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by Elizabeth Foxwell

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*Many readers will be expecting to see a column from Jon L. Breen this month. He passed the full-time Jury Box gavel to Steve Steinbock in 2011 but retained one column per year, in which he discussed reissued classics. Jon has now retired from reviewing in order to devote his energies to fiction. Elizabeth Foxwell is replacing him here with a column that also focuses on classics. It's the first time a woman has wielded the Jury Box gavel, and Beth is eminently qualified for it. She's an editor at McFarland and Co., where she edits the McFarland Companions to Mystery Fiction, and she serves as managing editor of Clues: A Journal of Detection. She also reviews mysteries for PW and is the published author of a number of short stories. We're thrilled to have her on board!*

Small presses continue to locate and publish neglected mystery gems—good news for readers interested in learning about the genre's past and eager for solid storytelling, captivating characters, and compelling detective work. The following is a sample of recent offerings.

\*\*\*\* Elisabeth Sanxay Holding, *Nobody Would Listen: The Collected Mystery Stories of Elisabeth Sanxay Holding*, Stark House Press, \$20.95. Elisabeth Sanxay Holding may be best known for *The Blank Wall* (1947), adapted for the 1949 film *The Reckless Moment* with Joan Bennett and James Mason, but this collection of nineteen mystery short stories and novellas introduced by Curtis Evans showcases her gift for exposing the seething darkness under seemingly placid situations. The best of these is the title story, in which a housekeeper fears a household's miasma will become lethal. In "Most Audacious Crime," a police commissioner in the Caribbean suspects a husband of impending skullduggery, but the crime's scope shifts. In the affectionate Chandlerian spoof "Farewell, Big Sister" (Raymond Chandler was an admirer of Holding's work), the case of a missing spouse takes an unexpected turn for both detective and client.

\*\*\*\* Mary Fitt, *Three Sisters Flew Home*, introduction by Curtis Evans, Moonstone Press, \$16.99. Originally published in 1936, this masterful mystery debut by Detection Club member Mary Fitt (a.k.a. classical scholar Kathleen Freeman) features a New Year's Eve house party roiling with

resentments, power plays, inescapable obligations, and doomed love, ratcheting up the suspense as the reader attempts to guess the likely victim of a potentially deadly murder game.

\*\*\*\* Anthony Berkeley, *Jumping Jenny*, Poisoned Pen Press, \$14.99. A sudden death at a house party poses complications for amateur sleuth Roger Sheringham in an ingenious inverted mystery by Detection Club cofounder Anthony Berkeley (a.k.a. Anthony Berkeley Cox and Francis Iles) first published in 1933. The tiresome and petty Ena Stratton is found swinging from a gallows during a costume party devoted to well-known murderers and their associates. Sheringham is convinced that the police may finger Ena's long-suffering husband and so tampers with the crime scene. A comedy of errors ensues as the guests scramble to bolster the case for suicide, culminating in a neat twist ending.

\*\*\*\* Jack Ritchie, *The Best of Manhunt 4: The Jack Ritchie Stories*, edited by Jeff Vorzimmer, Stark House Press, \$15.95. Over a thirty-year career, Edgar winner Jack Ritchie (a.k.a. John George Reitci) penned nearly 350 short stories. Mounting suspense and artful twists mark the twenty-eight stories collected here, largely set in a hard world of men scrabbling for power and money and women struggling to survive as mere pawns in a larger game. Standouts include "The Canary" (a prison break involves revenge), "Solitary" (a stint in solitary confinement has far-reaching effects), "The Deveraux Monster" (the owner of a stately home contemplates a family legend in a sly take on *The Hound of the Baskervilles*), and "Ripper Moon!" (a Jack the Ripper fixation has implications for a psychiatrist).

\*\*\* Susan Scarlett, *Murder While You Work*, Dean Street Press, \$17.99. Susan Scarlett wrote twelve novels, mostly romance, without revealing her true name: Noel Streatfeild, well known for her "Shoe" children's books (such as *Ballet Shoes*). Her only mystery, *Murder While You Work*, was published in 1944. During WWII, a young woman leaves hospital work for the challenges of an English village, a munitions job (reflecting the author's WWI experience), and a likely serial killer in the vicinity. In this whydunit and howdunit, Scarlett/Streatfeild deftly portrays the steadfast heroine undeterred by a domestic monster, danger, and even blossoming love. Don't miss the eccentric but level-headed aristocrat with atypical dogs.

\*\*\* E.C.R. Lorac, *These Names Make Clues*, Poisoned Pen Press, \$14.99. Detection Club member E.C.R. Lorac (a.k.a. Edith Caroline Rivett) employs lively elements of Golden Age detection in this clever 1937 novel chockful of anagrams, repulsive victims, and colorful suspects with multiple pseudonyms. Chief Inspector Macdonald and other guests are invited to a publisher's house party/treasure hunt; after a power failure, a guest is found dead, and another death later muddies the case. Lorac's crisp prose, vivid characters, intricate plotting, and a narrative approach that suggests Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* are just a few of the pleasures offered.

\*\*\* Eleanor A. Blake, *The Jade Green Cats*, Coachwhip Publications, \$14.95. Journalist Eleanor Blake (a.k.a. the mother of actor Wally Cox) salutes her cynical Chicago newspaper world in this snappy tale originally published in 1931. Reporters John Kymmerly and Dawn Carson pursue clues to an obsession of a doctor and his associates with two green cat figurines, which is marked by death. Amid their developing relationship, Kymmerly and Carson are spurred by the allure of a scoop and the desire to protect the poor and vulnerable.

\*\*\* J. Harvey Bond, *Mike Lanson for Murder*, Coachwhip Publications, \$29.95. This collection of four energetic and entertaining mysteries with the shrewd and intrepid crime reporter Mike Lanson from the Creston (clued as Kansas) *Gazette* reflects the background of author J. Harvey Bond (a.k.a. Salina-born journalist and cartoonist Russell Robert Winterbotham). In *Bye-Bye, Baby!* (originally published in 1958), Lanson's investigation of the mysterious death of his newspaper's former editor triggers two additional deaths. In *Murder Isn't Funny* (originally issued in 1958), Lanson takes on the shooting of a cartoonist linked to missing comic-strip artwork. In *Kill Me with Kindness* (originally published in 1959), Lanson probes the killing of an anti-vice crusader who was a busy blackmailer. In *If Wishes Were Hearses* (originally issued in 1961), Lanson traces the connections among the murder of a private detective engaged in divorce cases, the killing of an alcoholic playboy, and the testimony of a wino witness. The smart-aleck Lanson, though prone to entanglements with shady women, trigger-happy men, demanding editors, and irascible cops, usually comes out on top as, in the sarcastic words of one character, "the second coming of Sherlock Holmes" (p. 390).

\*\*\* Ellery Queen and Josh Pachter, *The Adventures of the Puzzle Club and Other Stories*, Crippen & Landru, \$20. In January 1965, the first Puzzle Club mystery appeared in *Cavalier*, likely written by Frederic Dannay (according to Francis M. Nevins's introduction) and likely inspired by Agatha Christie's Tuesday Club Murders stories with Miss Marple (according to Josh Pachter's introduction). "The Little Spy" preceded four other puzzlers in which club members seek to stump fellow member Ellery Queen with perplexing details of a fictional crime. Pachter wrote follow-up Puzzle Club stories and another series of stories for *EQMM* with the Griffen family, in which the children are named for mystery writers or mystery characters. Harkening back to a bygone era when the puzzle mystery was king, these stories may provide enjoyable fodder for brain-teaser fans.

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