

Marilyn'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 an incentive by any publisher.

December Reviews

Title: **Dark Angels**
Classification: Fiction
Author: Karleen Koen
Publisher: Crown Publishers
Copyright: 2006

Book Rating: 


Reviewer Comments: The historical novel begins in 1670, ten years into the reign of Charles II, King of England, during the Restoration period. The main character, Alice Verney is a young woman of the court determined to establish herself as a major player in the tumultuous atmosphere of royal court. Political intrigue, of course, is rampant with treachery, murder, shifting alliances and hints of war as well as a crisis of succession in the air. But of course the most enjoyable aspect of the book is the sheer opulence and pageantry of the court itself. This book is the prequel to the highly acclaimed *Through A Glass Darkly* also featuring Alice Verney. Read this excellent novel, then go on to follow Alice in her later years.

Title: **A Fountain Filled With Blood**
Classification: Mystery
Author: Julia Spencer-Fleming
Publisher: St. Martin's
Copyright: 2003

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Second in the great series by this author. Episcopal priest Clare Fergusson and police chief Russ Van Alstyne are both involved in solving the mystery behind several vicious attacks during the July Fourth weekend. At first it seems the victims were selected because they were gay. But when an out of town developer is murdered during the plot, at they say, thickens. With clues pointing to a large conspiracy concerning the developer's plan to build an upscale spa in the tiny town, Clare and Russ find themselves in an escalating threat to their very lives. You will enjoy the visual characters and the continuing attraction of Clare and Russ to each other. Don't miss this.

Title: **The City of Falling Angels**
Classification: History
Author: John Berendt
Publisher: Penguin Books
Copyright: 2005

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: A very disappointing book by the author of *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*. This much anticipated general non-fiction project takes place in Venice shortly after the burning of the Gran Teatro La Fenice on January 29, 1996. The investigation into the fire's cause provides the background of the plot. While information about the physical setting of Venice and its culture is interesting, it doesn't carry the book to the level of a good read. Residents of the city were well-drawn and enjoyable, some quite zany. But the story didn't flow smoothly and didn't build satisfying conclusions. It seemed ponderous and plodding, not a book to be recommended very highly.

November Reviews

Title: **Thunderstruck**
Classification: History
Author: Erik Larson
Publisher: Crown
Copyright: 2006

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: The technique of parallel plots is once again employed by this author (see *The Devil in White City* in archives). Guglielmo Marconi spent all of his energy and all of his time trying to perfect his invention of the wireless. He, of course, succeeds while alienating his wife and colleagues until his obsession is all that remains. But wait - he's the good guy, isn't he. The other main character is a doctor, described as mild-mannered and pleasant who, nevertheless, murders his wife, eviscerates her, buries what's left in the basement then escapes with his secretary. The ensuing search for the fugitives becomes a case of such notoriety that it is surpassed only by the Jack the Ripper murders. The two stories merge toward the end of course, Marconi's invention plays a part in the satisfactory conclusions. Dr. Crippen is caught, tried and convicted. Marconi is highly successful and receives all the accolades and place in history that he deserves.

Title: **Abundance: A Novel of Marie Antoinette**

Classification: Fiction
Author: Sena Jeter Naslund
Publisher: William Morrow
Copyright: 2006

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: Historical Fiction. At 14 Marie Antoinette is sent to France to marry the 15 year old dauphin in order to establish a political alliance between Austria and France. The book follows her life from that moment to the final unfortunate end. Toinette, as she preferred to be called, is quite a different person from the selfish, uncaring woman history has portrayed. But then, history always is written by the victors. She always is courageous and empathetic, while also often being reckless and astonishingly naive. Beautifully written, the novel is both powerful and heartbreaking. Toinette and her husband, Louis XVI, both are victims of their own personalities - his of a lack of leadership, hers of naivety. The horrendous acts of the mobs are the results. The book brings the people and the times to life in a way you will find fascinating. Don't miss this.

Title: In the Bleak Midwinter

Classification: Fiction
Author: Julia Spencer Fleming
Publisher: St. Martins Press
Copyright: 2002

Book Rating: 

Reviewer Comments: A remarkable first novel which won 6 major book awards, due no doubt to the depth of plot and character development. Clare Fergusson, former Army chopper pilot and a woman with a "mind of her own" seems a little odd to the members of the conservative St. Albans Episcopal Church where she has just been assigned. Ideas to improve services to the community are met with resistance and seem to indicate a lack of confidence in the new priest. Then a newborn baby is found on the church steps with a note requesting that he be given to a certain couple in the congregation. Clare finds the congregation solidly behind her in her effort to fulfill this request. But it's not just a simple matter, as Sheriff Russ Alstyne informs her. The parents must be identified and other legal matters addressed. In the search for the mother the seemingly peaceful settlement the town is shattered as deceit, betrayal and murder are discovered. Resolution of the several conflicts is found but shock and sadness accompany the truth. Well written with characters you will love, the novel is well worth reading and I look forward to subsequent books in the series.