

STARK HOUSE PRESS

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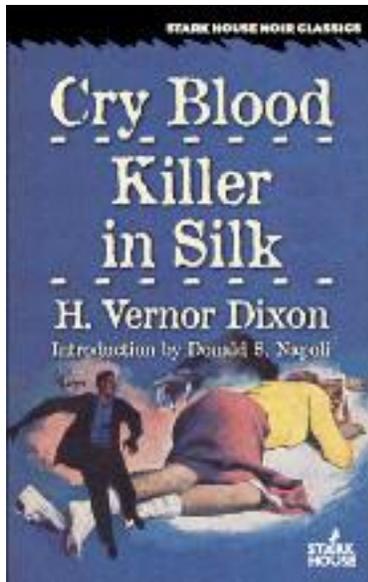
Hello Stark House Crime Club members and those of you who just want to keep up with Stark House books. Welcome, one and all. Here it is December already. Seems like we were just celebrating Christmas a few months ago, and it's snuck up on us again. There is Christmas music in all the stores, Christmas ads on TV, and Christmas cookies everywhere you look.

Here at Stark House we just received our next-to-the-last book of the year in the form of *The Yellow Claw / The Golden Scorpion* by Sax Rohmer. We think that art director Mark Shepard outdid himself on the cover this time. Very distinctive. And we really should give a tip of hat to Mark. Sometimes all he has to work with is the fact that the book is set in a jail, or that there is a femme fatale, or that there's a bank robbery. We do what we can to point him in a direction, but what he comes up with is often just happy accident, and sometimes pure magic.

With the Sax Rohmer book, there was a little of both.

For the Lionel White book we just published, we used a new artist, James Heimer, who we hope to work with again. His stylized image is perfect for the heist-gone-wrong angle. And JT Lindross's cover art for *Fell the Angels* is pretty cool, too. We asked for an urban fantasy cover that involved selkies, and he definitely came through. No mean feat when you consider that he's (probably) never seen a selkie. But then, neither have we. Good job, JT.

When it came time to create a cover for *Cry Blood/Killer in Silk* by H. Vernor Dixon, our January book, Mark tried all sorts of angles. But nothing was working right this time. Our fault entirely—we weren't giving the right signals. Finally, we sent him the original cover art to see if that suggested something. He ended up using this original Barye Phillips cover art, but taking all the background characters away, leaving us with a giant hand pointing at a running man. Mark worked his graphic magic and it came out perfectly.



H. Vernor Dixon

Cry Blood / Killer in Silk

978-1-933586-79-3 \$20.95

Cry Blood is the story of a man unjustly accused of a young girl's disappearance and murder. The evidence is circumstantial, but the town folk soon make up their mind that he must be guilty—her shoes were found loosely buried in his garage floor. His friends turn on him, and soon his own wife is making rash accusations. No one believes that he could be innocent. This book has the accusatory ring of truth to it, and is just as timely today as when it was originally published in 1956. The law says a man is guilty until proven innocent, but the court of public opinion usually works that in reverse.

The second book in the two-fer is *Killer in Silk* and it also involves a someone who is assumed to be guilty, this time a society woman who has closed herself off from the world in the mansion where her husband was shot. She had been found innocent of the crime, but assumes the mantle of guilt anyway. When she meets an alcoholic writer, the two of them eventually figure out what really happened that night. This book says as much about how writers see themselves as it does about guilt.

Harry Vernor Dixon was an interesting guy. He was a vaudevillian actor—or in the words of the time, an eccentric dancer—with his sister when he was younger, always pulled toward the arts and entertainment. He was born in Sacramento, attended the California School of Fine Arts in San Francisco, and remained a resident of Northern California all his life. This is where he set most of his books. *Cry Blood* is set in the Monterey area, and *Killer in Silk* is set in San Francisco and Marin.

Dixon also had an interest in aviation and diving (he invented a vertical lift takeoff propeller blade that is still used today). His daughter Pamela calls him "eccentric, vain, sentimental and always on stage, with a wonderful story-telling voice; Richard Burton comes to mind." Larger than life, and always the life of the party. We'd like to have known him.

Harry Dixon began as a short story writer in the mid-1930s for *Colliers*, *American Magazine* and *Cosmopolitan*—the slicks, as they were known then—and eventually

turned to novel writing in the 1950s. He published 15 novels in his lifetime, most of them paperback originals. Prologue Books has made some of his books available as ebooks, but this will be his first two-fer for Stark House in an official print edition. And just to sweeten the deal, we got Donald S. Napoli, curator and writer for the *Reading California* blog, to provide an informative introduction.

And thus begins January 2016.

But before we check out of 2015, we have one more sale to share with you to help your Christmas gift buying. If you go to our website, we are willing to **discount the entire catalog of books**—everything on the site—by 40% for the rest of the month of December 2015, plus media mail shipping. The discount isn't available at the website, only through this newsletter. If you contact us at griffinskye3@sbcglobal.net, we will make sure you get the discount, and are billed via paypal.

It's just our way of saying thank you for your continued support. See you in 2016!

—Greg Shepard, publisher
Stark House Press

Bring back the mystery!

