

Slay Rides

Christmas Picks for murderous fun

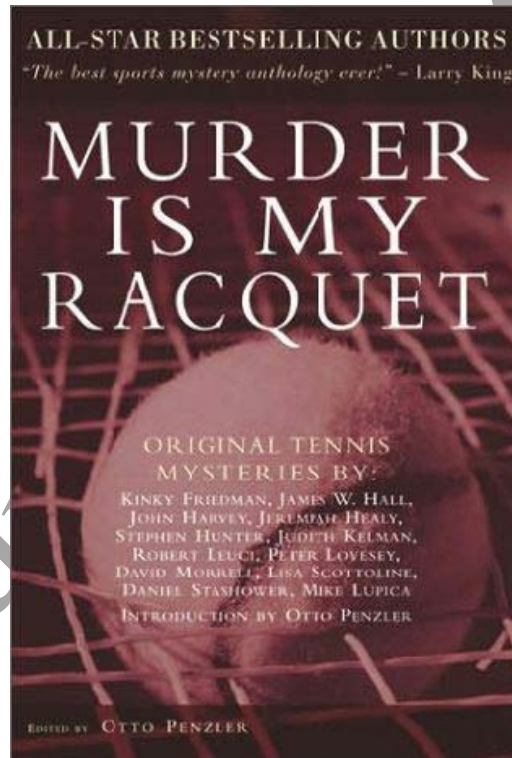
Suspended Sentences

by Jim Napier

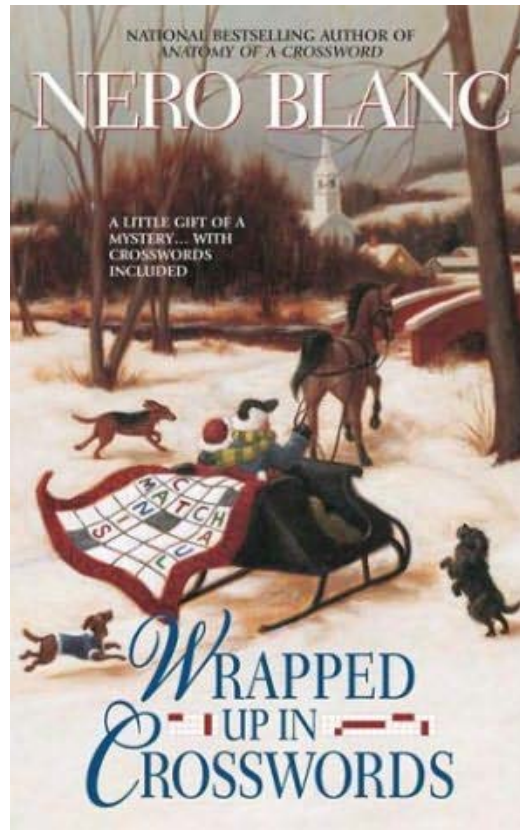
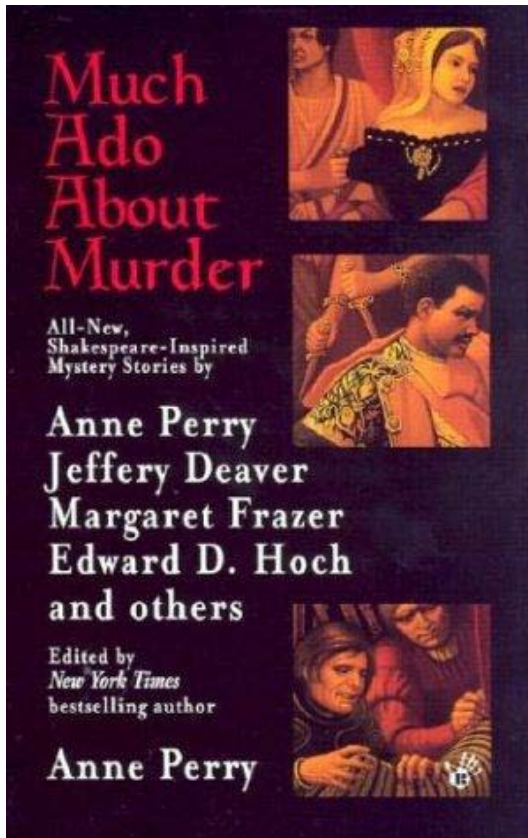
Christmas is nearly upon us, and what better gift for your bibliophilic friends than a nice juicy murder mystery? With that in mind, here are a few suggestions, running the gamut from fireside cozies to gritty police procedurals to intriguing history-with-mysteries. You might just want to stuff your own stocking, and if you do, who's to know?

Short Stories

As the owner of the Mysterious Bookshop in New York City, the founder and editor of the Mysterious Press, and mentor to many contemporary crime writers, **Otto Penzler** is the Doyen of American crime writing. For this anthology of fourteen tennis tales, aptly titled *Murder is My Racquet*, Otto has assembled a collection of stories by such established writers as Peter Lovesey, Jeremiah Healy, Lisa Scottoline, and Lawrence Sanders. All in all, a nice set, sure to make a hit... (*Murder is My Racquet*, NY, Mysterious Press, 2005)

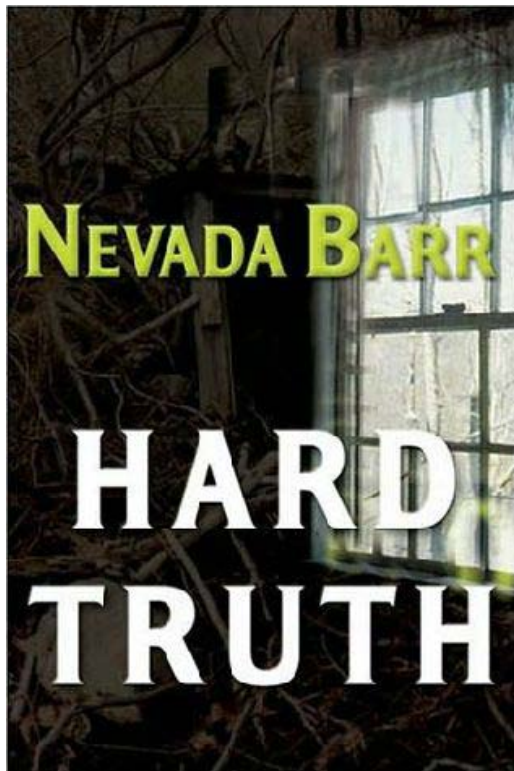


Much Ado About Murder is, if you'll forgive the phrase, a hist-myst with a twist: all seventeen stories are drawn from the Elizabethan world, and inspired by Shakespeare's life, times, and works. Aided by such gifted writers as Robert Barnard, Simon Brett, Anne Perry, Marcia Talley, and Canada's own Peter Robinson, editor **Anne Perry** serves up a delicious platter of seasonal fare. (*Much Ado About Murder*, NY, Berkley Prime Crime, 2004)



Crossword Challenges

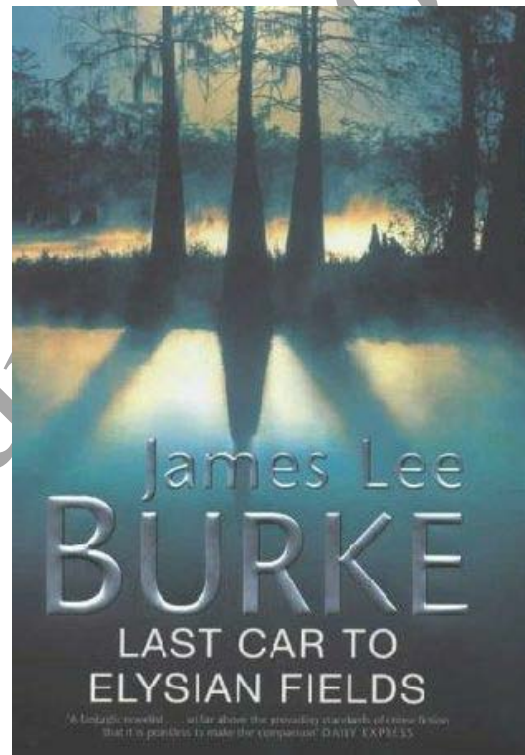
For those readers who thrive on a good challenge, husband-and-wife team Francis Biddle and Steve Zettler, otherwise known as **Nero Blanc**, have devised *Wrapped up in Crosswords*, a mystery in which crossword puzzles are integrated with the plot. (*Wrapped up in Crosswords*, NY, Berkley Prime Crime, 2004)



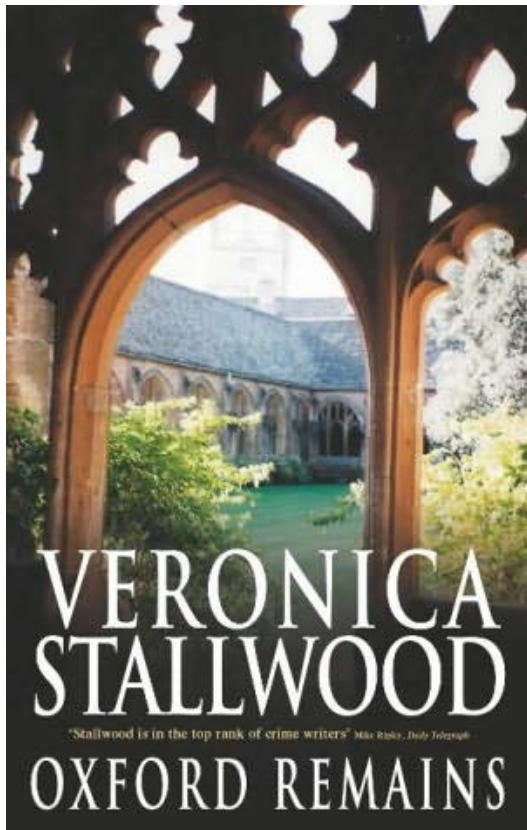
Our American Friends

Anna Pigeon is newly assigned as the first woman ranger in the Rocky Mountains National Park. On only her second day on the job she must deal with missing girls and a rural commune housing an ominous sect. An edge-of-your-seat thriller, with multiple plot twists amid a setting both beautiful and terrifying. *Hard Truth* is the latest in the Anna Pigeon series by noted writer **Nevada Barr**, herself a former park ranger (*Hard Truth*, NY, Putnam, 2005)

Robicheaux leaves his home in New Iberia and heads for New Orleans when he learns that an old friend, Catholic priest Jimmie Dolan, has been savagely assaulted. He juggles his inquiry into that case, with the murder of a liquor-store owner in New Iberia, and a cold case involving the disappearance, decades earlier, of a legendary blues musician. Offering full value for money, this gritty, multi-layered work is among Burke's best. (*Last Car to Elysian Fields*, NY, Simon & Schuster, 2003)



Last Car to Elysian Fields, by **James Lee Burke**, is set in Louisiana. Police officer and recovering alcoholic Dave



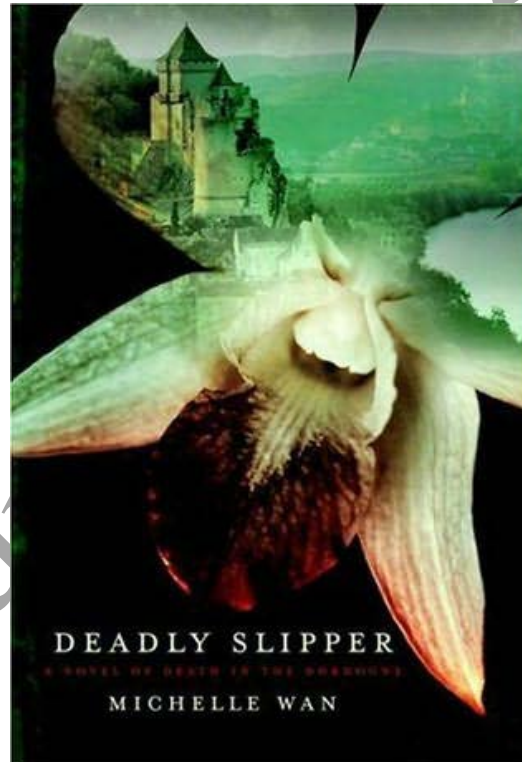
Best of British

Murder in Oxford: think Inspector Morse, right? Well, not entirely: among the many writers who have turned their hand to skullduggery in the City of Spires, **Veronica Stallwood** has made a name for herself, with more than a dozen such works to her credit. In *Oxford Remains*, her 11th in the series, protagonist Kate Ivory is called in when Daisy Tompkins, a second-year student at Bartlesmas College complains to the Dean about her tutor, Joseph Fechan, and the Dean feels she cannot objectively investigate a close friend. When Daisy turns up dead, suspicion naturally falls on Fechan, but in the world of mystery fiction things are never that simple, right? (*Oxford Remains*, London, Headline, 2004)

Canadian Capers

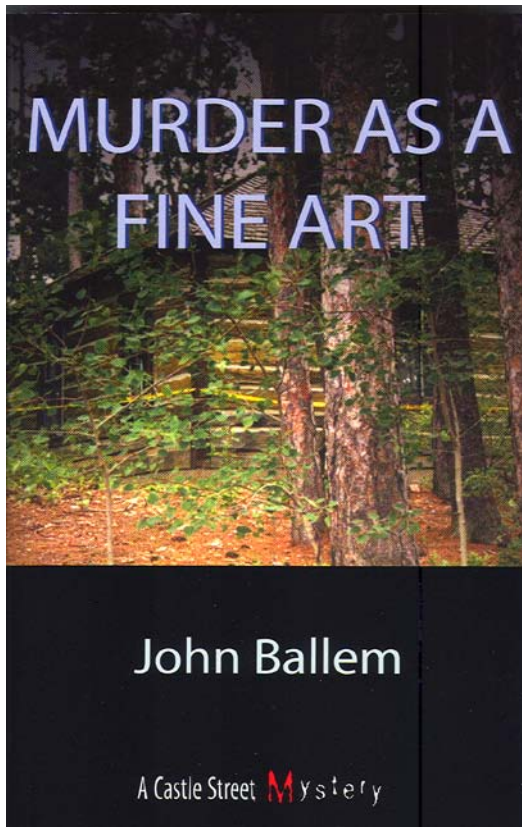
Set in Canada and France by Ontario author **Michelle Wan**, *Deadly Slipper* is

a tale of death in the Dordogne. In 1984, Mara Dunn's twin sister, Bedie, disappeared while on a hiking holiday in southwestern France with her boyfriend. Two decades later Mara has moved to France, determined to solve the mystery surrounding her sister's disappearance—her only clue a photo of some flowers. (*Deadly Slipper*, NY, Doubleday, 2005)



The Sherbrooke *Record*, Friday, December 16, 2005

Alberta writer and lawyer **John Ballem**'s eleventh novel is set in the Canadian Rockies, at the Banff Centre for the Arts. When playwright Alan Montrose is found dead, it is considered an accident; but when a second artist is burned to death in her studio, the other members of the colony come under serious scrutiny. An absorbing and cautionary tale that is as much about the human species as it is about a collection of artists and writers. (*Murder as a Fine Art*, Toronto, Castle Street Mysteries, 2002)



Happy Holidays....

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