



***Fly Away Home* by Jennifer Weiner**

Weiner (*Good in Bed*; *In Her Shoes*) started writing this novel long before the parade of philandering politicians filled our national consciousness. Who knew that Sylvie Serfer's fictional life as a politician's wife would mirror reality so closely? Far from being an overwrought tale of the wronged woman, this is an honest narrative about the expectations of being a woman with a capital W: standing by your man, being a mother, and wondering

where one's dreams have gone. Even though this could have simply been the ballad of Sylvie Serfer, daughters Lizzie, the self-described "basket case" and recovering addict, and Diana, a driven emergency room physician with a seemingly perfect life, enliven the novel even more. At times, the up-to-the-minute cultural references distract one from the story but not enough to mar what is otherwise a funny, heartfelt read. Verdict Sylvie, Lizzie, and Diana are complex characters who never slip into the shallow stereotypes of the good girl or the bad girl. Highly recommended for Weiner's fans and readers who enjoy women's fiction.

***Tough Customer* by Sandra Brown**

Brown's latest thriller reintroduces a character from her previous outing, *Smash Cut* (2009): Dodge Hanley, a grizzled investigator who used to be a cop. Dodge is awakened one morning by a call from Caroline King, a woman he hasn't seen in 30 years since the day their daughter, Berry, was born. Now Berry is the target of a frightening stalker who has just broken into Caroline's house and shot Berry's coworker, Ben Lofland. Dodge reluctantly agrees to travel from Atlanta to Texas to help the police hunt down Berry's tormentor, the vengeful Oren Starks. The police deputy on the case, Ski Nyland, is suspicious of Berry and convinced she is hiding something. As Dodge works with Ski to track Oren, his feelings for Caroline resurface, and he recalls how they first met and the reason their torrid relationship came to an end. Though a late-in-the-game twist seems somewhat farfetched, the draw here is the appealing Dodge, a character Brown fans will have no problem rooting for...

***Private* by James Patterson**

The police can't help you - Former Marine helicopter pilot Jack Morgan runs *Private*, a renowned investigation company with branches around the globe. It is where you go when you need maximum force and maximum discretion. The secrets of the most influential men and women on the planet come to Jack daily--and his staff of investigators uses the world's most advanced forensic tools to make and break their cases. The press will destroy you Jack is already deep into the investigation of a multi-million dollar NFL gambling scandal and the unsolved slayings of 18 schoolgirls when he learns of a horrific murder close to home: his best friend's wife, Jack's former lover, has been killed. It nearly pushes him over the edge. Instead, Jack pushes back and devotes all of *Private*'s resources to tracking down her killer. Only one place to turn: *Private*. But Jack doesn't have to play by the rules. As he closes in on the killer and chooses between revenge and justice, Morgan has to navigate a workplace love affair that threatens to blow the roof off his plans. With a plot that moves at death-defying speeds, *Private* is James Patterson's sleekest, most exciting thriller ever.

***Scarlet Nights* by Jude Deveraux**

Undercover detective extraordinaire Mike Newland's new and urgent case sends him from Ft. Lauderdale to Edilean, Virginia, the setting for Deveraux's popular series. His job is to protect Sara Shaw, whose fiancée Greg is part of the notorious Vandlo crime family. Everyone in Edilean hates Greg except Sara, who stubbornly believes in Greg even after he disappears weeks away from their wedding. Mike figures it will be easy to get Sara to trust him; women have always been attracted to him. But Sara is the exception. Weary of being seen as weak, she believes hunky Mike, brother of her best friend, has been sent to tempt her away from marrying Greg. The longer Mike stays, however, the more appealing he becomes to Sara, and soon they begin revealing secrets to each other, including Mike's true mission. As Deveraux continues her series, she brings to life the sort of sweet and spunky heroines who attract the muscular men her fans expect and enjoy. So this is another guilty-pleasure romance of suspense that will hook readers and leave them with a smile.

***Live to Tell* by Lisa Gardner**

In her newest thriller (after *The Neighbor*), Gardner once again successfully borrows from the headlines. Detective D.D. Warren is called to the home of a family of five-four of whom are now dead and the fifth, the dad, lying comatose in the hospital. What initially appears to be a simple, if horrifying, case of murder/suicide quickly turns into something else when a second family is found dead at home. Warren's investigations run parallel to the stories of two other women. Danielle Burton is the lone survivor of the murder of her own family by her father 25 years ago, while Victoria Oliver is living in near isolation as she cares for her severely mentally disturbed eight-year-old son. The connections among the three plot threads become increasingly clearer as both women are drawn into Warren's investigation. Verdict Gardner's writing gets

stronger with each new thriller, and the scary possibilities this novel suggests are certainly plausible enough to work. This will strongly appeal to suspense readers, especially for fans of Tami Hoag, Karin Slaughter, and Tess Gerritsen.

***The Clouds Beneath the Sun* by Mackenzie Ford**

Kenya in 1961 is a country on the cusp of change. Racial tensions run high as work toward independence from Great Britain begins, and the unrest is exacerbated when a Maasai tribal member is accused of killing an American paleontologist who was working at Dr. Eleanor Deacon's excavation site in the Kihara Gorge on the Serengeti. Newly minted Cambridge Ph.D. Natalie Nelson, who has aroused notice with her late-night habit of a solitary smoke and a nip of whiskey outside her tent, is the only witness and will speak against their cook, Mutevu Ndekei, at trial. Journalists salivate as the attorneys pit British law against tribal traditions, Natalie is pressured to recant her testimony, and the gorge, site of extraordinary fossils that could change notions of the origin of humankind, faces shutdown by the Maasai. VERDICT Ford (Gifts of War), an esteemed historian and nonfiction author under his actual name, Peter Watson, draws on his own archaeological background to give readers a fascinating, morally ambiguous novel that juxtaposes the ambitions of the scientific community of outsiders against the sensitivities of the native cultures whose riches they unearth. Cinematic descriptions of the land and its people imply an intimate knowledge of the African continent; readers will hear and smell the giraffe, antelope, leopards, and elephants that roam the plain. Complicated parent-child relationships and sibling rivalries add to the complexity of this story, making it ripe for sophisticated book groups.

***Shadow Zone* by Iris Johansen**

A lost underwater civilization, deadly algae, and hordes of attack dolphins roil the seas and threaten a fragile peace in the latest international thriller from the Johansen's, a tale that reunites characters from their best-selling *Silent Thunder* (2009). As Hannah Bryson concludes her research at the deep-sea archaeological site of the doomed colony of Marinth, scientists are on the brink of discovering what caused Marinth's downfall. The answer may lie in the panels of an intricate trellis that Hannah manages to bring to the surface, only to have it fall into the hands of Gadaire, a ruthless sociopath who wants to use it to bring about an environmental Armageddon. Only one person has the cunning and desire to stop Gadaire: Kirov, the Russian agent who came to Hannah's aid once before. While Hannah struggles with the spy-who-loved-me aspects of working closely with the inscrutable Kirov, her impetuous 12-year-old nephew, Ronnie, insinuates himself into the middle of the investigation. In this adrenalin-accelerating tale of a high-stakes, high-seas conspiracy, the Johansen's adeptly juggle multiple points of intrigue, smoothly balancing the prerequisite whirlwind pacing with plausible, even restrained, personal relationships. And Hannah emerges as a prepossessing, determined heroine who is more than capable of sustaining this absorbing series.

***Dragongirl* by Todd McCaffrey**

Young Fiona, rider of the gold queen dragon Talenth, has just returned from three years at the abandoned Weyr (or dragon domicile) Ingen, to which injured dragons and riders had gone to heal. The place is 10 Turns in the past, yet only days have passed at Fort Weyr when they return. The Weyr (dragons, riders, and support) are still fighting Thread shorthanded because the plague is still killing dragons, and dragons and riders are going down in battle. Suddenly all Telgar dragons and riders are lost Between. Since Talenth is the oldest queen who isn't leading a Weyr, Fiona becomes Weyrwoman of Telgar, where she galvanizes the people and attracts dragon riders and healers to join. The constant Thread falls cause rapid attrition of dragons and riders, and the search for a cure for the plague and the fight for survival become ever more desperate. Adding fascination is the book's exploration of the possibilities of dragons going between from one time to another just as they go almost instantly from place to place on the planet. Todd McCaffrey continues carving his own niche in the Pern canon while remaining faithful to the world-building and characterizations that have made his mother Anne's series a perennial favorite.

***Buddha's Orphans* by Samrat Upadhyay**

Called "a Buddhist Chekhov" by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Samrat Upadhyay's writing has been praised by Amitav Ghosh and Suketu Mehta, and compared with the work of Akhil Sharma and Jhumpa Lahiri. Upadhyay's new novel, *Buddha's Orphans*, uses Nepal's political upheavals of the past century as a backdrop to the story of an orphan boy, Raja, and the girl he is fated to love, Nilu, a daughter of privilege. Their love story scandalizes both families and takes readers through time and across the globe, through the loss of and search for children, and through several generations, hinting that perhaps old bends can, in fact, be righted in future branches of a family tree. *Buddha's Orphan's* is a novel permeated with the sense of how we are irreparably connected to the mothers who birthed us and of the way events of the past, even those we are ignorant of, inevitably haunt the present. But most of all it is an engrossing, unconventional love story and a seductive and transporting read.