

STARK HOUSE PRESS

April

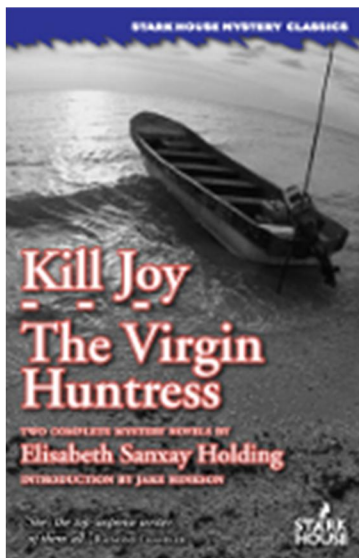
Newsletter, volume 5, issue 4

2016

In the last newsletter in March, we spread the word about our March and April titles—*Tommy Red* by Charlie Stella, *Scratch a Thief/House of Evil* by John Trinian and *The Girl on the Best Seller List* by Vin Packer—leaving us very little to discuss in the April newsletter. Which is not to say we haven't been busy. We're already working on the August books. But in our attempt at keeping the newsletter a bit more focused on current titles, we'll only highlight the June books this month.

The main title, the lead title, if you will, is *Kill Joy / The Virgin Huntress* by Elisabeth Sanxay Holding. This will be our seventh Holding two-fer, combining a mid-period novel from 1942 with one of Holding's last mysteries from 1951. The 1951 book, *The Virgin Huntress*, is one of her best, the story of a psycho-cad who ingratiates himself with women, then cuts the binds when they become too tight, sometimes a bit too literally, unraveling himself in the process.

As Jake Hinkson observes in his introduction to the books: "Human beings railing against the damn suburban life, the slavery—that was Holding's perennial theme. Sometimes those people were women, sometimes they were men. Sometimes they were good people struggling with their own weaknesses. And sometimes they were real bastards." *The Virgin Huntress* offers one of the latter.



Elisabeth Sanxay Holding

Kill Joy / The Virgin Huntress

978-1-933586-97-7 \$20.95

Kill Joy presents a different kind of situation. A young woman agrees to accompany her employers' niece to an old house on a lake where two young men—one an affable alcoholic, the other an acerbic artist—are residing. At first shocked at the impropriety, Maggie tries to accommodate the willful Miss Dolly. But after they receive a visitor, Miss Dolly's aged lawyer, and he turns up dead, Maggie falls into a maelstrom of doubt and suspicion, always trying to do the right thing but having to compromise her principals every step of the way.

Holding cranks up the tension one scene at a time, until the reader begins to suspect nearly everyone of hidden motives and criminal behavior. Yes, there is a whodunit reveal at the end, but as Hinkson says, "in a deeper sense the book has no solution." It is Hinkson's assertion that Holding is one of the great uncredited proponents of noir. Read it yourself this summer and see if you don't agree. Elisabeth Sanxay Holding isn't a cozy read—she gets right under your skin.

On the other hand—the slightly less subtle hand—we have another two-fer by our favorite British hardboiled author, James Hadley Chase. And by hardboiled I mean two books as unsentimental and as violent as they come. Chase's early novels were distinguished by their seedy adherence to the American gangster genre, but he went the Americans one better. His killers were true psychopaths, as ready to stick in a knife and watch their victims squirm as anything.

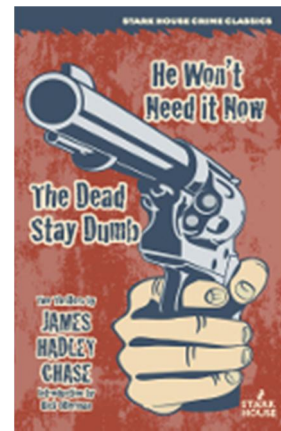
In June, we're reprinting *He Won't Need It Now* and *The Dead Stay Dumb*. Published under the pseudonym "James L. Docherty," *He Won't Need It Now* was Chase's second book, back when Chase was still trying to settle on a proper writing identity. His real name was René Brabazon Raymond but that was no kind of name for a writer of nasty thrillers. Apparently Docherty didn't cut it either, because this was the only book he published under this name. But it was as tough-minded as anything he wrote in the late 1930s and early 40s.

He Won't Need It Now is about a newspaperman who is fired, then set up to play the fall guy by a mysterious fat man. Instead of taking his woes to the cops like any law-abiding citizen, our hero decides to finagle his way to the heart of the situation and work at the same level as the crooks. He figures he'd rather be rich than honest, the motivating force at the core of most Chase books.

James Hadley Chase

He Won't Need It Now / The Dead Stay Dumb

978-1-944520-07-6 \$19.95



The Dead Stay Dumb is even more basic. Dillon is an out-of-town thug who comes to the city to take what he can get. He rules with his fists and a distinctly positive attitude—he's positive that whatever he wants, he'll get. Sometimes this works for him, sometimes it doesn't. But wouldn't you know it, a dame enters the picture, and soon becomes the Delilah to his Sampson, gradually defusing the big man as only a woman in a gangster book can.

This novel was reprinted in the U.S. as *Kiss My Fist!*, and we were sorely tempted to go with that title instead. It brutally sums up the book, capturing the essence of Dillon in a way that makes the UK title sound positively artsy. This was also another one of those early Chase books which was watered down by the author in a subsequent edition after he and his British publisher lost their 1942 obscenity suit. We used the unexpurgated version—or at least the most unexpurgated version we could find—figuring our readers would want the original or nothing at all.

We've got more early Chase books planned for this Fall. If you like gangster fiction, you really can't go wrong with Chase's 1940s crime books. His style and subject matter evolved over the years; he wrote more about con artists and shady ladies once he got going in the 1950s. But these early novels are in a category all their own—American crime classics written by an Englishman who eventually settled in France.

If you're a member of the Stark House Crime Club, you will automatically be shipped the Holding book. We'll send an email out to members to make sure you want the Chase book, too, before shipping that one.

And that's it for June. Right now, we need to get back to work on *The Red Hot Typewriter* by Hugh Merrill, which we are readying for an August release. This is a biography of John D. MacDonald as told through his letters, and provides a fascinating look at this fairly private individual. If nothing else, reading it makes you want to go back and re-read all your JDM books, and that can only be a good thing.

Before we close, however, we've got another sale, a **Springtime Sale of the Slightly Soiled**. That is, we've got some returns that really don't have much wrong with them—a dinged corner, a thumb crease, a bit of shop wear—but just enough that we can't sell them as new. For readers of the Stark House Newsletter, well, you can have them for \$5 each plus media mail shipping, and all you have to do is write to griffinskye3@sbcglobal.net to order them.

Here's what we've got, while supplies last (3-4 copies in most cases):

- 📖 Framed in Guilt/My Flesh is Sweet by Day Keene
- 📖 Lust Queen/Lust Victim by Don Elliott (Robert Silverberg)
- 📖 Fell the Angels by Catherine Butzen
- 📖 Dan Port Omnibus 1 by Peter Rabe
- 📖 Dan Port Omnibus 2 by Peter Rabe
- 📖 Kitten With a Whip/Kiss Her Goodbye by Wade Miller
- 📖 Night of the Horns/Cry Wolfram by Douglas Sanderson
- 📖 Snowbound/Games by Bill Pronzini
- 📖 Little Men, Big World/Vanity Row by W. R. Burnett
- 📖 Spouses & Other Crimes by Andrew Coburn

As an appropriate P.S. to this month's newsletter, we need to share a few of the critical comments which have been coming in on some of our new books. Point of pride, if you will.

LEAVE HER TO HELL by Fletcher Flora

"The plots are strong enough to capture and hold our attention, and Flora rewards our tenacity with pages of sardonic and often quirky dialogue."—Alan Cranis, *Bookgasm*

"A well-plotted 1950s private eye novel with a minimum of sex and violence and a maximum of wit and intelligence."—Sergio Angelini, *Tipping My Fedora*

"The dialogue is terse, the narration is colorful ... and the stories are garish and shocking in a way that makes us unable to stop reading. A little-known author who richly deserves a renaissance." — David Pitt, *Booklist*

TOMMY RED by Charlie Stella

"Why the hell isn't Stella on every mystery lover's must-read list... While the plotline may be a figment of Stella's imagination, the interaction between and amongst the characters is absolutely the real deal."—Don Kirkendall, *Men Reading Books*

"As usual Stella's ear for dialogue is amazingly authentic and accurate, which not only lends credibility to each of his characters but also adds to the headlong pace of the

narrative... Simmering underneath all the action and dialogue is the understated themes of change and regret.”—Alan Cranis, *Bookgasm*

“Stella serves up a tasty goombah stew with a splash of Guinness, and no one can make this recipe simmer better than he does.”—*Publishers Weekly*

“If you miss Elmore Leonard, give Charlie Stella’s *Tommy Red* a look...highly recommended.”—Bill Crider, *Pop Culture Magazine*

CRY BLOOD by H. Vernor Dixon

“Dixon’s writing is superb on all counts, and he stands out even among noirmasters. Classic crime fans must not miss out. Get this book.”—Kristofer Upjohn, *Noir Journal*

TRUTH ALWAYS KILLS by Rick Ollerman

“A moody novel with a sullen authority. A quality read but not a light one.”—Don Crinklaw, *Booklist*

“If you’re looking for a fast-paced crime novel, here it is.”—George Kelley

Until next time....

—Greg Shepard, publisher
Stark House Press

Bring back the mystery!

