

# Six for the Summer

## *Suspense and escapism*

### *Suspended Sentences*

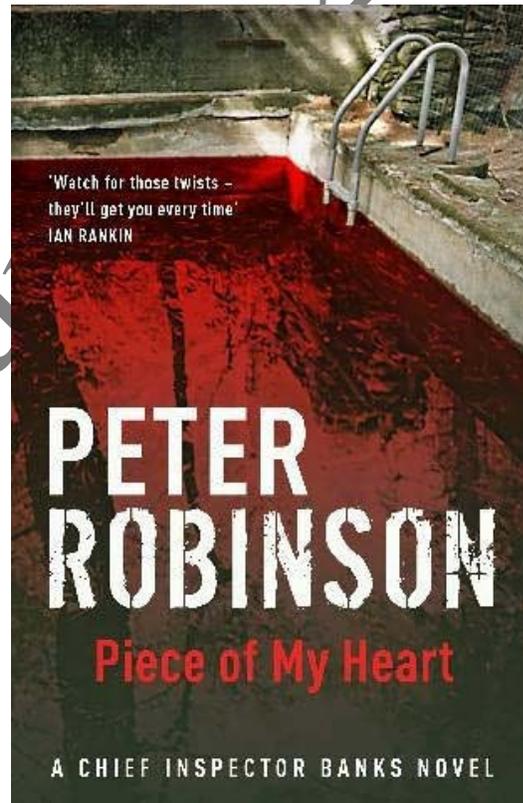
by Jim Napier

It's been a little late in coming, and more than once Old Man Winter has threatened to return for one last, malevolent foray, but finally we can say the worst is behind us: Summer is officially just around the corner. Time to dust off the golf clubs, break out the barbie, or head for the cottage, and enjoy the all-too-brief respite between blizzards that Canadians call Summer. And as we veg out in the back yard on a reclining lounge (*"No dear, I'm not asleep — just resting my eyes"*) here are a half dozen picks for an enjoyable literary escape, providing the best excuse not to get up and mow the lawn or prepare supper. After suffering the travails of Winter, we all deserve a break. (*"Be right with you, dear — I'm almost at the end of a chapter."*)

**Peter Robinson,**  
*Piece of My Heart*  
(McClelland & Stewart, 2006)

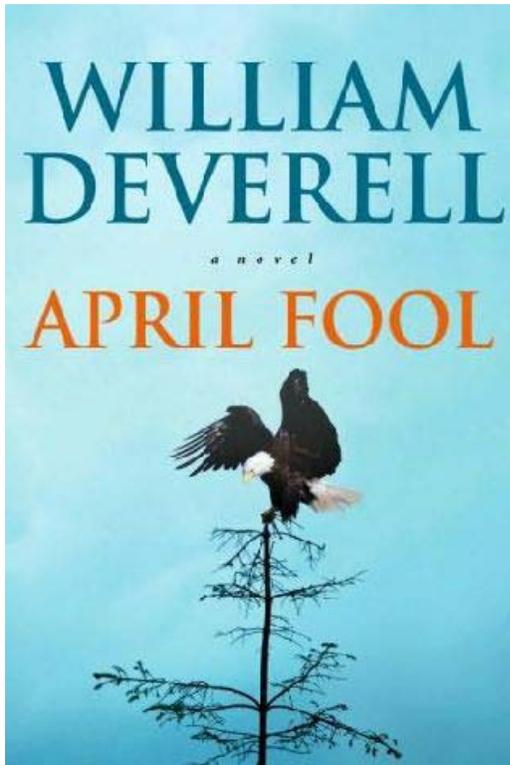
Banks is back. Toronto-based Peter Robinson's sixteenth novel featuring the Yorkshire-based Inspector Alan Banks finds him investigating the death of a freelance musical journalist whose research for a piece on an aging rock band has, it seems, opened up memories someone wants left untouched. Banks' investigation leads him to another killing, this one involving a young woman whose body was found inside a

sleeping bag at an outdoor rock festival some thirty-five years earlier. That case was never solved, and Banks' interest grows when he learns of a string of deaths not long afterward, culminating in



the original case officer's sudden demise. Banks sifts through the decades-old case files to learn the identity of the assailant, and determine whether a killer's reach extended from the muddy fields of a rock concert into the very heart of the Yorkshire Police. An example of the very best in current crime

fiction, *Piece of My Heart* was recently shortlisted for the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Crime Novel of 2007.



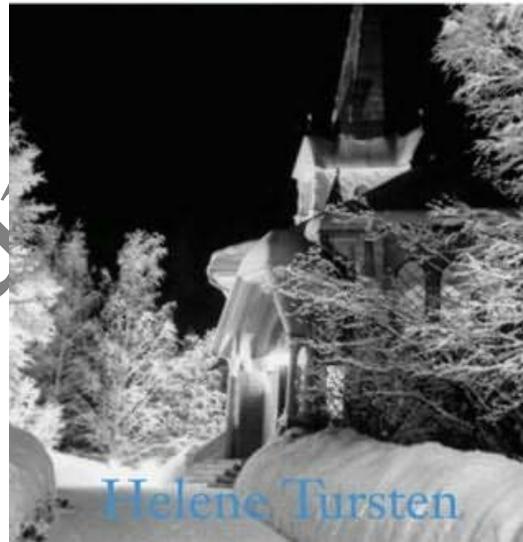
**William Deverell,**  
*April Fool*  
(McClelland & Stewart, 2005)

B.C.'s William Deverell has been a fixture in Canadian crime fiction for many years. The originator of the acclaimed CBC series *Street Legal*, he has published over a dozen mystery novels. One of my personal favourites is *April Fool*, published in 2005. Celebrated trial lawyer Arthur Beauchamp has finally retired from his legal practise and becomes a gentleman farmer on Garibaldi Island, just off the B.C. mainland. Old habits are hard to break, however. When one of his former clients, jewel thief Nick ("the Owl") Faloon is arrested and charged with the rape and murder of a well-known psychologist, Beauchamp, convinced that the diminutive felon is not capable

of such a crime, decides to come out of retirement and take up the case. His life is further complicated when his new wife, Margaret, joins an environmental group and lodges herself at the top of a huge Douglas Fir threatened by loggers. Can Beauchamp save the jewel thief, his wife, and the tree? Packed with crackling dialogue and sardonic wit, this is one of Deverell's finest, and the winner of the Arthur Ellis Award for Best Crime Novel of 2006.



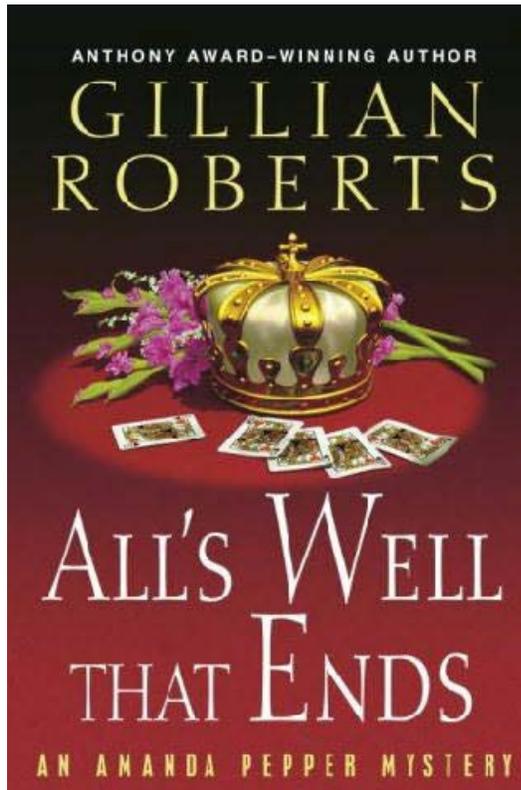
**The Glass Devil**



**Helene Tursten,**  
*The Glass Devil*  
(Soho Press, 2007)

Scandinavian crime writing is a genre unto itself, typically dark, gritty, with a definite edge, and utterly original. Think Ingmar Bergman meets *Silence of the Lambs*. Helene Tursten is one of the best of the current crop. When schoolteacher Jacob Schyttelius goes missing, Swedish Detective Inspector Irene Huss and her boss drive to his

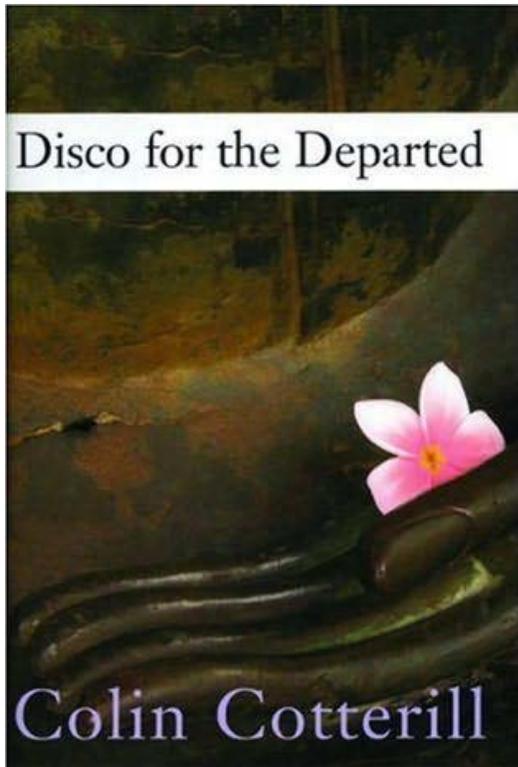
remote cottage. They are not prepared for what they find: he has been brutally murdered by two shotgun blasts, and on his computer screen is an inverted pentagram drawn in blood. At his parents' home an equally grim scene awaits them: the elderly couple have been shot in their bed, with a pentagram painted on their computer screen as well. Huff's only lead is the couple's distraught daughter living in London, so she heads for England to unravel a crime that may go well beyond the realm of earthly terrors. A well-crafted hard-boiled police procedural with a strong sense of place and a gripping plot.



***All's Well That Ends***  
**(Ballantine Books, 2007)**

Fast-paced action and graphic violence are not everyone's cuppa. Fortunately, for readers who prefer light-hearted escape and a challenging puzzle, there are traditional mystery novels, known in the trade as cozies. American author Gillian Roberts has enjoyed a high degree of success with her award-winning Amanda Pepper series. In this, the final novel in the series, Philadelphia English teacher Amanda Pepper learns that money has gone missing from school donations gathered to help the victims of a hurricane disaster. Are the rumours that students are gambling true? Meanwhile, her friend's Sasha's stepmother Phoebe has just been found dead, apparently a suicide. But with four ex-husbands, a hateful son, and a bevy of less-than-admiring "friends", suspicion abounds – especially when a second woman is found dead in Phoebe's house. A highly readable, entertaining whodunit in the traditional style.

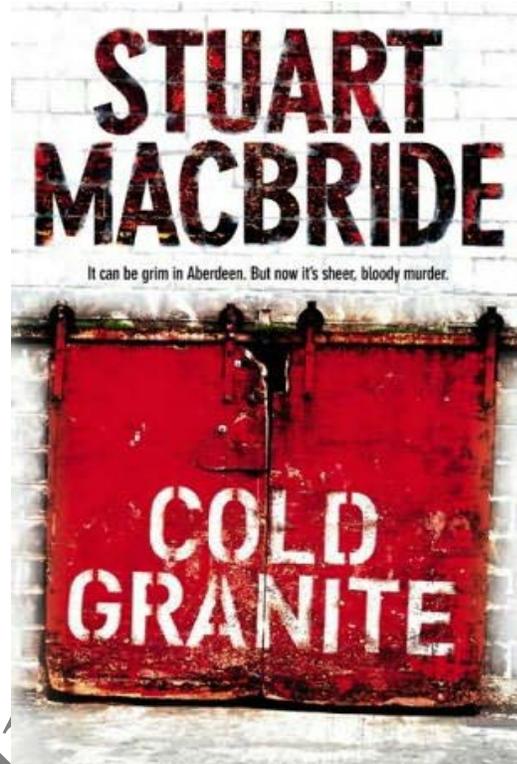
**Gillian Roberts,**



**Colin Cotterill,**  
*Disco for the Departed*  
(Knopf Canada, 2006)

Original tales set in exotic locations mark the novels of London-born author Colin Cotterill, who makes his home in northern Thailand. Seventy-three-year-old Laotian coroner Dr. Siri Paiboun and his assistant, Nurse Dtui, fly to a remote location in the mountains, where the Pathet Lao, the leaders of the current communist government, had hidden in caves decades ago during their insurgency. Preparations to mark the rise of the current regime have unearthed a body, a major embarrassment to the government. The coroner is ordered to identify the corpse and determine the cause of death quickly and discreetly. Is the body linked to the tumultuous politics of Laos, or some dark, Satanic ritual? Before his investigation is over, the good doctor will have to draw on his powers as a shaman to solve the puzzle.

An informed, literate, and captivating tale steeped in the history of a colourful country with a troubled past.



**Stuart MacBride,**  
*Cold Granite*  
(Harper Collins, 2005)

With three successful novels under his belt and a fourth coming soon, Scottish-born Stuart MacBride is quickly emerging as a fresh, new voice in the world of crime fiction. In *Cold Granite*, the second in this series, Detective-Sergeant Logan MacRae has just returned to work after a year of sick leave. His timing is less than perfect: the body of a strangled four-year-old has just been discovered, lying in a ditch. Worse, there's a serial killer stalking the good citizens of Aberdeen, and the media are having a field day. Logan must steer a careful path between his overbearing boss, DI Inch, and the chief pathologist, Isobel MacAlister, who happens to be an ex-girlfriend. In the

tradition of Ian Rankin and Val McDermid, but with a somewhat lighter touch, *Cold Granite* is a fine example of Tartan Noir. Gritty realism leavened with dark humour combine to make this an engrossing tale set in the bleak streets in northern Scotland. Highly recommended.

Jim Napier can be reached at  
[jim.napier52@gmail.com](mailto:jim.napier52@gmail.com)

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