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**winter reading 2005-6**

court. Our protagonist, Thomas Dennehy, has a good track record as a prosecutor. He also has a lovely daughter named Jasmine he sees on weekends and a bottle of Zoloft — little blue pills that keep him psychically above water.

And then Dennehy learns that someone claims he sent the wrong man to the death chamber. And there's his current problem with the prosecution of Moses Bol, a Sudanese refugee accused of murdering a white woman in the Nations, a militant enclave rife with racial hatred.

Dennehy grapples with these developments as Nashville smolders. He meets the Reverend Fiona, a fiery anti-death penalty advocate and intriguing beauty who claims she was with Bol at the time of the homicide, thus providing the accused with a handy alibi.

Page after page, our hero struggles to uncover the truth, confront his feelings for Fiona and stay out of harm's way. I rest my case.

Arvin grew up on a Kansas cattle ranch and was a music producer in Nashville, where he now lives and writes full-time.

— Dave Johnson

istically won't talk about it. The local sheriff wants construction to continue at the site and sweeps aside Jake's assertions of foul play. But Manny and Jake will stop at nothing to uncover the bones' deadly secret.

— Vanessa Salvia

**TWO HISTORIES**

**The Stranger House** by Reginald Hill.  
HarperCollins, 2005. Hardcover, \$24.95.

**R**eginald Hill, known primarily for his Dalziel and Pascoe police procedurals, ventures into different territory with his new novel, *The Stranger House*, a mystery that is part detective story and part secret history of the seemingly quiet English town of Illthwaite. The story involves Australian mathematics student, Samantha (Sam) Flood, and Spanish seminarian Miguel (Mig) Madero. Sam and Mig join forces after finding their individual searches into Illthwaite's history intersect. Each seeks to answer a family mystery, but the rocks they overturn reveal unsuspected secrets.

Hill's writing often does not seem up to the task of conveying the atmosphere of suspicion and secrecy he seeks to conjure, especially mysteries that span four centuries. Still, there is undoubtedly a large demand for detective fiction where deep historical secrets are revealed, notably when an element of religion is mixed in, as in the freight train that is *The Da Vinci Code*.

While not an entirely satisfying historical mystery, *The Stranger House* has enough twists and turns to please lovers of the genre and also make for a quick and pleasant read.

— Chris Ledford



**BONES NEVER LIE**

**Remains Silent** by Michael Baden and Linda Kenney. Knopf, 2005. Hardcover, \$23.95.

**I** almost didn't read this after scanning the dust cover, which describes the two main characters. Philomena "Manny" Manfreda is a New York City civil rights attorney and "unabashed shopaholic" who wouldn't be caught dead in anything but Chanel or Prada. A fashion victim who carries her poodle everywhere, Manny's character seemed laughable. However, 10 minutes into the book, I was hooked.

Manny bristles at any semblance of injustice and has acquired a reputation as a fierce defender of the disenfranchised. She is prosecuting a high-profile case when she calls Dr. Jake Rosen, Deputy Chief Medical Examiner of New York City, to the stands. He crucifies the prosecution's testimony. Manny can't stand the thought of him.

But soon after, bones are uncovered at the construction site of a shopping mall. When one set of bones is identified, Jake recommends Manny to represent the family of the deceased. Manny and Jake quickly become entangled in a decades-old cover up involving a former mental hospital. The body count rises. Jake and Manny develop a relationship, enhanced by a first "date" at an autopsy. Drawing on his encyclopedic knowledge of crime scenes, Jake explains the difference between coughed-up blood and blood splatters from a cut. And that there's always a disturbance in the soil when a body is buried, no matter how many years have passed.

But the unearthed bones share a tragic abnormality that even Jake's trained eye can't see. Retired medical examiner Dr. Pete Harrigan knows something but uncharacter-

**general nonfiction**

**MOVING FORWARD**

**How To Rent a Negro** by damali ayo. Lawrence Hill Books, 2005. Paperback, \$14.95.

**L**unching with friends, you look around and realize that something about the gathering seems particularly pale. You examine your companions: white, white, white, and ... white! Could it be true? Is everybody you know white?

Or is this you: you get constant invitations from friends trying to liven up their social events by adding some local color. You answer so many questions about being black that you're exhausted at the end of the day.

damali ayo, author of *How to Rent a Negro*, offers a solution designed for everyone. Since slavery is illegal, renting can get you the services you need or the compensation you deserve. If you're white, you can get your questions answered, show your friends and colleagues how you're "down with diversity" and always have a well-mannered, articulate black person available for

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