* together. But let's be honest here, this saga has Hollywood in mind. Justin Cronin was offered \$1.75 million for film rights before the book was finished. If you like lots of blood and gore, implausible situations, and believe aliens live next door then this is for you.

Sue McKenzie & Peter Hardy

s.mckenzie4@bigpond.com

The Search

Nora Roberts

Piatkus 2010

ISBN 9780749941796

RRP \$32.99



I wasn't really sure what this book wanted to be about. I thought it was going to be an exciting book about search and rescue and police investigation, but was

disappointed to find the only real climax happened in the sex scenes.

I found the dog search and rescue training thread very readable, including matters around police and FBI process, although the finale was slow and predictable. The emotional state of a crime victim turned trainer, desperately seeking to control their environment, was also interesting. But the characters' interactions, and the former victim's controlling friends aiding her affair with a barely disguised bully, drawn in by his inability to predict and control her, spoiled the overall readability of the book. According to the media release, Nora Roberts writes eight largely crime related novels and books a year. While admirably prolific, that might explain the slightly formulaic flavour.

Despite these frustrations I respect that there is a solid attempt to portray the heroine of the story as a capable woman who is not easily intimidated, and who doesn't need high heels and makeup to feel good. That's a nice change.

Adrienne Walker

adriennew@internode.on.net

THE FEDERATION PRESS

www.federationpress.com.au

VISIT OUR ONLINE BOOKSTORE



Log on and register to receive:

- Our new eNewsletter via email
- New title releases in your specific areas of interest
- RSS feeds on new titles

Search by Author, Title, ISBN or Keyword

Download free book supplements

View journal abstracts online

Order online using our secure credit card facility

Browse by subject: law, social work, environment, criminology, industrial relations, police studies, Indigenous studies, biography, health, ethics, government and political studies, human rights, history and more ...

The Federation Press Pty Ltd

PO Box 45 Annandale NSW 2038 Australia

Tel: + 61 2 9552 2200 Fax: + 61 2 9552 1681

Email: info@federationpress.com.au

Website: www.federationpress.com.au