

SIX FOR THE SUMMER

Escape by staying put

Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

With gas prices headed for the stratosphere, staying close to home this summer is looking less like an option and more like a necessity, leaving folks to wonder how best to while away the time. Good news: you can escape to faraway lands, or have experiences you've never dreamed of, all without giving a dime to the oil barons. Simply visit your local bookstore and delve into the printed word. And what better genre than crime fiction? Here are half a dozen summer reads that are guaranteed to whisk you away from the daily grind and entertain you to boot. So grab a good book, sit back and relax; the planet will be happier, and so will your wallet.

Linda L. Richards,

Death Was the Other Woman
(St. Martin's Minotaur, 2007)

A hard-boiled saga with a twist. In Prohibition-era L.A. Kitty Pangborn is the secretary to Dexter J. Theroux, a PI who regularly wrestles with the city's underworld. But when her boss takes on a client with a shady past, Kitty begins to doubt his motives. She tags along on the case to keep him out of trouble, and their journey, fortified by liberal doses of Johnny Walker, will take them through the seamy worlds of gambling and glitz, and we come to appreciate the role of the Girl Friday in getting her boss out of a jam.

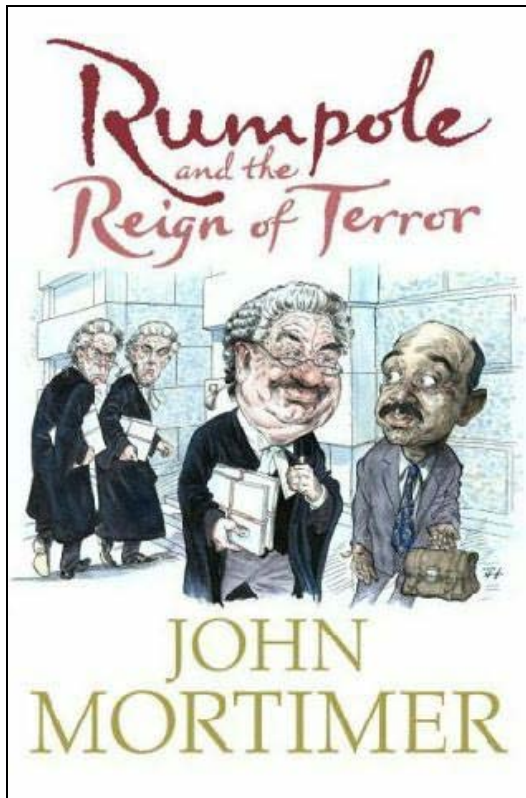
Combining stylish wit with crackling dialogue and gritty action, Richards



gives readers an insight into the Southern California of the 1930's. It makes you glad you didn't live back then.

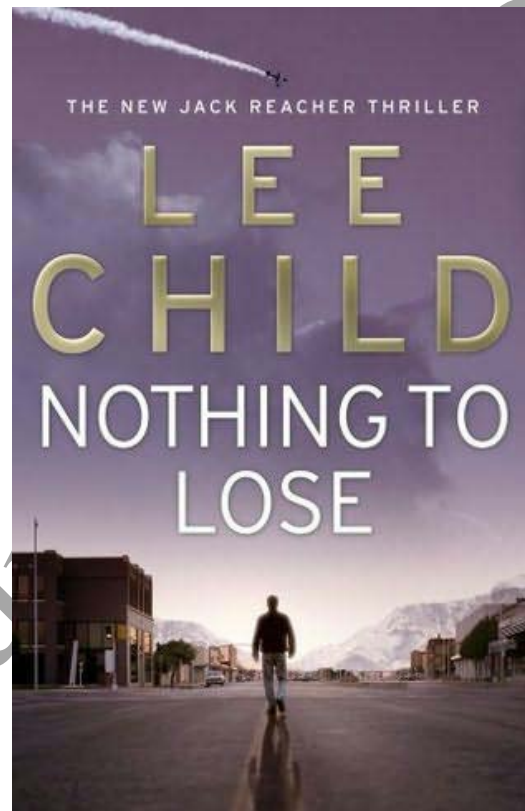
John Mortimer,
Rumpole and the Reign of Terror
(Viking Penguin, 2006)

The indefatigable British barrister Horace Rumpole returns in this tale lifted off the front pages. When the husband of one of his nefarious clients is arrested as an alleged terrorist, it falls to Rumpole, the *eminence grise* of 4 Equity Court, to stand up for human rights. As he weaves his way through the vagaries of the new security legislation (with occasional stops at Pommeroy's Wine Bar for his favourite libation, Chateau Thames Embankment) Rumpole must also grapple with his other half, familiar to Mortimer's readers as She Who Must Be Obeyed. It seems the redoubtable Hilda has taken to locking herself in the box-room of their flat, and Rumpole is understandably confused. Is the aging barrister equal to the occasion?



John Mortimer's deft satire can always be counted on for many a laugh combined with penetrating insights into the British legal establishment.

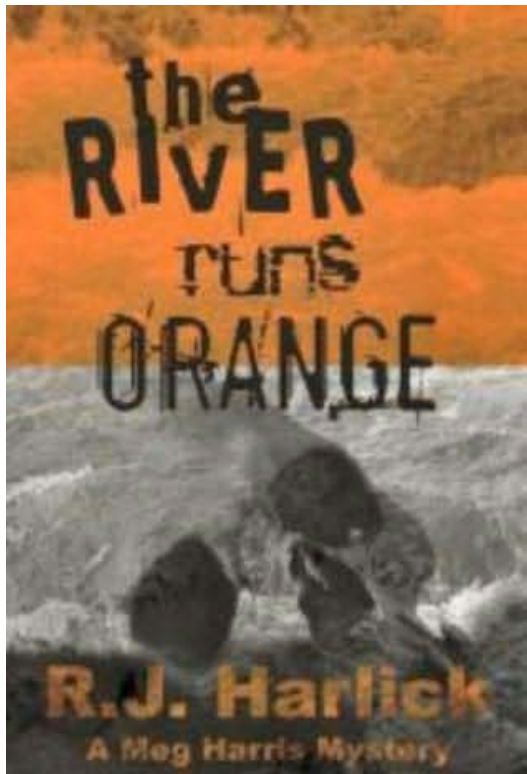
Lee Child, *Nothing to Lose*
(Delacorte Press/Random House,
2008)



The author of twelve best-selling, prize-winning novels, Lee Child has penned a cracker in this, the latest in his Jack Reacher series. They say bad news comes in threes. On the road in eastern Colorado, Reacher finds himself hitchhiking between two towns, fittingly named Hope and Despair. Mistake number one: there are no cars going toward Despair; that alone should have told him something. Seventeen dusty miles later Reacher arrives, tired and hungry, and heads for the only diner in town. When he gets there, he's not exactly welcomed with open arms. When four beefy locals claim the table

he's sitting at, he's not about to give it up gracefully. Mistake number two. And when he's arrested for vagrancy and told to move on, Reacher wonders what the town has to hide. Mistake number three.

Lee Child has a great eye for setting and an ear for spare, menacing dialogue, producing yet another gripping suspense tale.

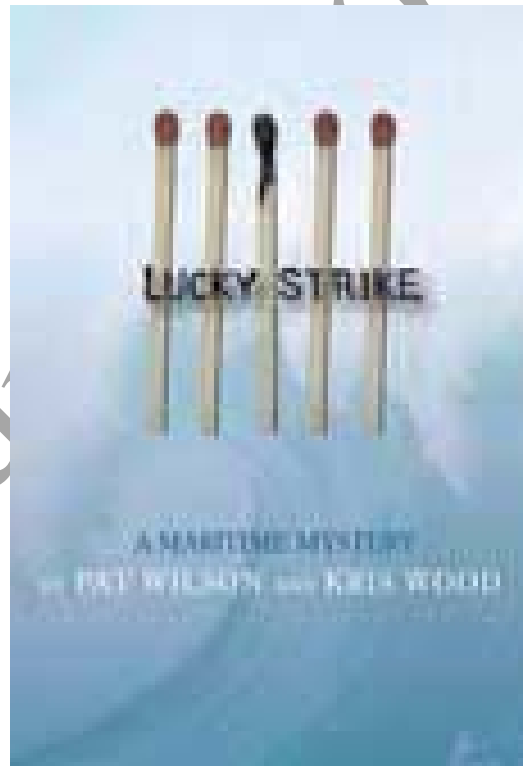


R. J. Harlick,
The River Runs Orange
(RendezVous Crime, 2008)

Canoeing through the whitewater rapids of a river in western Quebec, Meg Harris finds the remains of a native woman. When tests reveal that she died over ten thousand years ago, the media descend on Meg, and archaeologists from Quebec and Ontario compete for the prestige of the find, which seems to refute widely-held theories about migration patterns from Asia to the New World. But the

Algonquin community is also interested in the bones, insisting that the woman's remains must be returned to the land in order for her spirit to rest. The battle for the bones will escalate to violence, and before it is over more bodies will join that of the ancient native woman, and the survivors will be engulfed by events beyond their control.

An informed, nicely paced story with convincing characters and a believable plot.

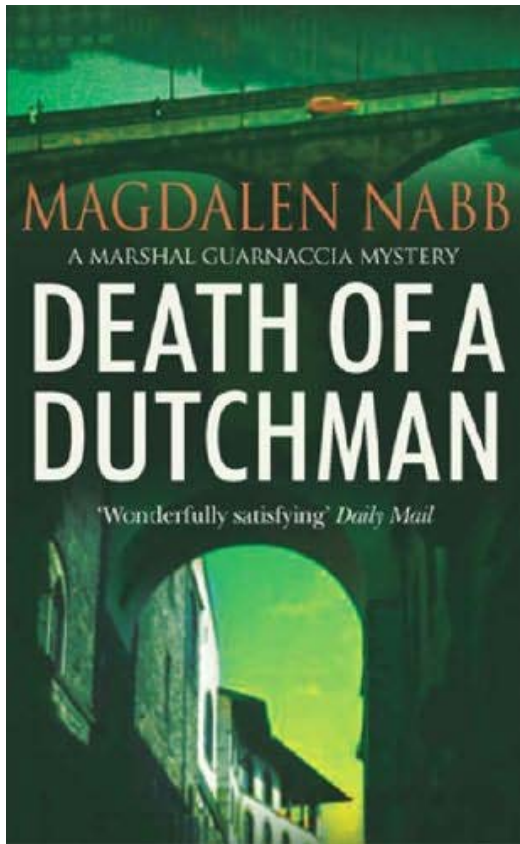


Pat Wilson & Kris Wood,
Lucky Strike
(RendezVous Crime, 2007)

Eric Spratt, a Toronto accountant, has recently testified against some high-ranking mafia mobsters. They're understandably ticked off. In an effort to prolong his life span the Witness Protection Program has given him a new identity and moved him to Comorant Harbour, a small fishing village on the Eastern shore of Nova Scotia. But while

he can cheerfully give up the big-box stores and trendy cafes that defined his existence in Toronto, Eric—now Charles Trenchant—is unprepared for the collection of eccentrics and small-time shysters that make up the local population. His nearest neighbours seem to be not-so-distant relations of Jed Clampett, and Anglican Father Donald Peasgood and his long-suffering wife Dorothy are keen to integrate Eric into the local community, bringing him a visibility he's all too anxious to avoid. Things take a definite turn for the worse when a local denizen is found with a knife sticking out of her chest. Who'da thunk that rural Nova Scotia could witness such goings' on?

Written by two Maritimers, the tale ripples with humour and authenticity.



Magdalen Nabb,
Death of a Dutchman
(Soho Crime, 2007)

For the dedicated crime solvers out there, a puzzle mystery with an intriguing plot by a gifted writer. In Florence a jeweller and goldsmith from Amsterdam has been found near death in his apartment, his wrists slashed and barbiturates in his body. He succumbs from his wounds without regaining consciousness, and his death is put down as a suicide. But Marshall Salvatore Guarnaccia is unconvinced. A mysterious woman had been seen near his apartment, and an elderly woman upstairs said she heard them arguing; but she is anxious for attention, and her account is open to question. When the Marshall learns of an elaborate missing ring that the victim's son had crafted, his interest is piqued: the ring is nowhere to be found. Was that the cause of the man's death, or is the culprit to be found elsewhere?

Highly regarded by her peers, Magdalen Nabb died of a stroke in August of 2007, at the age of 60.

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