

revealing diary augments the tense, surprise-laden plot. *Agent: Elaine Markson, Markson Thoma Literary Agency. (Jan.)*

The Troop

Nick Cutter. S&S/Gallery, \$26 (368p) ISBN 978-1-4767-1771-5

This predictable, carnage-filled thriller from the pseudonymous Cutter will appeal mainly to horror fans. On Falstaff Island, off Prince Edward Island, a troop of boy scouts encounters Thomas Henry Padgett, aka “the Hungry Man,” a victim of military research gone terribly wrong. An act of charity toward Padgett, who carries a deadly contagion, turns out to be a big mistake that leaves the scouts with no choice but to rely on their limited tools and rudimentary survival skills. Meanwhile, an alarmed military has quarantined Falstaff Island to protect the world from the evil released there. While the boys have many options, escape is not among them. Competent prose makes up in part for stock characters—the nerd, the popular kid, the quiet psychotic. Cutter’s appeal to modern-day disquiet over the ethical lapses of the military-industrial complex will strike many as pro forma rather than based in any authentic out-

rage over abuses real or imagined. *Agent: Kirby Kim, William Morris Endeavor. (Jan.)*

Haiti Noir 2: The Classics

Edited by Ewidge Danticat. Akashic, \$24.95 (320p) ISBN 978-1-61775-192-9; \$15.95 trade paper ISBN 978-1-61775-193-6

The second Haiti entry in Akashic’s noir anthology series reprints 16 stories, two novel excerpts, and one poem covering every corner of the island. Not exactly Cornell Woolrich noir, as Danticat suggests in her introduction when she notes that she wanted to include writers she admires, but the “noir genre, or elements thereof—however stretched—narrowed” her choices. But then, Haiti in general seems foreboding enough, with one of the authors (alongside his supporters) killed by Duvalierists in 1961, another by the 2010 earthquake. Nick Stone’s “Barbancourt Blues” gets the right mood with a man stalked by gangs of young boys, waiting for a chance to take him down. Roxane Gay’s “Things I Know About Fairy Tales” covers the kidnapping of *une diaspora*—a native who has moved to another country but returned to visit relatives. The strong point for this volume is that al-

most all of the stories are by actual Haitians. *(Jan.)*

The Blood Promise: A Hugo Marston Novel

Mark Pryor. Prometheus/Seventh Street, \$15.95 trade paper (280p) ISBN 978-1-61614-815-7

In Pryor’s engaging third Hugo Marston novel (after 2012’s *The Bookseller*), Hugo, a regional security officer at the American embassy in Paris, is less than thrilled to learn that he must babysit Charles Lake, a U.S. senator and presidential hopeful, at the chateau of the aristocratic Tourville family outside Paris. An isolationist, Lake is an unlikely official to be charged with sensitive diplomatic negotiations between France and the U.S. regarding the French island of Guadeloupe. When Lake is drugged at dinner and claims that intruders broke into his room and searched his papers, Hugo’s detective friend, Raul Garcia, discovers that one of the distinguished guests is linked to an unsolved murder. Stonewalling by the Tourvilles and subsequent killings tell Hugo that a missing antique chest may hold the key to the case. Despite some clumsy treatment of character details that are irrelevant to the plot, the cliffhanger chapter endings and an exciting chase involving the *Queen Mary II* liner keep the reader riveted. *Agent: Ann Collette, Rees Literary Agency. (Jan.)*

★ The Poisoned Island

Lloyd Shepherd. Washington Square, \$16 trade paper (432p) ISBN 978-1-4767-1286-4

Memorable prose, tight plotting, and complex characters distinguish Shepherd’s follow-up to 2012’s *The English Monster*. In June 1812, the *Solander*, a “nondescript ship containing wonders,” arrives in London, bearing the fruits of a major botanical expedition to Tahiti. The discoveries prove to have more than scientific implications when members of the crew start turning up dead with smiles on their faces, even after being strangled or having their throats slit. The task of solving the crimes falls to Charles Horton, of the Thames River Police, whose methods have already been successful in a number of cases—notably the Ratcliffe Highway murders six months earlier. The involve-

★ The Dead in Their Vaulted Arches: A Flavia de Luce Novel

Alan Bradley. Delacorte, \$24 (336p) ISBN 978-0-385-34405-0

The mystery is personal for Flavia de Luce in Bradley’s excellent sixth novel featuring the precocious 11-year-old sleuth in post-WWII England (after 2013’s *Speaking from Among the Bones*). The body of Harriet de Luce, her mother who disappeared in a mountaineering accident when Flavia was about a year old, has finally been recovered, and has been transported to the family home in Bishop’s Lacey for burial. As if that news wasn’t dramatic enough, Flavia is dumbfounded when she finds that former Prime Minister Winston Churchill is on hand for the coffin’s arrival at the railway station, and baffled when a stranger accosts her with a message for her father that “the Gamekeeper is in jeopardy.” Confusion turns to horror when the messenger falls, or is pushed, beneath the wheels of the funeral train. Despite the turmoil of these developments, Flavia retains her droll wit (showing off her encyclopedic knowledge of chemistry, she notes, “Metol, of course, was nothing more than a fancy name for plain old Monomethylparaminophenol Sulfate”). The solution to a murder is typically neat, and the conclusion sets up future books nicely. *Agent: Denise Bukowski, Bukowski Agency. (Jan.)*

