

Nancy's Shelf

Important Note: All reviews reflected on this page are solely the expressed opinions of the reviewer. Our reviewers are not paid or given any incentive by any publisher.

August Reviews

Title: **Say Goodbye**

Classification: Fiction

Author: Lisa Gardner

Publisher: Bantam

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: A middle-of-the-night phone call is never good news, but this one is just puzzling. Although FBI Special Agent Kimberly Quincy has never heard of her, a just-arrested prostitute is claiming to be her informant and is demanding to see her to report that her friend, another prostitute working for the same pimp, is missing. When it becomes evident that not one but many women are unaccounted for, Quincy and her team find themselves pursuing a man who not only kills for pleasure, but insists that his victims select his next prey: it has to be someone they love. This is unquestionably Gardner's most gruesome, most riveting novel to date...not to be missed! One note, though: this is not for arachnophobes.

Title: **Condition**

Classification: Fiction

Author: Jennifer Haigh

Publisher: HarperCollins

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Haigh's insight is at work again in this, her third novel, as she follows the McKotch family through their troubled relationship to one another. Frank and Paulette are driven apart by their daughter Gwen's diagnosis of Turner's syndrome, but the book title comes from much more than that. Years of repression and deceit have created what son Billy calls the "System..." a way of compartmentalizing people and places constructed to protect the fragile family, a condition that enables them to maintain the facade of closeness until real emotion forces each of them to face truths long buried. A wonderful read.

Title: **Made in the U.S.A.**

Classification: Fiction

Author: Billie Letts

Publisher: Grand Central Publishing

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Lutie McFee and her brother Fate are living with their father's former girlfriend, Floy, when Floy drops dead at the local Walmart. Afraid of being taken to foster homes they steal Floy's car and head to Las Vegas to look for their father, convinced he's living the good life and that he will be thrilled to see them, despite the fact that he abandoned them. Once in Vegas, really ugly things happen to them BUT, conveniently, they are rescued by a disabled circus star. How coincidental that Lutie is a gymnast and that their rescuer takes them to the winter quarters of the circus where she discovers the high wire. Happy, happy, right? Unfortunately, no...just contrived and trite. What a shame that Letts, who made such a promising start with Where the Heart Is and Honk and Holler Opening Soon, has lost her touch with Shoot the Moon and this one.


Title: **How Perfect Is That**

Classification: Fiction

Author: Sarah Bird

Publisher: Alfred A Knopf

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: I'm still yawning after reading this ho-hum novel about poor Blythe Young, former caterer to the stars, former wife to millionaire Trey Dix; current drunk, druggie and all around loser. Please only buy this book if you're up for three hundred pages of failed attempts to produce sympathy for this completely unlikable character, or if you're a masochist. Otherwise, pass.

Title: Chasing Darkness

Classification: Fiction

Author: Robert Crais

Publisher: Simon & Schuster

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Several years ago Elvis Cole cleared Lionel Byrd of murder, so when Byrd's body is found with evidence linking him to that crime and others since, Cole determines to find out if Byrd could have been guilty. His investigation leads him to a sleazy city official, a deputy police chief and a cover-up...all threatening to keep him from discovering the truth in time to prevent more deaths. Crais continues to keep us turning pages in this solid entry in the series.

Title: Cleaner

Classification: Fiction

Author: Brett Battles

Publisher: Dell

Copyright: 2007

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: In this very good debut, Battles chooses an unlikely hero: Jonathan Quinn, who makes his living cleaning up after killers have done their work. Just back from vacation, Quinn is sent to tidy up the details following a fatal fire but what he finds convinces him that this is no ordinary job, a conviction strengthened when the killers come for him. Full of spies and counterspies, this is a solid beginning to this new [series](#).


Title: Collision

Classification: Fiction

Author: Jeff Abbott

Publisher: Dutton

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: In this unfortunate attempt, Abbott weighs in with a completely disorganized spy thriller, with misunderstood good guy and CIA killer Pilgrim pursued by ruthless businessman Sam Hector as Hector tries to manipulate international terrorism. Despite a trail of bloody bodies and chase scenes, this book manages to be boring as Pilgrim and his unlikely sidekick Ben slash and shoot their way through enemies on all fronts in their effort to save the world. Even a contrived surprise ending can't save this one.

July Reviews

Title: Nothing to Lose

Classification: Fiction

Author: Lee Child

Publisher: Delacorte Press

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Wow! Jack Reacher ([series](#)) is back, bigger and better than ever as he uncovers the secrets in a small Colorado town where strangers are definitely not welcome. When the cops are called in response to Reacher's request for coffee at the local diner he's determined to discover what really goes on in the metal recycling plant owned, as is everything else in the town, by businessman and apocalyptic preacher Jerry Thurman. In a heart-pounding race Reacher has to take on the entire town to prevent a disaster of astonishing proportion. I couldn't put this one down!

Title: I Shall Not Want

Classification: Mystery

Author: Julia Spencer-Fleming

Publisher: Thomas Dunne Books

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Clare Fergusson and Russ Van Alstyne are back in the first in this series since the death of Linda Van Alstyne, and Spencer-Fleming has allowed their relationship to dominate the book with enough sexual tension to classify this entry as a romantic suspense rather than a mystery. A definite distraction from what used to be a tightly-written series with a romantic subplot, and one I hope doesn't continue in subsequent

submissions. Here, Clare is caught up in the murders of undocumented aliens who are, unfortunately, so vaguely drawn that it's hard to keep track...since, after all, Russ is no longer married and the focus is on: when can Clare sleep with him? All in all, a letdown.

Title: Sugar Queen

Classification: Fiction

Author: Sarah Addison Allen

Publisher: Bantam

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Josey Cirrini is twenty-seven years old and still living with her cold, controlling mother. Her only solace is her secret closet stash of candy and romance novels which is where she's heading when she finds Della Lee Baker...a local waitress with a shady reputation who has apparently chosen Josey's closet as her hiding place. Why she's there, and how Josey's life begins to change as a result, are all part of another magical Allen read; this is one author who hasn't suffered sophomore slump with her second book! Don't miss it.

Title: Fearless Fourteen

Classification: Mystery

Author: Janet Evanovich

Publisher: St. Martin's Press

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: It just wouldn't be summer without the new Stephanie Plum ([series](#))...there's something about the Morelli/Ranger indecision that lends itself to a front porch and iced tea. This one is no exception, as Plum takes on temporary custody of a client's kid while helping Ranger protect a has-been singer and trying to keep Grandma Mazur from digging up Morelli's yard. (Well, she DOES think the nine million dollars is buried there). Add to the mix a kidnapping, a homemade cannon that shoots potatoes and a dog that eats underwear and Stephanie is pretty busy. No big guffaws, but lots of little giggles.

Title: Black Out

Classification: Fiction

Author: Lisa Unger

Publisher: Shaye Areheart Books

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Ophelia is living a lie. Married to the mysterious Gray, mother of young Victory, she appears to have the perfect life, except that there is a hole in her memory that prevents her from knowing whether she is a murderer. This should have been riveting, but underdeveloped characters and an anticlimactic ending make it more slog than page-turner. Unfortunate, since Unger is really a very good writer, but you'd hardly know it from this effort.

Title: Blind Rage

Classification: Fiction

Author: Terri Persons

Publisher: Doubleday

Copyright: 2008

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: In this ho-hum [sequel](#) to Persons' very good debut novel, FBI agent Bernadette Saint Clare returns with her second sight and a ghostly sidekick. Unfortunately, she continues to muddle, rather than clarify, the investigation into the drowning deaths of troubled college students and proves that her unusual ability to enter a killer's mind is less effective than good detective work. I hoped for more from this one, but was really disappointed.