

removing his victims' ears, lips, nose, arms, legs, etc., while keeping them alive to watch their own mutilation. Despite a certain professional admiration for Danco's dexterity, Dexter decides to take on the case. It's the contradictions in Dexter's character that make it all work—he's smart, he's funny, he cares for children, and yet he has no normal human responses or emotions. The first book in the series, *Darkly Dreaming Dexter*, was very well received; this one should be as well, and deservedly so. (July 19)

★ This Dame for Hire

SANDRA SCOPPETTONE. Ballantine, \$21.95 (272p) ISBN 0-345-47810-X

An original idea—a female PI working on her own in 1943—and an unusually imaginative portrait of a New York City coping, surviving, even thriving during WWII lift the first of a new suspense series from Scoppettone (*Gonna Take a Homicidal Journey*). Faye Quick makes a tough and touching heroine, with a voice that just cries out for an actress like Ida Lupino to bring her to cinematic life. She starts as a secretary, learns everything her sleazy but charming boss knows about being a detective, then assumes charge of the agency after her employer is drafted. "Even though I *looked* like any 26-year-old gal anklng round New York City in '43, there was one main difference between me and the rest of the broads," Faye tells us. "Show me another Jane who did my job and I'd eat my hat." This lively, slightly mocking tone continues at perfect pitch, as Quick finds the dead body of a missing young woman on a snowy street, then is hired by the victim's parents to catch the killer. There are echoes of Chandler and Hammett in the distance, but the plot offers some fresh surprises. Best of all, Quick's 1943 New York looks like old magazine and newspaper photographs come to life—not faded but enhanced by the passage of time. *Agent, Charlotte Sheedy*. (July 5)



Double Tap

STEVEN MARTINI. Putnam, \$26.95 (432p) ISBN 0-399-15092-7

In veteran Martini's exciting eighth legal thriller starring Paul Madriani (after 2003's *The Arraignment*), the San Diego defense attorney takes on yet another especially difficult case. When Madelyn Chapman, the owner of a computer software company that sells a controversial security program to the U.S. government, is found shot twice in the head in her La Jolla home, the closeness of the bullet wounds indicates a "double tap," a feat typical of a highly skilled military marksman. Army Sgt. Emiliano Ruiz, a 20-year vet who served in Panama and the first Gulf War and who freelanced as a security guard (and occasional sex partner) for Chapman, is arrested for the killing. After the flashy defense lawyer originally in charge of the case quits, apparently under pressure, the more compassionate and less publicity-minded Madriani and his partner take it on. Ruiz turns out to have a seven-year gap in his résumé: was he in fact doing dirty work for Special Ops? And can Madriani find out his secrets in time to keep the sympathetic soldier from life in prison? The compelling plot builds to a conclusion that should surprise even longtime fans. *Agent, Esther Neuberg at ICM. BOMC main selection; Doubleday, Literary Guild and Mystery Guild alternates*. (July 26)

Double Cross Blind

JOEL ROSS. Doubleday, \$24.95 (384p) ISBN 0-385-51388-7

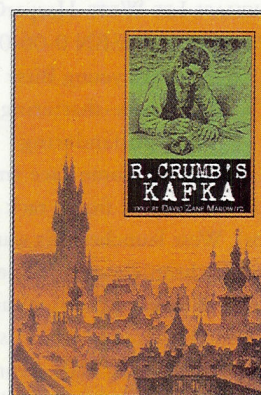
On the morning of December 1, 1941, at the start of Ross's debut thriller, American Thomas Wall wakes up in a London hospital, where he's recovering from wounds he suffered as a member of a Canadian unit massacred in battle on Crete. Thomas blames his diplomat brother, Earl, for betraying his unit to the Nazis and wants to know where Earl is. Later that day, a British intelligence officer persuades Thomas to pose as his brother in order to pump a captured German spy. Aware of Thomas's identity, the spy sets him on the trail of hidden microfilm containing information regarding the upcoming

Japanese attack in the Pacific. Thomas attempts to enlist the aid of Earl's wife, Harriet, but as she works for British intelligence, she has her own plans. A by-the-numbers plot, clichéd minor characters (including cockney hit men and a gold-hearted stripper), protagonists as unlikable as the antagonists and a foreseeable conclusion (hint: America will go to war) all add up to a routine read. *Agent, Henry Morrison*. (July 12)

White

CHRISTOPHER WHITCOMB. Little, Brown, \$24.95 (400p) ISBN 0-316-60080-6

The hero of *Black* (2004) returns to star in a thriller plot that's pretty familiar, but which becomes steadily more absorbing through understated treatment and well-done incidentals. Jeremy Waller, a dedicated family man



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