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by Steve Steinbock

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In recent months, several short-story collections have been published featuring regular *EQMM* contributors. Also landing on my desk were a couple items of Sherlockian interest that came too late to be included in our annual January/February Sherlock Holmes issue. We start off with books by an author whose work meets both criteria.

\*\*\*\* Steve Hockensmith, *Partners in Crime: Five Holmes on the Range Mysteries*, Rough Edge Press, \$14.99 paperback, \$2.99 e-book. The Holmes on the Range series by Steve Hockensmith debuted in the February 2003 issue of *EQMM*, introducing garrulous narrator Otto Amlingmeyer, a cowboy who serves as Watson to his brother Gustav. This pair of red-haired cowboys, popularly known as “Big Red” and “Old Red,” are inspired to become consulting detectives after reading the works of Arthur Conan Doyle and go on to perform feats of “deducifyin’” throughout the Old West. *Partners in Crime* collects four stories that originally appeared in *EQMM* (“My Christmas Story,” “Curious Incidents,” “Bad News,” and “Can the Cat Catch the Rat?”) as well as a new story that takes the Amlingmeyer brothers back to their hometown to solve a barn burning of sorts.

\*\*\*\* Steve Hockensmith, *Hunters of the Dead*, Rough Edge Press, \$14.99 paperback, \$2.99 e-book. The seventh novel in the Holmes on the Range series takes the Amlingmeyer brothers to Wyoming where they’ve been hired as guards at an excavation of dinosaur fossils, protecting their client’s claim against a rival team of paleontologists. But where the two young detectives expect to find dinosaur bones, they instead discover human remains. With rollicking dialogue and snappy humor, Hockensmith evokes the spirit of Mark Twain in this high-spirited detective yarn. Also new from Hockensmith is *Black List, White Death: Two Holmes on the Range Novellas* (Rough Edge Press, \$14.99 paperback, \$2.99 e-book). In addition to the two new novellas named in the title, this volume includes the bonus short story “Expense

Report: El Paso.” For those readers who want to catch up, Rough Edge Press is reissuing all the original Holmes on the Range titles.

\*\*\*\* Terence Faherty, *The Chronicles of Owen Keane*, Gisbourne Press, \$12.99. Another veteran *EQMM* contributor, Faherty is the author of seven novels and numerous short stories featuring failed seminarian turned private investigator Owen Keane. In 2005, Crippen and Landru published a collection of seven earlier Owen Keane stories. *The Chronicles of Owen Keane* picks up with six further short stories, all of which first appeared in *EQMM*, plus a new novella, “First Proof.” Owen Keane has been called a “metaphysical sleuth,” which is true in the sense that the stories are profound, provocative, and thoughtful, with an undertone of tarnished spirituality.

\*\*\*\* Dave Zeltserman, *Detectives and Spies*, \$15.00 paperback, \$5.99 e-book. Zeltserman, who has garnered multiple *EQMM* Readers Awards as well as the Derringer and Shamus awards, has brought together nine stories, the first four featuring an artificial-intelligence device called Archie Smith, followed by three stories about former L.A. cop Morris Brick and two hardboiled crime stories featuring Hell’s only private eye, Mike Stone. Most of the stories first appeared in *EQMM* or in its sister publication *Alfred Hitchcock’s Mystery Magazine*. My favorites are the stories about Archie, especially relevant with AI constantly in the news. Archie, a “highly-sophisticated neuron network,” serves as Watson to private eye Julius Katz in the first two stories, then is passed on to Katz’s sister, international spy Julia Katz, for the next two. Reading these tales is like playing a lively game of Clue, except with more colorful characters and an AI at your side.

\*\*\*\* Donna Andrews, Greg Herren, and Art Taylor, editors, *School of Hard Knox*, Crippen and Landru, \$22.00 trade paperback, \$47.00 clothbound signed. In 1929, Monsignor Ronald Knox, Catholic priest, translator, satirist, and mystery writer, came up with a list of the “ten commandments” of detective fiction. This tongue-in-cheek list, Knox’s “Detective Story Decalogue,” included rules that called out some of the overdone clichés of the period and assured that the reader was supplied with the necessary information to deduce the solution. *School of Hard Knox* is an assembly of thirteen stories—plus a work of verse by Peter Lovesey—that push the boundaries of Knox’s Decalogue. Authors include Gigi Pandian, Naomi Hirahara, Toni L.P. Kelner, Nikki Dolson, Richie Narvaez, Marcia Talley, and Frankie Y. Bailey. The beauty of the stories is that authors were given license to break the rules each in their own creative way. I can’t give away which specific rules are broken by which stories (as it would spoil a challenge presented by the publisher), but Daniel Stashower’s story “The Forlorn Penguin” is an unusually existential sort-of-Sherlockian story. A con artist gets conned in S.J. Rozan’s “Chin Yong-Yun Goes to Church,” featuring the mother of Rozan’s series hero Lydia Chin. Martin Edwards’s “The Intruder” involves a revenge plot that delivers a double-whammy solution. The clothbound edition of *School of Hard Knox* includes an additional chapbook featuring a Sherlockian pastiche written by Father Knox, originally published in 1947.

\*\*\*\*\* Laurie R. King, *The Lantern's Dance*, Bantam, \$28.99. In the eighteenth novel in King's series featuring Mary Russell and her husband, Sherlock Holmes, the couple arrive at the home of Holmes's son, Damian Adler, only to learn that the young artist and his family fled after a mysterious threat. While Holmes tracks down his son in order to get to the bottom of the threat, Mary remains at the son's home, exploring odd bits of treasure while nursing her sprained ankle. The lantern of the title is a candlelit zoetrope lamp which Mary discovers in a trunk, along with a mysteriously coded old journal. As Mary slowly deciphers the diary, pieces of Holmes's family history begin falling into place, including its connection to a famed French artistic dynasty. There are multiple mysteries at play in *The Lantern's Dance*, but the two most intriguing aspects of the book are Holmes's interactions with his son and granddaughter and Mary Russell's cryptographic discoveries as she decodes the old journal.

\*\*\*\* Max Allan Collins, *Too Many Bullets*, Hard Case Crime, \$26.99. Collins's historical P.I. series featuring "Private Investigator to the Stars" Nathan Heller has covered cases involving Al Capone, the Lindbergh kidnapping, the McCarthy hearings, and the assassination of JFK. In this latest volume, Heller is in Los Angeles in 1968 when his friend Senator Robert F. Kennedy is gunned down. While a work of fiction, *Too Many Bullets* is extremely well researched, explores various conspiracy theories, and seamlessly weaves in historical details and personalities.

\*\*\*\*\* Amnon Kabatchnik, *Horror on the Stage: Monsters, Murders and Terrifying Moments in Theater*, McFarland, \$75.00. Stage director and professor Kabatchnik has compiled the seven-volume *Blood on the Stage* encyclopedias as well as *Sherlock Holmes on the Stage* and the recent *Courtroom Dramas on Stage*. His latest work, focusing on horrors supernatural and psychological, contains the historic details of more than 500 plays and musicals including Bram Stoker's 1897 production of *Dracula* and its many adaptations and imitations, the 1921 Yiddish play *The Golem*, and theatrical adaptations of the works of Edgar Allan Poe, Oscar Wilde, Robert Lewis Stevenson, Alexander Dumas, and Victor Hugo. Musicals such as *Little Shop of Horrors*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd* are examined along with Boris Karloff's performance in the 1941 play *Arsenic and Old Lace*. The book includes extensive notes, photos, and appendices, and opens with a seventy-page historical summary of the subject.

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