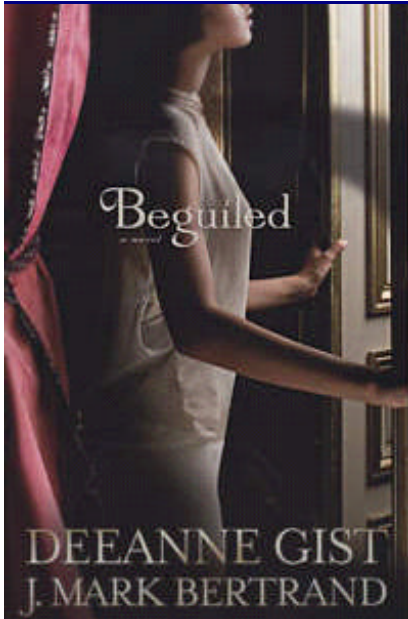


## Christian Fiction: Contemporary Mystery/Suspens

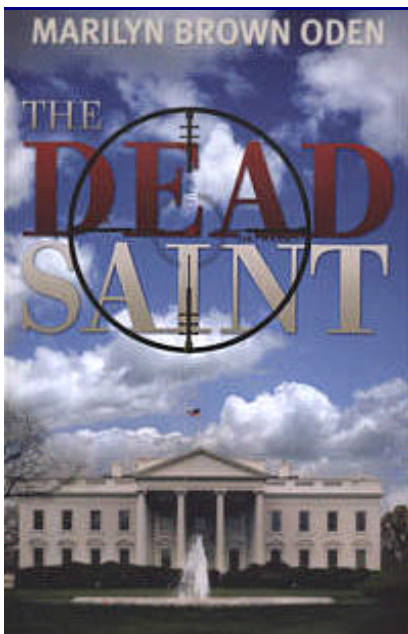


### Beguiled

by Deanne Gist & J. Mark Bertrand  
publ by Bethany House imprint of Baker Pub from Lion  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-0-764-20628-3) 19/03/2010

I liked this book. It was easy to read and captivating from the get go. Even though set in modern day Charleston the location of the story still took you back in time to the golden age of Charleston opulence. -  
This suspense novel has you guessing all the way along, drawing you back and forth between who was the goodie and who was the baddie. -  
The characters had a good range of personalities that come together well and also had you fooled, reminding you that you shouldn't judge a book by its cover. On that note I liked the front cover but felt that the title and authors should have been embossed; It would have been a nice touch – adding to that opulent theme of Charleston. Saying that though, it didn't detract from the story. Happy reading!

Notes by [Zo&euml; Stevenson](#)

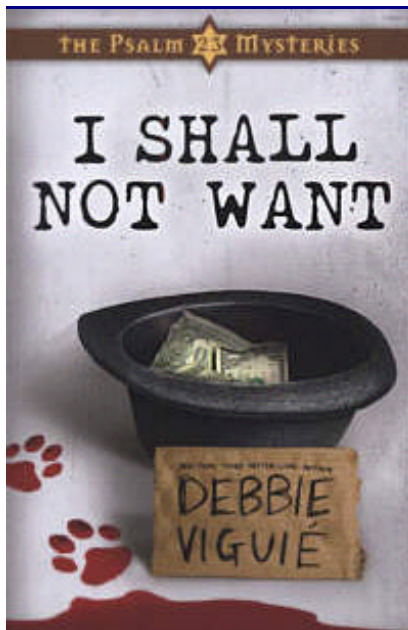


### The Dead Saint

by Marilyn Brown Oden  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-426-70867-1) Jun 2011

This is a fast moving, well written and enjoyable novel of international intrigue and murder that begins on the streets of New Orleans and ends in the Oval office at the White House. -  
The story starts with an apparent random shooting of a New Orleans Saints football player, continues through the tortuous realms of Balkan politics until with the assassination of a head of state it moves to the very heart of the American political system. Bishop Lynn Peterson becomes increasingly embroiled in a plot involving a mysterious Balkan secret society and deception at the highest level, and the lives of her husband and she herself are at risk as she wrestles with questions of trust, mental and physical pressure and most important of all, the spiritual dimension of her experience.

Notes by [George Taylor](#)



### **I Shall Not Want**

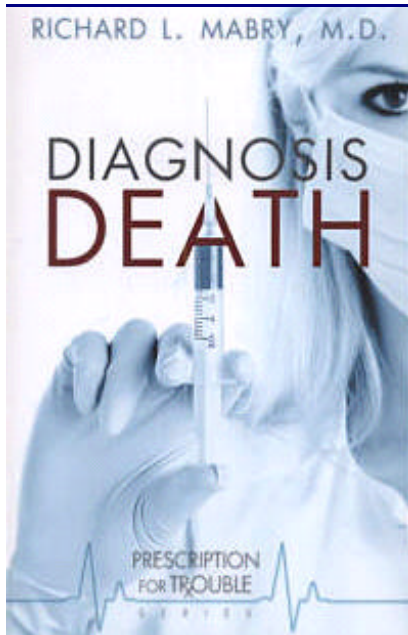
The Psalm 23 Mysteries

by Debbie Vigui  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-426-70190-0)

12/12/2010

I didn't read the first of these mysteries – I wish I had! -  
Cindy Preston has scarcely recovered from the traumas she encountered in the first book, before she is plunged into another mystery involving several of the characters from - The Lord is My Shepherd - and introducing others. -  
The back of the book gives an excellent pr&acute;cis - -  
It's Thanksgiving and Joseph Tyler, one of the members of Cindy's church, has organized a new charity that provides homeless people with rescue dogs to love and care for. But one by one, the homeless recipients are being murdered and their dogs stolen. Could an overly competitive millionaire with his prize-winning pooches and a grudge be behind the crimes? Or could it be someone much closer to Joseph who has something sinister to hide? Cindy and Jeremiah must rush to find a killer before he strikes again. -  
I couldn't have put it better. -  
A book to sit down and keep reading till you reach the end – enjoy!

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



## Diagnosis Death

Prescription for Trouble series

by Richard L. Mabry  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-426-71021-6) 04/04/2011

This is another book from - The Prescription for Trouble Series - , and again full of suspense with a little romance thrown in.

Still set in a medical environment but that would be expected due to the author's profession and the series format. Mabry has not over jargonised the book nor made the story unrealistic. -

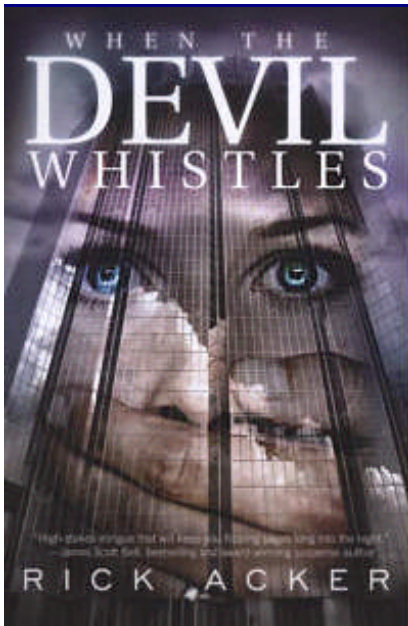
This is the second book by Mabry I have read and it has left me guessing all the way through which I like. As the previous book I reviewed in this series, - Medical Error - this book was quick to read although 302 pages long. The chapters were broken up by scene breaks which I find handy especially if I'm really tired or short on time and I can't indulge in a full chapter. -

There are references in this book to racial prejudices towards the lead character for being Hispanic and her colleague who is black which I find sad that this is still a part of the American society especially in Texas and Mabry is using the book to illustrate that racism still exists in the US. Maybe a topic for prayer. -

If this book was to be read in a book club there are some interesting discussion questions at the end. -

Again a good read and I would definitely read more of Mabry's stuff.

Notes by [Zo&uml; Stevenson](#)

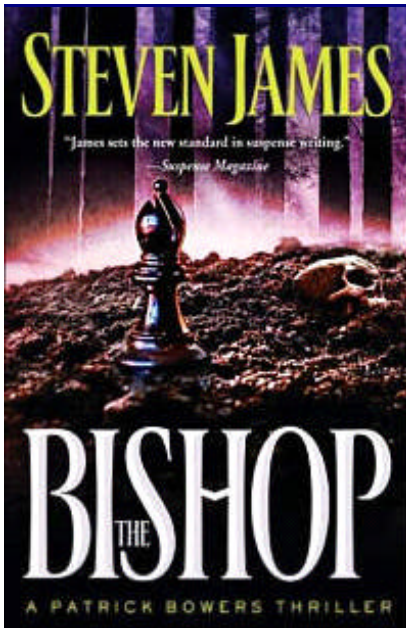


**When the Devil Whistles**

by Rick Acker  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-426-70767-4) Feb 2011

An enjoyable thriller with well-rounded characters set in the shadowy world of the professional whistle-blower. Allie inserts herself into various companies as a 'temp.' accountant to collect evidence of fraud and corruption involving government money; Connor, a Christian lawyer, handles the legal side and the company that hides her identity. Her high success rate, however, attracts the unwelcome attentions of the unscrupulous. Her cover is blown and blackmail and betrayal follow. The author works for the California Department of Justice and his loving detailing of legal procedures is, on occasion, slightly overdone. Also, the sub-plot involving Koreans on a salvage boat comes across as almost an entirely separate story that only connects with the rest in the final few chapters. Overall, though, the quality of the writing and characterisation overrides these quibbles. "You find out who you are when the devil whistles" is the theme: Connor's struggles to define and remain true to his ethical principles in the face of much pressure, and Allie's painful process of self-discovery when her world implodes, make fascinating reading.

Notes by [Diane Morrison](#)



### The Bishop

Patrick Bowers Thriller Book 4

by Steven James  
publ by Revell imprint of Baker Pub from Lion  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-0-800-73302-5) Oct 2010

Fourth in the chess-themed series featuring FBI agent, Pat Bowers, - The Bishop - continues the author's exploration of evil, morality and what it means to be human. Slightly less gory than its predecessors, this episode fleshes out the characters of some of the supporting cast, making them less stereotypical and more interesting. It also manages to consider deep issues while still maintaining the requisite pace and action. It is not absolutely necessary to have read the preceding three; the book stands alone and will appeal to any devotees of the genre. The villains are still appallingly fiendish and unnaturally clever, the maverick cop is still hampered by his antagonistic superiors and distracted by his personal life, and things are never quite resolved at the end – leading the reader neatly into the next sequel. This reader found the abrupt changes of viewpoint shifting from the first to the third person irritating, but others consider it inspired! Well-written, intelligent, but not for the faint-hearted.

Notes by [Diane Morrison](#)



## The Last Word

Sophie Trace Trilogy Book 2

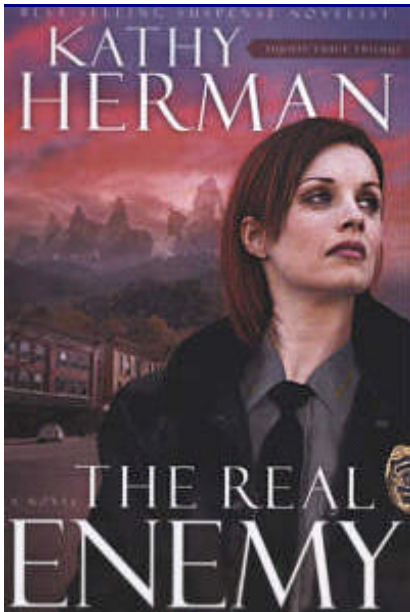
by Kathy Herman  
publ by Xlibris distributed by Gardners  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-434-76785-1) 29/05/2009

Vanessa Jessup – daughter of Police Chief, Brill – takes centre stage in the second instalment of the Sophie Trace trilogy. As her existence was only alluded to in the first book, Vanessa's character as the middle child is brought to life when she finds herself in a very precarious situation. After becoming romantically involved with her college professor, Vanessa discovers she is pregnant and is pressured by her commitment-phobic lover to get an abortion. While she recognises that this would in fact be the easiest option, her Christian upbringing and personal convictions about the sanctity of life convince her otherwise. When the father of her unborn child flees the scene, Vanessa is compelled to leave college and return to her parents' home in Sophie Trace – despite fears of disappointing them. -

The drama continues as Brill, not only having to come to terms with her daughter's surprise pregnancy announcement, also faces a very real threat on her life. A convicted wife-beater and murderer, who Brill helped put behind bars, is released and is out to take revenge on those police offers involved in his arrest. Time and resources are running out as she fights to protect herself – and her colleagues – from the man who has sworn to kill her. -

A vast improvement on the first book of the series, "The Last Word" is gripping, fast-paced and emotional. While some of the characters are still a little flat, and a few phrases have been over-used, the storyline is much more dynamic. More importantly, the gospel message is explained thoroughly and repeatedly in a number of different scenarios. The author deals with the pregnancy situation very sensitively, and conveys well the issues that a backslidden Christian would struggle with in our secular culture.

Notes by [Sarah Broady](#)



## The Real Enemy

Sophie Trace Trilogy Book 1

by Kathy Herman  
publ by Xlibris distributed by Gardners  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-434-76786-8) 01/04/2009

- The Real Enemy - is the first instalment of the Sophie Trace Trilogy by CBA best-selling author, Kathy Herman. The series – which sells itself as suspense fiction – follows the personal and professional trials of Chief Brill Jessup and her family. This first book sets the scene as Brill settles into Sophie Trace’s small-town life following an abrupt decision to relocate from her home, and eighteen-year career, in Memphis. Broken and bitter after being betrayed by her husband, Brill struggles to build a happy home for her nine-year old daughter, Emily, while still living with the man who broke her heart. Not only does she have to stay strong for her impressionable child, she also has to prove herself as the town’s first female chief of police. When innocent people start disappearing and Indian spirit legends are resurrected, the pressure mounts for Brill as she furiously attempts to solve the case and protect her family. -

The main issue covered in this story is that of betrayal and forgiveness. Brill – understandably - cannot come to terms with her husband’s infidelity and refuses to accept his heartfelt apologies. Her relationship with God also suffers as she delves deeper into her anger, and we eventually see her being brought to a point of real vulnerability where healing can begin. Some aspects of the storyline and dialogue are repetitive, and the characters are perhaps not as dynamic or memorable as they could be. But all in all, the crime-based plot is interesting and the overall message is one that continually needs to be heard in our broken world.

Notes by Sarah Broady

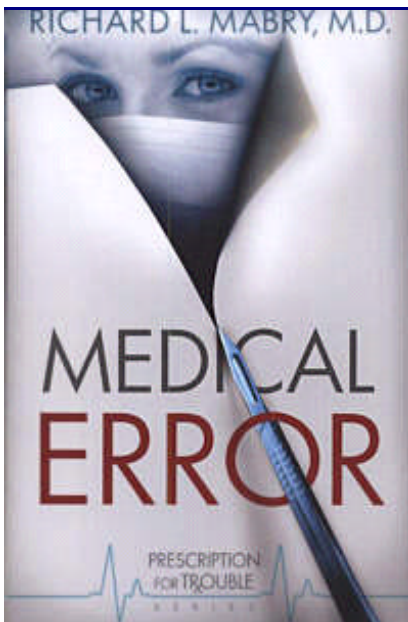


## Nightmare

by Robin Parrish  
publ by Bethany House imprint of Baker Pub from Lion  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-0-764-20607-8) 01/10/2010

Do ghosts exist? Is every incidence of 'paranormal activity' demonic? All Maia, daughter of two famous TV ghost-hunters, wants is a quiet, anonymous college education leading to a normal career among the living, but financial difficulties lead her to accept a job from an occult-obsessed, rich fellow student, Jordin, who wants a guided tour of America's most haunted sites. Maia is alarmed by the unusually high level of paranormal events that ensue. And then Jordin disappears and Maia finds herself teamed up with her erstwhile employer's hostile Christian fiancé to find out what has happened to her, and many others like her. The novel starts slowly and takes time to engage, possibly because none of the characters seem overly likeable at first, though some of them do develop. It is a fantasy novel, so don't expect a likely or realistic solution to the mystery, but it is – in the end – a gripping read. It does contain graphic and somewhat gory descriptions of supernatural phenomena, so not recommended for the nervous or the sensitive!

Notes by [Diane Morrison](#)



## Medical Error

Prescription for Trouble series

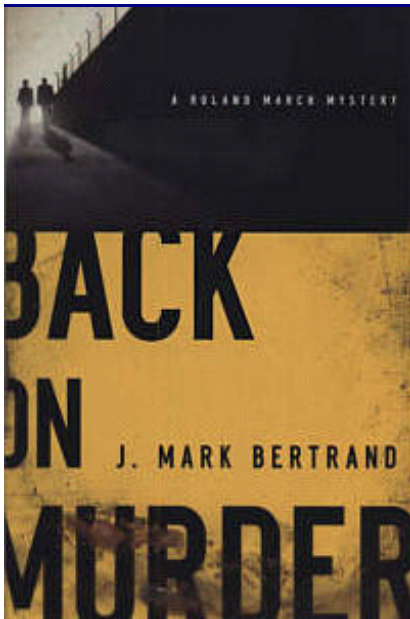
by Richard L. Mabry M.D.  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-426-71000-1) Aug 2010

This book came recommended on the back of the reputation of a book in the same series; - The Prescription for Trouble Series - , and they were not wrong. I very much enjoyed this story. It had a good balance of suspense and romance to my liking. -

Although set in a medical environment it is not over jargonised nor unrealistic, although the story was more akin to a John Grisham novel and was entertaining to read. At some points in the book I actually felt Mabry had been clever in his writing which left me a'gasp until I had read on further to see that I had been diverted off the scent. -

The book felt shorter than the average length book but I think that this was helped by the fact that the chapters were broken up by scene breaks which were quite handy if I was really tired or short on time and I couldn't indulge in a full chapter. - I liked this book and would definitely read more of Mabry's books.

Notes by [Zo&euml;l; Stevenson](#)



### Back On Murder

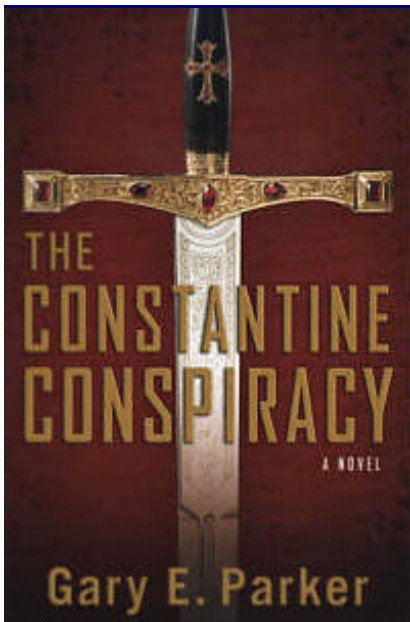
Roland March Mysteries

by J. Mark Bertrand  
publ by Bethany House imprint of Baker Pub from Lion  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-0-764-20637-5) 01/10/2010

Roland March is a Houston detective who is no longer performing at a level acceptable to him, or his Department. Once he was a top performer in the Houston Homicide Department but he is now disillusioned and is being given a number of low rank tasks taking him outside Homicide that are prodding him towards retirement. -

Then a sordid drug related shooting gives him the incentive to think again about his work, life, relationships, his career and leads him towards a more fulfilled life. A missing girl, and a series of seemingly unrelated crimes culminating in more savage murders and the exposure of police corruption at a high level carry the story forward and lead to March's reconciliation into the Homicide Department. A readable novel, with an unexpected twist in every chapter, which carries the reader along with it to its final outcome and the examination of levels of morality and humanity which confront us all.

Notes by [George Taylor](#)

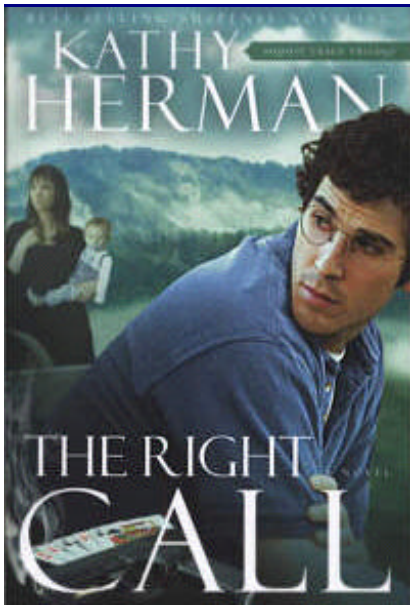


### The Constantine Conspiracy

by Gary E. Parker  
publ by Revell imprint of Baker Pub from Lion  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-0-800-73327-8) Aug 2010

A well-written adventure story complete with all the popular ingredients, including a centuries-old conspiracy impinging on the lives of modern-day innocents, ruthless assassins, and things and people who turn out to be not what they seem. Since the Emperor Constantine made Rome Christian, the Conspiracy has worked through the ages to wipe Christianity off the map – and since the days of the crusades the equally mysterious 'Order' has worked to thwart them. In present-day America, rich playboy, Rick Carson, finds his father killed, the police think he did it, the real murderers want to make him an offer he can't refuse, and helpful Forest Ranger, Shannon Bridge, seems to be suspiciously well-informed about his family. This isn't a mystery story – the suspense is all in the action – but it is an enjoyable read, and Parker has managed to remain spiritually sound and still make his over-privileged, atheistic 'hero' likeable, which is no mean feat.

Notes by [Diane Morrison](#)



### The Right Call

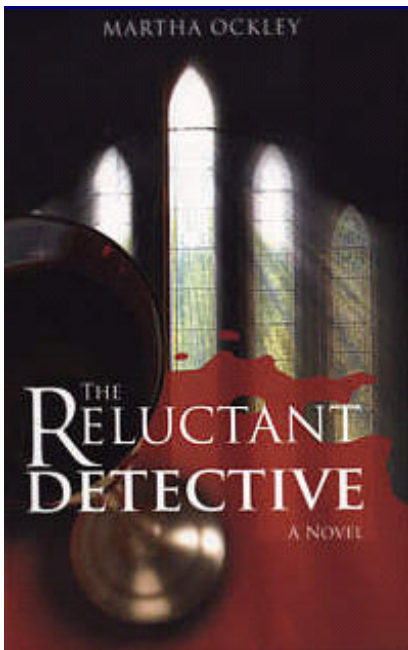
Sophie Trace Trilogy - Book Three

by Kathy Herman  
publ by Xlibris distributed by Gardners  
in Paperback  
at £9.99 (978-1-434-76784-4) Apr 2010

The final chapter of the Sophie Trace Trilogy, - The Right Call - , is an intriguing amalgamation of murder, romance and Christian values. The scene is set in a small American town where main character, Ethan Langley, had expected to spend a care-free summer with his girlfriend, Vanessa and her baby boy, Carter. However, nothing could have prepared him for the shock when four young people were murdered in cold blood– one of whom was especially close to his heart. Could Vanessa's mother, Chief of Police Brill Jessup, solve the case before any more innocent lives were lost? -

In the first few chapters, new characters are introduced at quite a quick pace and it might seem a little confusing if you aren't familiar with the first two books of the trilogy. However, the author (Kathy Herman) includes sufficient background information for the book to be read as a stand-alone title. I enjoyed the fact that the Christian element of the story wasn't cliché or preachy. Faith was integrated throughout the book as a way of people responding to what was happening in their lives. 'Arrow' prayers were often shot up to God at times of real difficulty – I liked the reality of that. I also valued the story's message that God can use even the most painful of situations to work things out for his good purposes.

Notes by Sarah Broady



### The Reluctant Detective

A Faith Morgan Mystery - Book One

by Martha Ockley  
publ by Monarch imprint of Lion Hudson  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-854-24985-2) Oct 2010

Faith Morgan was a successful policewoman but when her long term relationship with a Detective Inspector broke up, she felt called into the church and a completely fresh way of life. Recently priested she is sent by the Bishop to look at a village near Winchester with a view to becoming its incumbent. Instead of a quiet, low key, look around, she is very quickly recognised for who she is, and during the communion service witnesses the death of the retiring priest as he drinks from the chalice. -

It is no surprise that the investigating officer turns out to be her disgruntled ex-lover and the story moves on apace. -

The local Bishop and her present Bishop agree that she should stay on to meet the pastoral needs of the stunned and grieving parishioners, but of course she gets involved with the investigation too, and I thoroughly enjoyed this easy to read murder mystery with its many twists and turns.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)



### Tomorrow We Die

by Shawn Grady  
publ by Bethany House imprint of Baker Pub from Lion  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-0-764-20596-5) 2010

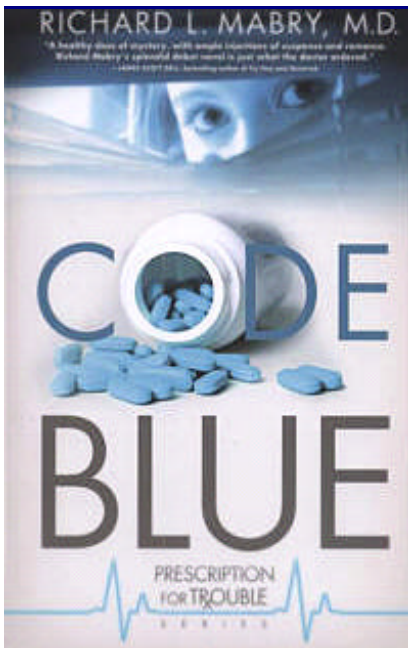
This is Grady's second book and this time we are looking through the eyes of a paramedic and again based in Reno, Nevada USA, Grady's hometown. -

The plot is good, the story has a thriller intrigue and Grady has a nice way of keeping you hooked. -

With suspense at its core, the story takes John Trestle, a bored Paramedic, in search of Martin, a dying-man's last request, but as he searches he is snared in a mystery of murder and danger that not only threatens his life but his beloved mentor and the girl he loves.

Whilst I enjoyed this book, a couple of times I got confused in Grady's description of things and found myself having to re-read a section in order to place who was who, but this didn't detract from the overall enjoyment.

Notes by [Zo&uml; Stevenson](#)



## Code Blue

Prescription for Trouble Book One

by Richard L. Mabry  
publ by Abingdon Press from Alban Books  
in Paperback  
at £8.99 (978-1-426-70236-5) Apr 2010

I only intended to get an idea of this book and then send it to an appropriate reviewer, but once started I couldn't put it down. -

One of the themes is hinted at in the subtitle, prescription trouble, but that is not the only problem facing Dr Cathy Sewell on her return to her home town to set up a GP practice. Someone seems to be out to do her harm, could it be that they even want her dead? That seems a bit far fetched, and who on earth can it be? Cathy is a skilled, well trained physician but there are rumours about her competence on top of everything else. - After more than one relationship that ended with betrayal, she finds it impossible to trust any of the men around her, even her old flame Will, now a local Lawyer who offers her professional help and a loving family. -

On top of everything else money worries are weighing her down, till help comes from a surprising source and at the very end of the book all is resolved in a most surprising way.

Notes by [Mary Bartholomew](#)