

the present-day Southwest. Ann, a New Mexico librarian, spots the reincarnated Oppenheimer and Fermi at a restaurant near her home; Szilard soon joins them; Ann persuades her garden-designer husband, Ben, to take them all in. Subsequent trips to Los Alamos and (with the help of a rich UFOlogist) Japan to view the monuments at Hiroshima persuade the three to work for disarmament. Army surveillance ensues; at one rally, shots are fired; and Christian Fundamentalists try to take things in a more rapturous direction. It takes considerable talent to pull off a conceit like this, and for the most part Millet makes it look easy, drawing full-blown, dead-on portraits of the three scientists that don't diminish their characters or their work. Her threads on weapons buildup, the topsy-turvy mosaic of contemporary American political culture and the difficulties of marriage feel realistically motivated and nicely argued. Millet gives a whimsical conceit real depth, and the result, if a bit pious in spots, is a superb, memorable novel. (July)

The Other Shulman

ALAN ZWEIBEL. Villard, \$23.95 (304p) ISBN 1-4000-6266-7

Told via flashbacks as its protagonist runs the New York City marathon, this very likable effort from a former *Saturday Night Live* writer is the story of T.O. Shulman, New Jerseyan, stationary store owner and father of three who's gained and lost enough pounds to make "another Shulman." The novel takes its cues from the same green lawns of suburbia that have enchanted writers from John Updike to Chang-rae Lee, but it is Tom Perrotta, with his more quotidian approach to the problems of suburbanites, to whom this work owes its biggest debt. Shulman, in a rut, has decided that his path to salvation is 26 miles long. A fading marriage, absent children and the imminent failure of his business are further complicated by his discovery of a doppelgänger, a real "other Shulman," owner of a mega-stationery store who symbolizes the decline of the Capra-esque smalltown ideal in which displays of vanity and ambition are suspect. But as Shulman's legs grow stronger, his nascent will begins to assert itself in his

escalating battle against the cynical manipulations and spiritual falsity that his twin represents. The book wavers by adopting a kind of last-minute ad hoc magical realism that muddles questions about exactly how real Shulman's enemy is, but it nevertheless tells a winning tale. *Agent, Suzanne Gluck. (July 12)*

To the Power of Three

LAURA LIPPMAN. Morrow, \$24.95 (448p) ISBN 0-06-078492-X

The trouble with writing the Tess Monaghan mysteries is that fans want more, more, more. Lippman scored big with her 2003 stand-alone, *Every Secret Thing*, but this one doesn't pack the same punch. Here's Baltimore—outlying Glendale, anyway. Here are two terrific cops: Sgt. Harold Lenhardt, the family man, and his partner, Kevin Infante, who dates babes. But where's a woman to inspire and worry us, as Tess does? Lippman's latest teems with female characters, but none whose POV elicits strong emotion. Since third grade, three girls have been best friends: rich, pretty Kat Hartigan, athletic Josie Patel and dramatic Perri Kahn. Now high school seniors, they've come to a gruesome end in the girls' bathroom. Kat is dead. Perri, the presumptive shooter, is missing half her face. Josie has a bullet in her left foot. She alone can talk, and it's clear to Lenhardt that she's lying. Lippman zigzags her way to the moment of truth. Some of the scenes are wonderfully well told, and Lippman, as always, neatly skewers people in power (the school principal tells a 911 dispatcher, "I wouldn't characterize it so much as a school shooting... but as a shooting at the school"). But this novel doesn't so much rise above genre as make one miss it. *Agent, Vicky Bijur. (July)*

Poison Heart

MARY LOGUE. Ballantine, \$23.95 (240p) ISBN 0-345-46224-6

Deputy sheriff Claire Watkins is on the case once again in Logue's latest mystery (after *Bone Harvest*), set as usual in the small but not-so-sleepy town of Fort St. Antoine, Wis., population 142. The story opens on ruthless gold-digger Patty Jo Tilde as she idly watches her hus-

band, Walter, suffer a stroke, hoping he'll die so she can sell the family farm. A how-will-she-solve-it rather than a whodunit, the novel's fun is in rooting for Claire as she first suspects and then resourcefully tries to prove what the reader knows all along. With the exception of the nasty Patty Jo—the lone Fort St. Antoine resident with a penchant for murder and arson rather than baking cherry pies—the novel offers an endearing cast of characters. When not busy sleuthing, Claire enjoys a smalltown camaraderie with charming fellow citizens, who include farmers, a retired schoolteacher, a bookstore owner, an artist and Claire's live-in steady, Rich Haggard. Except for a few tense moments, this is a kinder, gentler novel of suspense, engagingly but slowly paced. Logue's fans who have followed Claire's evolution from big city policewoman to smalltown cop and from new widow to contented girlfriend will be cheered by her resilience and continuing crime-solving adventures. *Agent, Jane Chelius. (July)*

Lifeguard

JAMES PATTERSON AND ANDREW GROSS. Little, Brown, \$26.95 (400p) ISBN 0-316-05785-1

Each bum Ned Kelly, a part-time lifeguard, pool guy and errand runner in Palm Beach, Fla., has just scored with beautiful, rich Tess McAuliffe. Life sure is looking up, especially from his days back in chilly South Boston. He's looking forward to another round with Tess, but first he has to help some small-time hoodlum pals commit a \$60-million art heist. It's supposed to be an easy job, but everything goes to hell—the paintings they were after weren't even there—and soon enough his pals are all dead, as is Tess. Ned goes on the run, accused of the murders and the heist as well. He flees back to Boston, but gets caught by cute-as-a-button FBI agent Ellie Shurtleff, assigned to investigate the case for the agency's Art Theft and Fraud department. After some rough stuff, he takes her hostage and in short order they've bonded. Ellie can see that Ned's a good guy who could never have committed the crimes he's charged with, so the two of them join forces to bring down the actual thieves and killers. It's a twisty story that

will engage the interest of beach-goers everywhere, whose sun-addled brains will put up with pedestrian writing and an improbable plot just to find out exactly whodunit and why. (*July 11*)

★Fire Sale

SARA PARETSKY. Putnam, \$25.95 (416p) ISBN 0-399-15279-2

Private eye V.I. Warshawski takes a break from tony Lakeview to fill in for her old high school basketball coach on Chicago's South Side in her 12th adventure. Vic starts her volunteer stint looking for a team sponsor at megadiscount store By-Smart, whose founder, Buffalo Bill Bysen, is a fellow alum. Of all Bysen's cutthroat, cost-cutting family, only idealist 19-year-old Billy shows any interest in helping the team. When he disappears, his frustrated father hires Vic to find him. The mother of a high school basketball player also hires Vic to investigate sabotage at the flag factory where she works—an investigation cut short when the factory blows up before Vic's eyes. Things go no better at school or at home, and clues pile on but they don't add up. Vic takes her lumps as she makes her way from a fundamentalist church, where the pastor goes to extremes for his flock, to the city dump, where villains try to bury their secrets. Paretsky has recently tackled the Holocaust (*Total Recall*) and globalization (*Hard Time*); here she explores the struggles of the working poor and the schemes of the rich and infamous. Packed with social themes and moral energy, held together by humor, compassion and sheer feistiness, this novel shows why Paretsky and her heroine are such enduring figures in American detective fiction. *Agent, Dominick Abel. (July)*

Lord Vishnu's Love Handles: A Spy Novel (Sort Of)

WILL CLARKE. Simon & Schuster, \$23 (256p) ISBN 0-7432-7147-5

Travis Anderson, the protagonist of Clark's intentionally kitschy debut, knows when someone will call on the telephone and he knows that his wife is cheating on him. A dream told him to get into the Web-site building business,

and he's now quite comfortable. Following this early-pages setup (in another of the seemingly endless computer-oriented conceits by young male novelists), a bored Travis stumbles on a government Web site that stealthily head hunts psychics. Soon, he begins to help locate missing persons, but a crazed, power-mad co-worker kidnaps his wife and son, setting things in hectic motion. Travis's first-person narration is vivid and witty, and gives the dopey plot, which involves a man who claims to be an incarnation of the god Vishnu, nice nuance. But a tricked-out denouement, with Disney World wired to blow Atlanta Olympics-style, is overblown and finally pushes the book from campy and fun to silly and showy. *Agent, Jenny Ben for Trident Media Group. (July)*

Courtesan

DORA LEVY MOSSANEN. Touchstone, \$14 paper (384p) ISBN 0-7432-4678-0

Asweeping romance with intrigues in both fin de siècle Paris and repressive Persia, Mossanen's engrossing second novel (after *Harem*) follows the sentimental education of a young seductress. Though Simone knows from a young age that she's too romantic to follow her courtesan mother, Françoise, into the family business, her grandmother, famed Parisian madam Gabrielle (née Ester Abramowicz), isn't so convinced. A really handsome man, she figures, can seduce Simone, and thus initiate her into the habits of wealthy courtesans. Gabrielle sets upon Cyrus, a handsome Persian jeweler, and Simone is intrigued by the man who supplies only the rarest diamonds to the shah's court ("Was the origin of red diamonds the blood of mistreated diggers, the blazing eyes of dragons guarding illicit mines, or the tears of children forced into hard labor?" she wonders). She succumbs to his charms—but then they fall in love. Simone moves with her new husband to the rugged mountains of Persia to make a quiet life living as Jews in a Muslim country, but her happiness is short-lived. Abrupt shifts between times and locations confuse, but the engaging plot wins out. And while the sex scenes are a bit over-

cooked (Simone "directed the creamy gaze of her breasts" at a suitor), readers will find themselves gripped by spirited Simone's many adventures. *Agent, Loretta Barrett. (July)*

Godlike

RICHARD HELL. Akashic, \$13.95 paper (150p) ISBN 1-888451-77-7

Poet and punk pioneer Hell's lyrically melancholy second novel (after *Go Now*), set primarily in the East Village circa 1972, honors decadence and dissolution and celebrates art and angst in a compelling if unsettling story of 27-year-old married poet Paul Vaughn's ("I'm not really a faggot. I just have a queer streak") transcendent affair with a 16-year-old. Would-be poet Randall Terence Wode ("T") is "a rampaging adolescent" whose "bony boy's buttocks" become, for a brief time, the center of Vaughn's physical desire, and whose brash spirit is, for 30 years, the core of Vaughn's emotional universe. The novel's wrenching account of a memorable love, peppered with poems (some original, others by James Schuyler, Ron Padgett and others), skips between the months of the older poet's affair with the cocky young Kentucky runaway and, decades later, the month of Vaughn's most recent institutionalization for psychiatric observation. But Hell's prose, alternately explosive and tender but always charged with rewarding humanity, ably propels the story. By no means a mainstream effort, this gritty novel will find readers in the demimonde of poets and people who read them, and among those who appreciate how artistry and sexuality can fuel each other. (*July*)

The Difference Between Women and Men

BRET LOTT. Random, \$23.95 (208p) ISBN 0-375-50262-9

The third collection from Oprah author Lott (*A Song I Knew by Heart; Jewel*) comprises uneven stories that explore the frail relationships and difficult emotions that render life surreal: in the eponymous story, an angry wife miraculously moves all of her furniture, including a heavy armoire containing her bewil-