

PASSPORT TO CRIME



Bookclub Guide



Dear Reader,

I'm thrilled to present Soho Crime's Passport to Crime book club guide. For 30 years, Soho has been publishing crime fiction set all over the world—great detective stories with plenty of armchair travel excitement and atmospheric details to help the reader feel like they have been immersed in a culture and place.

Now that we have more than 50 series in print, we decided to create this discussion guide to aid book clubs in traveling the world with Soho Crime. We hope you'll find all the inspiration your book club might need here to take you through a whole year's worth of reading excitement!

We've included 22 titles set all over the world, with discussion questions and thematic recipe suggestions for snacks and drinks. We hope it makes the book club fun and accessible for a wide range of readers, libraries, bookstores, and discussion groups.

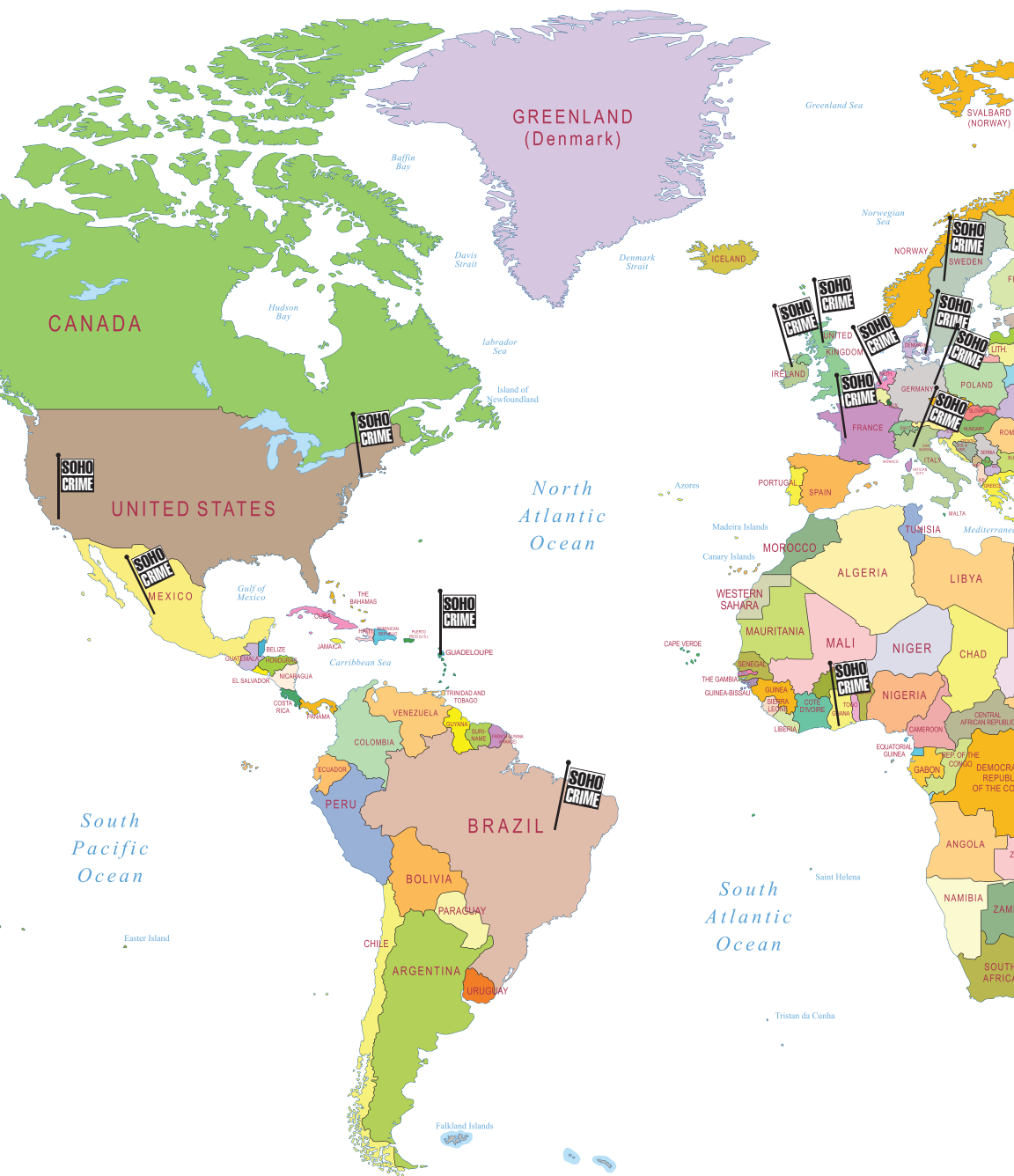
We hope you enjoy traveling the world with Soho Crime!

Juliet Grames
Associate Publisher

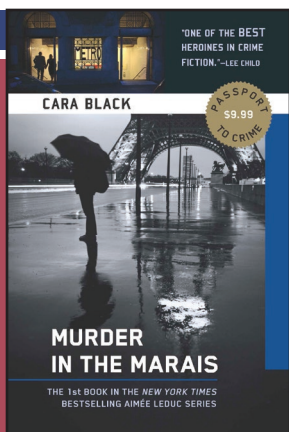
A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Juliet Grames". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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PARIS, FRANCE

MURDER IN THE MARAIS

Cara Black

While on a case in Marais, Paris's historic Jewish quarter, Aimée Leduc, a Parisian private investigator, finds herself caught in a dangerous web of ancient secrets and buried war crimes.

ISBN 978-1-56947-999-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Cara Black has dedicated this book to "the ghosts." Do you find her depiction of Paris haunted by its history?
2. Memory is a recurring theme. How is this worked into the narrative? How do time and memory affect the characters?
3. What sort of social commentary does the novel put forth? Do Cara Black's characters challenge prevailing views on certain ideas?
4. What does Aimée Leduc's array of disguises reveal about her?
5. How would you describe Aimée? How much is she an idealized character?



FOOD:

CLASSIC CROQUE MADAME

8 slices toasted brioche, each ½ inch thick
8 oz thinly sliced Black Forest ham
1 ½ cups béchamel sauce
1 cup grated Gruyère cheese
4 eggs

Preheat a broiler. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

Place the brioche slices on the prepared baking sheet. Top each of 4 slices with 2 oz ham. Top all slices with 3 tbsp of the béchamel sauce, spreading it evenly with a knife. Top all slices with 2 tbsp of the cheese.

Broil until the cheese is bubbling and light brown, 10 to 15 minutes.

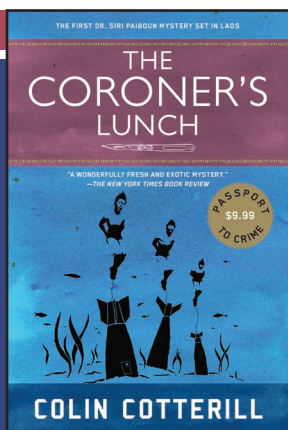
Meanwhile, in a nonstick fry pan over medium-low heat, cook the eggs sunny-side up. Stack the 4 slices without ham onto the ham-topped slices. Top each sandwich with 1 egg.

DRINK:

FRENCH 75

1 oz gin
½ oz simple syrup
½ oz fresh squeezed lemon juice
Brut Champagne or a dry sparkling white wine
Garnish: Lemon twist

Combine gin, simple syrup, and lemon juice in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake until well chilled and strain into a glass. Top with Champagne and garnish with a lemon twist to serve.



VIENTIANE, LAOS

THE CORONER'S LUNCH

Colin Cotterill

72-year-old Dr. Siri Paiboun, dragged out of retirement by the new Communist government to serve as the national coroner of Laos, appeases the spirits by solving their murders.

ISBN 978-1-61695-649-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does Colin Cotterill contribute to your understanding of Lao history and politics? Through the lens of Dr. Siri Paiboun, how does Cotterill provide sociopolitical commentary?
2. How does the novel break traditional mystery-storytelling norms?
3. A 72-year-old certainly makes for an intriguing detective of sorts—does age hinder Dr. Siri? How can one transcend age?
4. Besides Dr. Siri, does Cotterill craft effective characters? Beyond his physical attributes, how would you describe Mr. Geung? Nurse Dtui?



FOOD:

THAI LARB

Dressing:

½ cup fresh lime juice
2 tbsp fish sauce (such as nam pla or nuoc nam)

2 tbsp (packed) light brown sugar
½ tsp Sriracha sauce

Stir all ingredients in a small bowl to blend; set dressing aside.

Chicken:

1 ½ lb skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch pieces
½ cup coarsely chopped shallots
2 tbsp thinly sliced lemongrass

2 kaffir lime leaves, thinly sliced
1 small red Thai chili, thinly sliced
1 garlic clove, thinly sliced
2 tsp fish sauce (such as nam pla or nước mắm)

Combine first 8 chicken ingredients in a food processor. Drizzle 1 tbsp oil over and pulse until chicken is very finely chopped. Heat remaining 2 tbsp oil in a large heavy nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken mixture and sauté, breaking up into small pieces with the back of a spoon, until chicken is starting to turn golden brown and is cooked through, about 6 minutes.

Place 2 lettuce leaves on each plate. Top leaves with chicken mixture, dividing evenly. Garnish with cilantro and spoon reserved dressing over.

DRINK:

FRESH COCONUT JUICE

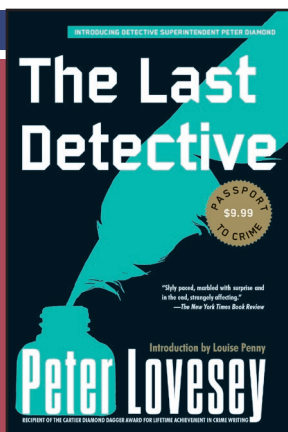
(with pieces if possible)

or

BEER LAO

(Laos's signature export)

1 tsp kosher salt
3 tbsp peanut oil or canola oil, divided
Cilantro tender leaves and stems
8 small iceberg lettuce or hearts of romaine leaves



BATH, ENGLAND

THE LAST DETECTIVE

Peter Lovesey

When a woman's body is found floating in a reservoir, Detective Superintendent Peter Diamond must both track down the killer and locate two stolen Jane Austen letters.

ISBN 978-1-61695-530-4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How is Peter Diamond made out to be “the last detective?”
2. Does Diamond have an anger problem? How are rage and unbridled emotion worked into the narrative as a recurring theme?
3. How does the novel provide commentary on the justice system?
4. On p. 85, Lovesey writes that “any piece of literature has a life of its own, complete and independent of its author.” Does this feel true to the novel itself? Does your work take a life of its own?



FOOD:

SPINACH HERB QUICHE

1 (9-inch) refrigerated rolled pie crust
4 large eggs
1 ½ cups half-and-half
1 tsp ground nutmeg
¼ tsp cayenne pepper

6 cups baby spinach
6 oz Gruyère cheese, shredded
¾ cup fresh flat-leaf parsley, chopped
¼ cup chopped chives
Salad, for serving

Heat oven to 425°F. Unroll pie crust and fit into bottom and up the sides of a 9-inch tart pan with a removable bottom; fold excess into and around sides of pan. Bake until lightly golden, 10 to 12 minutes.

In large bowl, whisk together eggs, half-and-half, nutmeg, and cayenne. Stir in spinach, cheese, parsley, and chives.

Lower oven to 375°F. Pour egg mixture into the crust. Bake until set and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean, 40 to 45 minutes. Serve warm or at room temperature with salad.

DRINK:

NEGUS

1 lemon
2 tbsp sugar
1 bottle ruby port
Water

Pare off the yellow rind of one lemon in thin strips, avoiding any of the white pith, if possible. Put it into a double boiler with lemon juice, the sugar, and the port. Heat, stirring until sugar is dissolved. When hot, add 1 cup boiling water and strain into a preheated pitcher. Pour into glasses or cups with or without a flick of nutmeg.

CRASHED

Timothy Hallinan

Los Angeles burglar Junior Bender is blackmailed into finding out who's sabotaging the blue film set of one of the city's most feared crime bosses, Trey Annunziato.

ISBN 978-1-61695-276-1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean to be lawful and bad? Unlawful and good? Are these mutually exclusive?
2. What are Junior's faults? Despite his educational background and less-than-lawful occupation, is he an idealized character? Does he more or less fit the concept of the "hero?"
3. Describe Junior's relationships with his "friends" and associates. What is his relationship with his family? How are Junior's relationships shaped by his chosen occupation?
4. How does the novel function as social commentary on Hollywood/show business?
5. How do traditional and non-traditional gender roles play out?
6. How is race worked into the story? Examples include Trey and Ji Ming, as well as descriptions of Los Angeles' ethnic and suburban neighborhoods.



FOOD:

KIMCHI & AVOCADO QUESADILLAS

8 flour tortillas, 7–8 inches in diameter
1 jar (14 oz) kimchi, drained and chopped
2 cups shredded jack cheese

2 avocados, thinly sliced
1 tbsp toasted sesame oil
2 tbsp seasoned rice vinegar
1 tsp toasted sesame seeds
Cilantro leaves

Top 4 tortillas evenly with kimchi, then with cheese, avocados, and remaining tortillas.

Mix oil, vinegar, and sesame seeds in a small bowl; set aside.

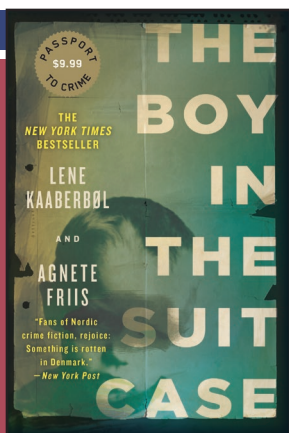
Heat a 12-inch frying pan over medium-high heat. Toast each quesadilla until lightly browned and cheese has melted, 1 to 2 minutes per side. Slice each quesadilla into wedges, sprinkle with cilantro, and serve with sesame dipping sauce.

DRINK:

GRIFFITH

1 oz TRU organic garden vodka
1 oz GRAND POPPY organic bitter liqueur
1 oz freshly squeezed local lemons
1 oz simple syrup (half sugar, half water)
2–3 slices fresh local cucumbers

Muddle cucumbers, add rest and shake with ice. Strain into martini glass and garnish with a cucumber ribbon.



COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

THE BOY IN THE SUITCASE

Lene Kaaberbøl & Agnete Friis

Danish Red Cross nurse Nina Borg finds herself in grave danger when a favor for an estranged friend leads her to a kidnapped 3-year-old boy in a Copenhagen train station locker.

ISBN 978-1-61695-491-8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Guilt, regret, and compulsiveness are persuasive themes throughout the story. What drives Nina?
2. How do sex and gender factor into the novel's power dynamics?
3. Does the novel provide social commentary on immigration? If so, how?
4. How did the perspectives of the criminals affect your understanding of the young boy's abduction?
5. Rather than traditional chapters, sections are marked by months and periods of time noted in hours and minutes. How does this style of time demarcation contribute to the story?



FOOD:

FRIKADELLER SMØRREBRØD

9 oz finely ground pork
9 oz finely ground veal
1 medium onion, ground finely along with the meat
1 large egg
1 ½ cup soda water
1 tsp salt

3 tbsp flour (rye or wheat)
A pinch or two of ground allspice
Freshly ground pepper to taste
Butter for frying

Optional topping: agurkesalat or dill pickles

DRINK:

RUBY-RED PUNCH

½ cup cranberry juice cocktail	½ cup raspberry sherbet
¾ cup lemon juice	2 cups ginger ale
¼ cup sugar	

or

ALBANI GIRAF GOLD

Combine all the ingredients (except the butter) in a bowl. The mixture should be quite moist and soft. Place a non-stick frying pan over medium-high heat, then melt a couple of table spoons of butter in the frying pan. The meatballs will be fried in batches. Using a pair of spoons, form the meatballs and place them, one by one, in the hot frying pan. Don't put too many frikadeller in the pan at once, or they will boil instead of fry! The frikadeller should not touch. Cook the meatballs for about 3 minutes, then flip gently. Cook for 3 minutes more, then remove the frikadeller to a separate platter. Add more butter and fry another batch. Once you are ready for smørrebrød, butter a piece of dark Danish rye bread, slather it with Dijon mustard, place a couple of sliced meatballs on the mustard, and then finish with an appropriate topping (for instance, agurkesalat or even dill pickles).



DETECTIVE INSPECTOR HUSS

Helene Tursten

When high-profile Richard Von Knecht falls to his death from his apartment window, Inspector Irene Huss must solve the murder while navigating family secrets and their unexpected connection to the Hell's Angels.

ISBN 978-1-61695-111-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Huss's personal life—her family, her hobbies, her dog, Sammy—are a big part of this novel. Do you find the humanization of the detective in matters unrelated to the case interesting, distracting, or both?
2. Why is Huss the only one who can solve this case? What makes her more capable than her colleagues?
3. What is the narrative saying about celebrity life, and how is it juxtaposed with gangs like the Hell's Angels? How are they intertwined?
4. What narrative purpose do drugs serve in this story? How are they used to unify the two mysteries and what do they say about drug use in society as a whole?



FOOD:

SWISS STEAK

¼ cup all-purpose flour
½ tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper
2 lb beef top round steak, cut into
1-inch pieces

2 tbsp canola oil
1 medium onion, thinly sliced
2 cups water
2 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
Optional: 1 ½ cups gravy

Preheat oven to 325°. In a large resealable plastic bag, combine flour, salt and pepper. Add steak, a few pieces at a time and shake to coat. Remove meat from bag and pound with a mallet to tenderize. In an oven-safe Dutch oven, brown steak in oil on both sides. Arrange onion slices between layers of meat. Add water and Worcestershire sauce. Cover and bake 2 to 2 ½ hours or until meat is very tender. Remove to a serving platter and keep warm. In a small bowl, combine flour, salt, pepper and broth until smooth; stir into pan juices. Bring to a boil over medium heat; cook and stir 2 minutes or until thickened. Serve steak and gravy with noodles or mashed potatoes if desired.

DRINK:

SINGLE-SHOT ESPRESSO

(Next best thing, if no espresso maker is available: French press, using a medium-grind dark roast.)

or

KIRSCHWASSER

(a liqueur distilled from cherries, drunk neat)

MURDER AT CAPE THREE POINTS

Kwei Quartey

Detective Inspector Darko Dawson investigates the ritualistic murder of a wealthy couple on Ghana's gorgeous coast, disputed tribal lands where oil has been discovered.

ISBN 978-1-61695-483-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How do Dawson's allegiances to his family and to his work relate? To what extent does he appear to be willing to place work above family? What sacrifices is he forced to make because of his job?
2. Kwei Quartey describes the Cape Three Points area as a place where modern capitalism is destroying a traditional way of life. This situation is not unique to Ghana—discuss equivalent situations in other countries. Do you believe a country's federal government should step in to protect tribal lifestyles?
3. What is the significance of the pocketwatch found in Mr. Smith-Aidoo's mouth?
4. In Chapter 41, Dawson states that "it's all about family" and that "in the end, it's all that really matters." What evidence is there in the text for or against this claim?



FOOD:

HKATENKWAN (Groundnut Stew)

1 chicken, cut into pieces
1 tbsp peanut oil
2 hot chilies, crushed (or 1 tsp cayenne)
1-inch piece of ginger
1 cup onion, well chopped

1 medium eggplant, peeled and cubed
 $\frac{1}{2}$ onion
 $\frac{2}{3}$ cup peanut butter
2 cups okra
2 tbsp tomato paste
2 tsp salt

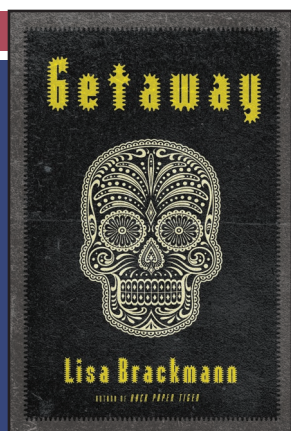
Boil chicken with ginger and onion half, using about 2 cups water.

In a separate large pot, fry tomato paste in the oil over low heat for 5 minutes. Add chopped onions and tomatoes to paste, stirring occasionally until onions are clear. Remove partially-cooked chicken pieces and put them, along with half the broth, in the large pot. Add peanut butter, salt, and peppers. Cook for 5 minutes before stirring in eggplant and okra. Continue cooking until the chicken and vegetables are tender. Add more broth as needed to maintain thick stew consistency.

DRINK:

AKPETESHIE

(a liqueur distilled from cherries, drunk neat)



PUERTO VALLARTA, MEXICO

GETAWAY

Lisa Brackmann

An innocent-seeming encounter on Michelle Mason's beach vacation to Puerto Vallarta drags her into a covert operation involving drug runners, goons, and venture capitalists.

ISBN 978-1-61695-071-2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Michelle Mason was once a well-kept upper-class housewife; now we see her having to use her wits to survive. Were you impressed by Michelle's bravery and decision-making over the course of the stressful plot? Were there times when you would not have done what she did?
2. How does Michelle's impending poverty affect her response to Gary's offer to pay her for spying on Danny? Is poverty inherently demoralizing? Why or why not? How are the functions of poverty and the drug trade intertwined?
3. When Michelle and Danny accidentally swap phones, it seems innocuous enough, but when a smartphone can be used to pinpoint a person's location via GPS, is an iPhone an extension of your person? What is the effect on our society of electronic surveillance in our everyday life?
4. This book plays with conventional suspense/thriller tropes. What do these tropes suggest about American culture?—i.e., how is Michelle's adventure like and *not* like a "beach book"?



FOOD:

ENCHILADAS SUIZAS

2 tbsp butter	12 8-inch corn tortillas	2 cups shredded, cooked chicken
¼ tsp salt	½ cup sliced green olives	1 cup Cheddar cheese, shredded
1 cup heavy cream	1 ½ cups chicken broth	1 clove garlic, minced
¾ cup chopped onion	Canola oil for frying	1 cup Monterey Jack cheese, shredded
1 dash cumin, ground	1 pint cherry tomatoes	
¼ cup chopped green onion	1 cup green chili peppers, chopped	
2 tbsp all-purpose flour		

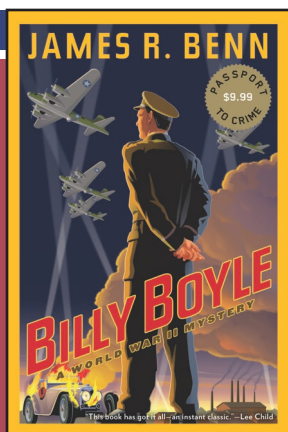
To prepare salsa verde, melt butter in saucepan over medium heat. Sauté onion until soft. Stir in flour. Add broth, chilies, garlic, salt, and cumin. Simmer about 15 minutes to blend, then set aside. Preheat oven to 350°F. In heavy skillet, lightly fry tortillas in shallow oil. Combine cheeses, keeping ½ cup aside for topping. Dip each tortilla in salsa verde(both sides). Place 2 heaping tbsp chicken and about 2 tbsp cheese down the center of each. Roll and place seam side down in shallow dish. Spoon additional salsa verde over them and then cover evenly with heavy cream. Sprinkle with remaining ½ cup cheese mixture and with green onions. Bake uncovered in preheated oven for 20 minutes. Serve immediately, garnished with olives, cherry tomatoes, and additional salsa on the side.

DRINK:

LOLA'S HORCHATA

1 cup uncooked white rice	½ tbsp ground cinnamon
½ tbsp vanilla extract	½ cup milk
5 cups water	¾ cup white sugar

Blend rice and water until rice just begins to break up, about a minute. Let rice and water stand at room temperature for a minimum of 3 hours. Strain the rice water into a pitcher and discard the rice. Stir the milk, vanilla, cinnamon, and sugar into the rice water. Chill and stir before serving over ice.



LONDON, ENGLAND

BILLY BOYLE

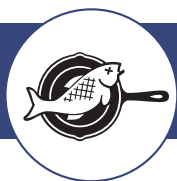
James R. Benn

At the outset of WWII, 22-year-old Irish American cop Billy Boyle is relieved when his mother wrangles him a job with a relative, but that job turns out to be personal investigator for US General Dwight D. Eisenhower, which brings Billy to overseas Europe.

ISBN 978-1-61695-355-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. WWII was an era of so much strife. What do you think are the pros and cons of using the war as a backdrop for a murder mystery? Has James Benn used the period effectively as a setting?
2. Humor plays a large part of the narrative. How is Billy's wit different from that of the British and Norwegian men and women he encounters? What role does it play in Billy's characterization?
3. Talk about the relationship between Billy and Kaz and how it progresses. Are they good partners or foils for each other?
4. What does the story have in common with pulp novels of the era in which it is set?



FOOD:

FISH AND CHIPS

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1 ½ lb fresh cod | 2 tbsp malt vinegar |
| 2 cups flour, divided | 1 tbsp honey |
| 1 ½ tsp baking soda | ¼ cup beer (lager or dark ale) |
| ½ tsp salt | 2 tbsp sweet pickle juice |
| ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper | 1 ½ cups lemon/lime seltzer |

Cut cod filets into strips about 8-10 inches long and about 2 inches around. Roll the cod strips in ½ cup of flour in a medium bowl. Shake off excess and set aside.

In a medium to large bowl, place 1 ½ cups of flour, baking soda, salt, pepper, and vinegar. Add honey, beer, and pickle juice. Beat with a whisk as you pour in lemon/lime seltzer water until the batter is the consistency of a light pancake batter. Set aside.

Slice 2 russet potatoes into thick fries or wedges, leaving skin on. Roll the cut potatoes on paper towels until dry.

Fill a cast iron skillet ¾ full with Canola oil. Bring the oil to 350°F.

Dip the floured cod into the batter with tongs, then gently lay the battered fish into the hot oil. Cook on one side, then flip using tongs; about 4-5 minutes total. As the fish is done cooking, place on a sheet pan and keep warm in the oven. Drop in the fries and cook until crisp. Place on the pan with fish and salt as they come out of the oil. Cook the second batch of fries and place with the rest on the pan.

DRINK:

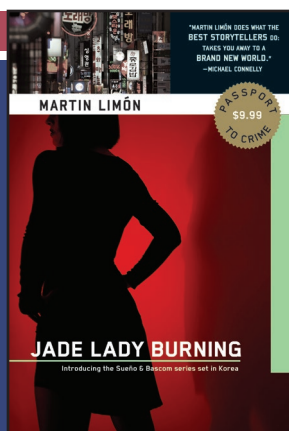
BLACK TEA WITH MILK

(not cream!)

or

GUINNESS

- 2 russet potatoes
- Canola oil for frying



SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA

JADE LADY BURNING

Martin Limón

Two GIs in Korea must solve the brutal, ritualistic murder of a Korean prostitute before the press finds out the murderer might be an American.

ISBN 978-1-61695-090-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Martin Limón served in the US Army in Korea, just like his character George Sueño. How autobiographical do you think his story is? Do you find his depiction of Army life convincing?
2. What classic noir devices does Limón use in the story and why?
3. How are women viewed and treated in the narrative, and how do the detectives contribute to or oppose this?
4. The relationship between the businesses and GIs in Itaewon is mutually beneficial, but in what ways are the Koreans at odds with the Americans? How does this contribute to the lack of investigation on the part of the KNP into the young woman's murder?
5. What role do corruption and vice play in the novel, and why is Itaewon the perfect setting for this particular murder and conspiracy?



FOOD:

KIMCHI UDON (a popular street food in Korea)

7 oz Udon noodle
5 oz firm tofu, cubed
1 cup kimchi, chopped + 3–4 tbsp kimchi juice
2 ½ cups chicken broth
1 tbsp soy sauce
1 tbsp rice vinegar
2 soft-boiled eggs

2 tsp toasted sesame oil
1 tbsp finely chopped green spring onion
1 tsp toasted sesame seeds

Optional: 1 tbsp Sriracha hot sauce

In a medium pot, bring chicken broth to a boil over medium heat.

Add kimchi and kimchi juice into the pot, then add soy sauce and rice vinegar to taste. Add cubed tofu and Udon noodles into the pot and let them cook for 3–5 minutes. Stir gently. Add toasted sesame oil and turn off the heat. Serve each bowl with a soft-boiled egg and sprinkle with finely chopped green spring onion, sesame seeds and a drizzle of sesame oil. Add Sriracha if you like, and enjoy!

DRINK:

BANANA MILK

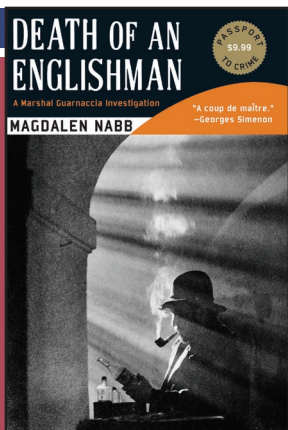
1 ripe banana 2 tsp sugar
1 cup of milk ½ tsp vanilla

*Blend together and sprinkle with cinnamon.
Serves 2.*

or

SOJU

(a Korean alcoholic beverage
made from rice, wheat, or barley)



FLORENCE, ITALY

DEATH OF AN ENGLISHMAN

Magdalen Nabb

Marshal Guarnaccia, a quiet but intelligent officer of the law, must solve the rare murder of an Englishman in Florence, Italy.

ISBN 978-1-61695-299-0

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How is the marshal different from typical detective protagonists? How does this contribute to the overall feeling of the small-town murder narrative?
2. What does the story tell us about language, its barriers, and the ways in which we communicate across languages and cultures?
3. How does the setting of Florence in December enhance the narrative and unfolding of the mystery?
4. What role do food and drink play? How are they used as character devices?



FOOD:

RIBOLLITA SOUP

3 garlic cloves, peeled and smashed
1 small onion, peeled and roughly chopped
1 carrot, peeled and chopped
1 celery stalk, chopped
4 oz pancetta or ham, chopped
½ cup olive oil

One 15-oz can whole peeled tomatoes
Three 15-oz cans cannellini or great northern beans, drained and rinsed
2 cups chicken broth
1 sprig fresh rosemary
1 bunch kale, roughly chopped
½ cup toasted bread crumbs
Grated parmesan

In a large pot over medium heat, sauté the garlic cloves, onion, carrot, celery stalk, pancetta, in 2 tbsp of olive oil for 5 minutes. Add the can of peeled tomatoes and their juices, along with the cannellini, chicken broth, and rosemary. Simmer, covered, until the beans break apart, about an hour. Add kale and cook for 5 to 7 minutes more. Stir in bread crumbs or small chunks of thick-crusted bread and serve, drizzled with olive oil and sprinkled with grated parmesan.

DRINK:

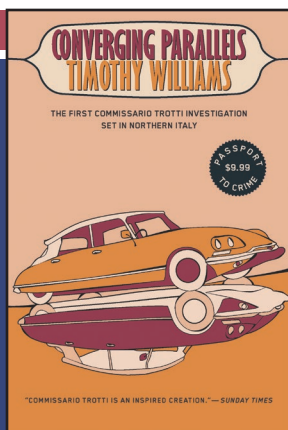
AMERICANO

(two shots of espresso with equal parts hot water.)

or

GRAPPA

(a grape-based pomace brandy, drunk straight and occasionally with coffee.)



ITALY

CONVERGING PARALLELS

Timothy Williams

In this CWA Award-winning debut, set in an unnamed city in Northern Italy in 1978, Commissario Piero Trotti must solve both a local murder and his own goddaughter's kidnapping.

ISBN 978-1-61695-460-4

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Commissario Trotti is asked to solve a murder without alerting his fellow police. How does he go about solving the case without the resources afforded him by the department? What are the consequences of doing so?
2. What are the “converging parallels” the title refers to?
3. How has the town remained so idyllic compared to other towns with ugly suburbs, pollution, and poverty? What role does local politics play, and what will they do to maintain the status quo?
4. Does a lack of crime make it easier to commit crimes? Did the witnesses to the kidnapping let it happen because they were oblivious? What effect does this have on the Commissario's investigation?
5. “A quiet city at all costs, Trotti, that's what I want. And it is why I'm having second thoughts about your usefulness here.” What does Leonardelli mean when he says this to Trotti after the girl is found? How does this relate to the underlying corruption the town is experiencing?



FOOD:

QUATTRO STAGIONI PIZZA (Four seasons pizza)

Dough:
3 ¾ cups flour

1 ½ tsp salt
1 ½ cups warm water

1 tbsp sugar
1 packet yeast

Whisk flour and salt together. Make a well and add warm water, sugar and yeast. When foamy, mix in 3 tbsp olive oil; knead until smooth, 5 minutes. Brush with olive oil, cover in a bowl and let rise until doubled, about 1 hour 30 minutes. Divide into two 1-pound balls. Makes two pizzas.

Pizza:
1 lb dough
½ cup crushed San Marzano tomatoes
Dried oregano

Salt and pepper
Olive oil
½ lb diced mozzarella
Torn basil

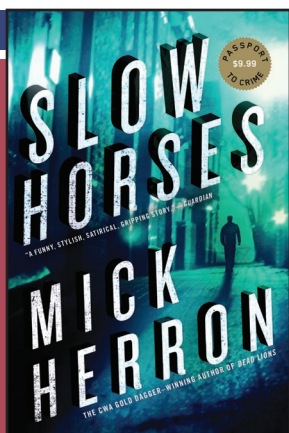
Place a pizza stone or inverted baking sheet on the lowest oven rack and preheat to 500°F. Stretch dough on a floured pizza peel, large wooden cutting board or parchment paper. Top with crushed tomatoes, dried oregano, salt, pepper and olive oil; bake five minutes or until slightly golden at 500°F. Sprinkle with mozzarella, basil, and one topping for each quarter of the pie: one quarter olives, one quarter artichoke hearts, one quarter ham, one quarter mushrooms. Slide the pizza (with the parchment paper, if using) onto the stone or baking sheet. Bake again until golden, about 15 minutes.

DRINK:

BAROLO RED WINE

Olive oil

½ cup chopped artichoke hearts
½ cup olives
½ cup sliced ham, cut into small pieces
½ cup sautéed sliced mushrooms



LONDON, ENGLAND

SLOW HORSES

Mick Herron

River Cartwright, exiled to Slough House—London's dumping ground for failed MI5 spies—sees an opportunity to redeem himself when terrorists kidnap a young man.

ISBN 978-1-61695-416-1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What memories does River's chase in the opening scene trigger? Some of these memories are significant while others—such as his recalling the Hogwarts Express platform number—are less important. Which memories are most relevant after reading further into the book?
2. It's explicitly stated that Slough House is not in Slough and it's not a house. Why is it called Slough House?
3. Do you perceive Sid and River's relationship to be a father-daughter, brother-sister, workplace, or friend relationship? Why?
4. What about Ho causes others to mistrust him the most? Which other characters does River mistrust? Why?
5. How does the role of Slough House change throughout the book? How might Lamb's possession of it change its role?



FOOD:

MUSHROOM & HERB OMELET

2 large eggs
Salt and pepper, to taste
1 tsp chopped fresh parsley
2 oz sliced mushrooms
1 tsp chopped fresh tarragon

1 crushed garlic clove
1 tsp snipped fresh chives
½ oz unsalted butter
1 tbsp water

Crack eggs into bowl and add parsley, tarragon, chives, water and pepper to taste. Beat enough to bake eggs. Set aside while preparing mushrooms.

Heat an omelet pan. Add sliced mushrooms and garlic, cook gently for 3–4 minutes or until mushrooms have softened and released juices, and turn up the heat a little and continue cooking for 1 minute or until juices have evaporated. Set aside in small bowl.

Melt butter to coat bottom of the pan. Pour in the egg and herb mixture. Cook for about 1 minute, stirring gently and pulling the cooked egg toward the center. When the omelet holds together, stop stirring and cook until underside is brown (about 30 seconds).

Scatter mushrooms along the middle of the omelet and fold both sides inward. Serve immediately.

DRINK:

LONDON FOG

16 oz milk
1 bag Earl Grey tea

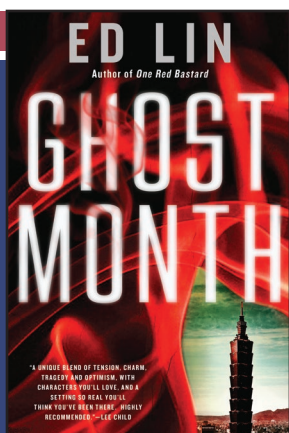
1 shot vanilla syrup
½ cup boiling water

or

LONDON COCKTAIL

2 oz gin
2 dashes orange
bitters

½ tsp simple syrup
½ tsp maraschino
liqueur



TAIPEI, TAIWAN

GHOST MONTH

Ed Lin

When his high school sweetheart is murdered, Jing-nan, who runs a food stall in the famed Taipei night markets, investigates her death during Taiwan's most superstitious month.

ISBN 978-1-61695-541-0

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Ed Lin suggests a typical Taiwanese dish, *zongzi*, steamed sticky rice mixed with pork, yam, taro, mushroom, and egg, as a metaphor for Taiwan and its many distinct ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and racial traditions. Would you agree? Based on the author's depiction of Taiwanese history, how much do you think it has in common with the history of the Americas, their colonization and racial diversity?
2. Food plays an enormous role in this book. Which of the dishes Jing-nan mentions sound most and least appetizing to you?
3. How do the characters of Jing-nan (a Taiwan-born man who wants to move to America), Frankie the Cat (a mainland Chinese-born man who has been labeled both a nationalist and a traitor), and Dwayne (an aboriginal man who left his tribe to live in Taipei) provide different commentaries on assimilation? Which of these characters do you think is satisfied with the choices he's made? Which has regrets?
4. Are Jing-nan's final decisions regarding Julia understandable? Why?



FOOD:

FATTY MINCED PORK ON RICE (Lu Rou Fan)

600g pork, cut into tiny cubes
3 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp dark soya sauce
3 tsp of sugar
4 shallots, minced
5 cloves garlic, minced
5 eggs, hard-boiled

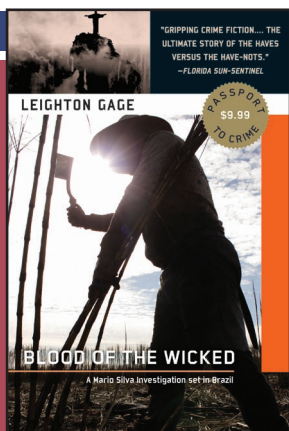
3 tbsp shao hsing (rice) wine
2 tbsp dried shrimps, soaked until soft and coarsely chopped
2 star anise
½ tsp five-spice powder
Cooked rice

Heat a wok until hot. Add the pork cubes and dry-fry until water has evaporated and oil oozes out. Add in the minced garlic and minced shallots. Continue to stir-fry until fragrant. Add in the coarsely chopped dried shrimps. Then add in five-spice powder and star anise. Continue to stir-fry. Add in hot water to cover the pork pieces. Add in half the amount of shao hsing wine. Add in the rock sugar, soy sauce and dark soya sauce. Add in the hard-boiled eggs to the pork and gravy. Turn the eggs to ensure they are evenly coloured. Allow to simmer for about 20 minutes or until the gravy is almost dry. Serves 4 to 5.

DRINK:

TAIWAN DUCK FART

½ oz blended American whisky
½ oz coffee liqueur
⅓ oz Irish cream liqueur



BRASILIA, BRAZIL

BLOOD OF THE WICKED

Leighton Gage

Mario Silva is dispatched to find a bishop's killer and—assisted by his nephew, Hector Costa—must battle the state police and a corrupt judiciary in order to solve the murder and several brutal killings that follow.

ISBN 978-1-61695-180-1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Both the murders of Dom Felipe and those of the agricultural worker, his wife, and his two children in Cascatas do Pontal are comparable in their brutal nature and the good-natured dispositions of the victims. How do the responses to these murders differ, and why?
2. Mario Silva has many close connections to the case throughout. What aspects of Silva's search for Dom Felipe's killer become personal for him? Which had the most drastic effects on Silva as a detective?
3. What negative effects do Mario Silva's presence and actions have on those around him? What aspects of his disposition, occupation, and situation most unnerve or hurt them?
4. There are direct references to injustices in Brazil specifically. What statements can be perceived to be aimed toward society as a whole and which are specific to Brazil?
5. On the final page of the novel, Silva asks Father Francisco, "How many rich men in this country actually wind up being convicted of a crime?" How is this question answered throughout the book? What other injustices are revealed throughout the book?



FOOD:

SMOKED HAM & FIG SALAD

10 thin slices of smoked ham (Presunto)
3 basil leaves chopped
1 piece of fresh mozzarella sliced thinly
2 tbsp olive oil

4 fresh figs cut into halves
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
1 bunch of arugula chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

In a platter, place fresh mozzarella slices with smoked ham on top. Place fresh figs, arugula, and basil leaves on plate. Drizzle olive oil, balsamic vinegar, and salt and pepper, to taste, over plate.

DRINK:

VITAMINA DE ABACATE

½ large avocado (or 1 small avocado)
1 tbsp white sugar
1 cup cold milk
Juice from half a lemon or lime

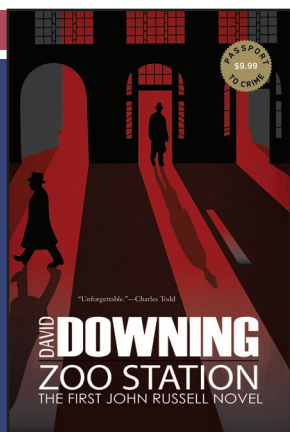
Blend all ingredients together. Mix well for 1 to 2 minutes. If too thick, add more milk.

or

CACHAÇA COCKTAIL

2 oz Leblon Chachaça
.75 oz Cream
.75 oz Lime juice
1 Egg white
.75 oz Earl Grey tea syrup (1 part sugar, 1 part brewed Earl Grey tea)

.5 oz Giffard Vanille de Madagascar Liqueur
Fever Tree club soda



BERLIN, GERMANY

ZOO STATION

David Downing

Anglo-American journalist John Russell is approached by an acquaintance from his old Communist days to do an espionage job for the Soviets and reluctantly accepts the offer.

ISBN 978-1-61695-348-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you feel David Downing has successfully captured 1939 Berlin as a setting? Which pieces of his depiction did you find most surprising? Most atmospheric?
2. How does each character's nationality affect his/her perception throughout the book? What expectations are set up on the basis of their nationality and in what way are they satisfied?
3. Downing uses the German language sparsely throughout the novel. How did this affect your interpretation of the piece? Did it add any elements of truth to the book?
4. Russell thinks, near the end of the novel, that they've hit "the end of any lingering hopes for peace." Is he right about this? What could have gone differently to result in peace?



FOOD:

SCHWABISCHER KARTOFFELSALAT (German Potato Salad – Schwabisch Style)

2 lb potatoes, unpeeled
1 cup vegetable stock
½ small onion, diced

3 tbsp vinegar, or more to taste
½ tsp prepared yellow mustard

2 tbsp vegetable oil
salt and pepper, to taste

Place potatoes into large pot and cover with salted water; bring to boil. Reduce to medium-low heat and simmer until tender, about 20 minutes. Drain; allow potatoes to cool slightly. Peel and slice potatoes. Mix potatoes and onions in a bowl. Stir in mustard, salt, and pepper.

Bring vegetable stock to a boil in a small saucepan, pour over potato mixture and stir to combine. Stir in vinegar and let rest for 10 minutes. Stir in vegetable oil and season with salt and pepper if desired.

DRINK:

RHABARBER-SCHORLE (Rubarb Spritzer)

or

DUJARDIN SOUR

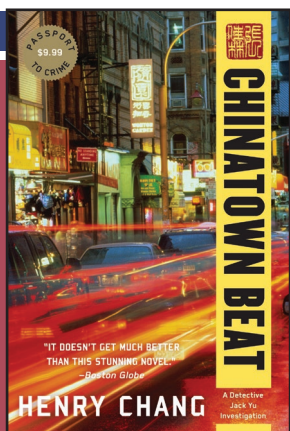
10–15 rhubarb stalks, leaves
(approx. 6 cups chopped)

3 cups sparkling water
Honey (or sweetener) to taste

⋮

1 part Dujardin brandy
½ part orange juice

1 part lemon juice
½ part sugar syrup



CHINATOWN, NEW YORK

CHINATOWN BEAT

Henry Chang

Chinatown native Detective Jack Yu has just been transferred to his old neighborhood, where 99% of the cops are white. He is faced with cases only he can solve with his police training and insider knowledge.

ISBN 978-1-56947-478-5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the Chinatown community view police officers, especially with the Fifth Precinct located at the heart of Chinatown?
2. What does it mean for Jack Yu to be a police officer? While the term “Chinaman” has derogatory connotations, how do the characters, including Jack, use the term? In using the term to refer to themselves and others, is this a form of subversion?
3. Describe the Chinatown community. In what ways are Jack Yu’s two very different worlds intertwined? How do the gangs function as lawkeepers? What is the rule of law in Chinatown?
4. How does filial piety emerge in *Chinatown Beat*? Does it hold significance in a partially assimilated community?
5. How do issues of sexuality and gender manifest, especially for Mona and Lucky?



FOOD:

CHOW MEIN

8 oz Chinese long beans or green beans, cut into ½ to 1-inch pieces to yield about 2 cups
2 large carrots, peeled, trimmed and cut into matchstick-size pieces
8 oz fresh or dried chow mein noodles
3 tbsp vegetable oil

1 (2-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled and minced
3 garlic cloves, minced
6 large shiitake mushrooms, thinly sliced
1 (8-oz) can sliced water chestnuts, rinsed and drained

¼ cup low-sodium chicken broth
½ cup hoisin sauce*
2 tbsp soy sauce
2 tbsp honey
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 green onions, thinly sliced

Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil over high heat. Add the beans and carrots and cook for 1 minute. Drain and put in a bowl of iced water until cool, about 1 minute. Drain and set aside.

Return the water to a boil. Add the noodles and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 5 to 7 minutes. Drain and rinse with cold water. Pat dry and set aside.

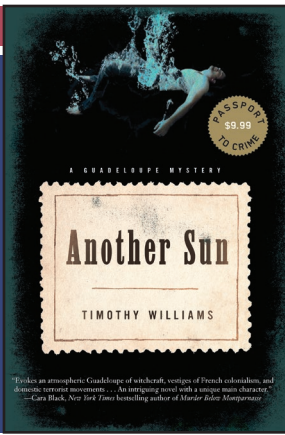
In a large nonstick skillet, heat the oil over high heat. Add the noodles, ginger and garlic. Cook for 2 minutes until the noodles are lightly browned. Add the mushrooms, beans, carrots, and water chestnuts and cook for 3 minutes. Add the broth, hoisin sauce, soy sauce, and honey. Bring the mixture to a boil and stir until slightly reduced and thick, about 2 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.

Transfer the chow mein to a large bowl and garnish with the green onions before serving.

DRINK:

RED LOTUS

1 ½ oz vodka
1 ½ oz lychee liqueur
1 oz cranberry juice



ANOTHER SUN

Timothy Williams

French-Algerian Judge Anne Marie Laveaud is relocated to the Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, where she struggles against local politics in her first murder investigation.

ISBN 978-1-61695-363-8

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Under what conditions is the body found in the opening chapter? What significant clues are dropped right away?
2. Madame Calais is revealed to be part French and part English. What other elements of race and nationality relations are used throughout the book? How do they affect the murder investigation?
3. Voodoo witches and curses are mentioned throughout the book. Is there any credibility, from the perspective of the characters, in these claims? Do they seem credible to you?
4. What father-son and mother-son relationships does Anne Marie come across? How do they tie into the investigation? How do they each relate to Anne Marie's relationship with her own son?
5. Is Madame Calais truly responsible for Hégésippe Bray's death? What is her perception of the suicide?



FOOD:

CRAB MATÉTÉ

- 6–8 land crabs
- 7 oz smoked bacon
- 2 fresh red tomatoes
- 1 bundle herbs with chives
- 4 garlic cloves

Clean crabs with brush under cold water. Split in two but leave legs attached. Remove shell, conserve crab fat, and let it steep in lemon juice.

Mix lemon juice, salt, pepper, and 2 crushed garlic cloves.

Let cleaned crabs steep in mixture with claws and legs slightly mashed. Fry chopped chives and remaining garlic cloves in the oil. Place crab fat and smoked bacon (cut in small pieces) in boiling water. Add crabs and brown for 15 minutes while stirring. Add seeded tomatoes and let cook for 10 minutes.

Serve with rice if desired.

DRINK:

KALE & BANANA SMOOTHIE

- 1 banana
- 1/2 cup light
- 1 tbsp flax seeds
- Unsweetened soy milk
- 2 cups chopped kale
- 2 cups chopped kale
- 1 tsp maple syrup
- Blend. Serve over ice.*

or

TI' PUNCH

- 1 1/2 shot rum
- 1/4 shot cane sugar
- 1 slice lime
- Syrup

RANDOM VIOLENCE

Jassy Mackenzie

A wealthy woman is killed in Johannesburg, and P.I. Jade de Jong offers to help her father's former assistant with the investigation.

ISBN 978-1-61695-218-1

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the extreme violence of Annette Botha's murder affect its reception and investigation?
2. Where does Jade's determination to solve the case stem from?
3. How does the inclusion of post-apartheid political background information affect your reception of the book? Did you think it was important to the story?
4. When the Viljoen brothers are incarcerated, gang violence breaks out in the prison, and Viljoen senior and three others were killed. What other acts of violence serve as asides from the main investigation? Why is it important to the book that these be acts of "random violence?"
5. By the book's end, are there any acts of random violence that Jade would have been able to prevent?



FOOD:

SPICY LENTILS

- | | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 2 cups orange lentils | 1 tsp turmeric |
| 3 garlic cloves, crushed | ½ tsp cayenne pepper |
| 1 tsp cardamom seed, crushed | 1 large sweet onion, chopped |
| ½ tsp salt | 1 tsp cumin seed, crushed |
| 1 tsp coriander powder | 1 cup tomato, diced peeled |
| ¼ tsp ground cinnamon | 1 inch piece fresh ginger, grated |
| ¼ cup vegetable oil | |

Dissolve salt in enough boiling water to cover lentils. Add lentils. Cook until tender (about 20 minutes). Drain and mash with potato masher. Heat oil in a pan and fry onions and garlic until onions are golden. Add remaining ingredients and simmer for a few minutes. Stir in lentils and heat until thick. Serve hot.

DRINK:

MAHEU

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------|
| 1 cup maize meal | 2-3 cups hot water |
| 2 tbsp wheat flour or malt | Sugar (to taste) |

Mix the maize meal with a small amount of cold water in a saucepan. Pour the hot water over it and bring to a boil, stirring to keep it from getting lumpy. Simmer for 10 to 15 minutes and remove from heat. Once cooled, add the malt or wheat flour. Stir well. Add water if not pourable.

Place in a container with a tight fitting lid and leave to ferment for a few days.

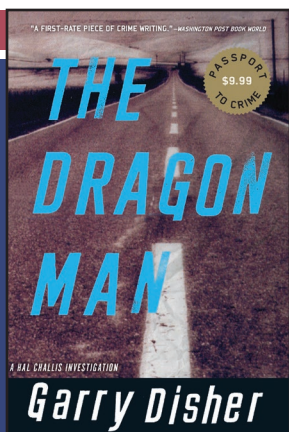
To know if the maheu is ready, give it a taste. It should taste sour. If not, let stand for another day. Once fermented, refrigerate for up to a week. Stir in some sugar to taste and serve.

or

ELEPHANT'S MUDBATH

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 oz vodka | 1 oz de kuyper Crème de |
| 1 oz Amarula cream | Cacao, Brown |
| liqueur | |

Blend all ingredients with crushed ice and serve in tall shot glass.



MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

THE DRAGON MAN

Garry Disher

On the Mornington Peninsula, Hal Challis and his team of officers track down a serial killer while balancing their complex and very messy lives.

ISBN 978-1-61695-448-2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Disher provides several narratives and innumerable insights into the lives of the men and women at the Waterloo Criminal Investigation Branch. Overall, how would one read this as a sociopolitical commentary on the police? On the subject of authority?
2. Crime can often reflect poverty, desperation and varies from small-time fare to the most serious. Throughout the novel, Waterloo's inhabitants are often described as poor while Challis, on the other hand, has the luxury of restoring and flying aeroplanes. If Challis were of less affluence, would and how would one's reading of him change?
3. Compared to his co-workers, Scobie Sutton is notable for not possessing similar vices or insecurities, almost arguably bland. While one could say this makes him a less-interesting/engaging character, how does his "blandness" enhance the character?
4. The book's descriptions of the killer are quite alienating, not to mention the use of italics to distance the main plot from the killer's. Does this dehumanize the killer? Do they possess humanizing qualities?



FOOD:

CRAB SALAD IN AVOCADO HALVES

½ cup finely-chopped red onion
3 tbsp mayonnaise
2 tbsp chopped fresh cilantro
3 tsp fresh lime juice
½ tsp ground cumin
½ tsp lime zest
1 cup crabmeat

Salt
Fresh ground black pepper
1 large ripe avocado, halved,
pitted, and peeled
Lime wedge

Stir red onion, mayonnaise, cilantro, 2 tsp lime juice, cumin and lime peel in medium bowl to blend. Mix in crabmeat. Season salad with salt and pepper.

Brush avocado halves with remaining 1 tsp lime juice to prevent discoloration. Arrange avocado halves, cut-side up, on plates. Mound crab salad on each avocado half.

Serve salad with lime wedges.

DRINK:

AUSTRALIAN ICED COFFEE

(Cold espresso, milk and ice cream.
Cream optional.)

or

VICTORIA BITTER

(an Australian pale lager)

OUTSIDER IN AMSTERDAM

Janwillem van de Wetering

Amsterdam cops Grijpstra and de Gier investigate the seemingly straightforward suicide of a religious society leader, all while contemplating Zen Buddhism.

ISBN 978-1-61695-300-3

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. In the opening line of the preface, the writer says that, as a child, he always “wanted to be an Indian, and a cowboy in [his] spare time.” How do elements of the characters’ imaginations influence their actions in the book?
2. How does the multi-dimensionality of the villain’s character affect your perception of the crime?
3. What clues did you discover as a reader before the protagonists?
4. Do the elements of the Dutch language throughout the book make the story more credible or personable?
5. What is force majeure? How precisely does it affect the investigation?



FOOD:

DUTCH APPLE CAKE

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| ½ cup shortening | 1 egg |
| 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour | ½ tsp salt |
| ¾ cup milk | 1 tsp ground cinnamon |
| 1 cup white sugar | 1 ½ tsp vanilla extract |
| 1 tbsp baking powder | 2 apples (peeled, cored, and cut into eighths) |
| ¼ cup white sugar | |

Sift flour with baking powder and salt. In large bowl, cream shortening and 1 cup sugar until light. Beat in egg and vanilla until fluffy. Add sifted ingredients alternately with milk. Spread batter into a greased 7 x 11 inch baking pan. Place apple pieces in rows on the batter with the sharp edges pressed in slightly. Sprinkle sugar and cinnamon on top. Bake at 350°F for about 50-60 minutes or until the apples are tender.

DRINK:

SLEMP

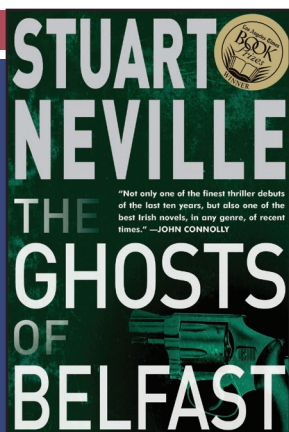
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|------------------|-------------------|
| Pinch of saffron | 1 stick cinnamon |
| 4 cups milk | 2 tbsp cornstarch |
| 8 cloves | Piece of mace |
| ½ cup sugar | |

Tie herbs in a piece of cheesecloth and put in the milk. Scald and simmer for 30 minutes. Add the sugar. Dissolve the cornstarch in a little cold water and add to the hot mixture. Stir and cook 5 minutes more. Press the herb bag between two spoons and remove.

or

NEGRONI

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1.5 oz Bols Genever | 1 oz Campari |
| 1 oz Sweet vermouth | Garnish: orange peel |



BELFAST, IRELAND

THE GHOSTS OF BELFAST

Stuart Neville

Gerry Fegan was a “hard man,” an IRA killer in northern Ireland. Now that peace has come, he is being haunted by twelve ghosts of the innocents he’s murdered, and the only way for him to appease them is to kill the men who gave him orders.

ISBN 978-1-61695-241-9

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How much is Northern Ireland’s recent history—in particular, the Troubles—present in this story? What is Stuart Neville saying about the ongoing ramifications of the Troubles? Do you read a political bias, either Protestant or Catholic, in the story? Does the narrative imply that one side or the other was more in the right—or in the wrong?
2. What role does the past have in *The Ghosts of Belfast*? Fegan is literally haunted by his own past, but do other characters carry similar burdens?
3. While *The Ghosts of Belfast* has been called a thriller, a horror novel, and an organized crime novel, it isn’t exactly a mystery. How would you personally categorize the book if you had to pick a genre for it? In what ways does it break genre conventions?
4. Consider Fegan’s intentions over the course of his vendetta. In what ways is he acting morally? In what ways is he acting immorally?
5. Why does Quigley hand the gun over to Fegan on page 306? What was the alternative choice he could have made?



FOOD:

COLCANNON

1 lb cabbage
Salt and pepper to taste
1 lb potatoes
1 pinch ground mace

2 leeks
½ cup butter
1 cup milk

DRINK:

SHAMROCK

1 ½ oz Irish whiskey
½ oz dry vermouth
1 olive

In large saucepan, boil cabbage until tender; remove and chop or blend well. Set aside and keep warm. Boil potatoes until tender. Remove from heat and drain.

Chop leeks, green parts as well as white, and simmer them in just enough milk to cover, until they’re soft.

Season and mash potatoes well. Stir in cooked leeks and milk. Blend in cabbage and heat until the dish is a pale green fluff.

Make a well in the center and pour in melted butter.

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