

25 BEST INTERNATIONAL MYSTERY SERIES

I'm Carmen Amato, author of the Detective Emilia Cruz series set in Acapulco, inviting you to come on an around-the-world trip with me, one mystery series at a time. Happy reading!

AFRICA

1 Precious Ramotswe series by Alexander McCall Smith

Main character: Precious Ramotswe is the “traditionally built” proprietress of the Number 1 Ladies Detective Agency, in Gaborone, Botswana.

Have to start at the beginning? Yes, because the series continues in a linear fashion like a television soap opera, with major life changes for all the characters happening throughout.

Recommended favorite: Hard to name one, as they are all written with the same measured pace, engaging character development, love for Botswana, and cultural details.

Find on Amazon >>> [NUMBER 1 LADIES DETECTIVE AGENCY](#)

2 Tannie Maria mysteries by Sally Andrew

Main character: Maria van Harten is a widow living in South Africa’s Klein Karoo district who becomes the advice columnist, doling out wisdom and recipes suitable for the lovelorn and aggrieved while stumbling across murder and a certain handsome detective.

Have to start at the beginning? Yes, start with RECIPES FOR LOVE AND MURDER, in which Maria corresponds with a woman who seeks advice, then ends up dead, sending Maria--as well as her boss Hattie and the paper’s single investigative reporter Jessie--into a maze that includes a female lover, abusive husband, and strange doings at the local grocery store.

Recommended favorite: So far there are only 2 books in the series, RECIPES FOR LOVE AND MURDER and THE SATANIC MECHANIC, which together create a continuing storyline. Read, then wait breathlessly for the next in the series.

Find on Amazon >>> [RECIPES FOR LOVE AND MURDER](#)

3 Inspector Kubu series by Michael Stanley

Main character: Detective David “Kubu” Bengu of the Botswana Criminal Investigation Department is a hefty cop—his nickname “Kubu” means “hippo”--and family man who solves crimes rooted in his country’s culture and spiritual beliefs.

Have to start at the beginning? No. A CARRION DEATH is first in the series, but each book stands alone.

Recommended favorite: DEADLY HARVEST takes on the pervasive influence of witch doctors and their potions called *muti* that include human body parts.

Find on Amazon>>> [A CARRION DEATH](#)

AMERICAS

4 Detective Emilia Cruz series by Carmen Amato

Main character: Emilia Cruz is the first and only female detective on the Acapulco police force, taking on Mexico's drug cartels, official corruption, and culture of *machismo*.

Have to start at the beginning? CLIFF DIVER is the first full-length novel in the series and sets up Emilia's position as not only the only female in the squadroom, but as a relatively inexperienced detective who is forced by the police union to head the investigation into the murder of a dirty cop—her own lieutenant.

Recommended favorite: PACIFIC REAPER pits Emilia against an evangelical priest dedicated to Santa Muerte, Mexico's forbidden saint of death, and begins a series arc that exposes Emilia's shocking family secrets.

Find on Amazon >>> [CLIFF DIVER](#)

5 Inspector Armand Gamache series by Louise Penny

Main character: Gamache leads the Homicide Department of the Sûreté du Québec. His investigations, however, invariably lead him to the small village of Three Pines, where the unexpected always happens.

Have to start at the beginning? No, each book can stand on its own but details drip out about a series-spanning unsolved crime.

Recommended favorite: HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN is a study in personalities, with everyone subjected to Gamache's careful scrutiny and probing questions. Plus, the usual dose of Tree Pines quirkiness.

Find on Amazon >>> [HOW THE LIGHT GETS IN](#)

6 Spenser series by Robert B. Parker and Ace Atkins

Main character: Spenser, whose first name we never learn, is an ageless private investigator in Boston, Massachusetts who deftly moves between the city's finest restaurants and its darkest criminal underworld. Series dialogue is a lesson for all wannabe mystery writers.

Have to start at the beginning? No. There are many Spenser novels and they can all be read on their own but starting from the beginning reveals how the characters have evolved over time and allows the reader to catch references to past events in the most recent books.

Recommended favorite: HUGGER MUGGER, in which Spenser investigates crooked horse racing is great, but the series' triumph is POTSHOT, in which all the crime stoppers Spenser has run into over the lifespan of the series come together to take on a cult.

Find on Amazon >>> [HUGGER MUGGER](#)

7 Inspector Lascano series by Ernesto Mallo

Main character: Inspector Perro Lascano is a police superintendent in turbulent Buenos Aires, Argentina, during the height of the right wing military junta's rule (1976-83) when right and wrong are hideously intertwined.

Have to start at the beginning? Yes. NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK sweeps us into a mix of crime and mystery, with multi-layered characters and a rich, intimate style.

Recommended favorite: As of this writing, there are only 2 novels in the series available in English, NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK and SWEET MONEY. Grab them both and stay awake for the next few days.

Find on Amazon >>> [NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK](#)

8 Chief Inspector Mario Silva series by Leighton Gage

Main character: With a stubborn and brooding demeanor, Chief Inspector Mario Silva of Brazil's federal police has been described by Booklist as "South America's Kurt Wallander."

Have to start at the beginning? BLOOD OF THE WICKED sets up Silva as a good cop with a rag-tag but loyal band of underlings caught in Brazil's pervasive corruption. The book also gives us Silva's disturbing but important backstory.

Recommended favorite: Impossible to pick just one. Even as New York agents were claiming that books with Latino characters could not sell, this series was breaking down barriers with high quality writing and an insider's view of a fascinating culture.

Find on Amazon >>> [BLOOD OF THE WICKED](#)

ASIA

9 China Thrillers by Peter May

Main character: Beijing detective Li Yan and American forensic pathologist Margaret Campbell solve crimes in modern China even as they carry on a tempestuous relationship. Tremendous sense of place.

Have to start at the beginning? No. Each book stands alone although the central romantic relationship evolves throughout the series, starting with THE FIREMAKER.

Recommended favorite: No favorites here. Each book is written with vast authenticity, from the pancake vendors on the street corner who trades riddles with Li Yan, to Margaret's visa troubles.

Find on Amazon: >>> [THE FIREMAKER](#)

10 Hiro Hattori series by Susan Spann

Main character: Ninja-with-a-heart Hiro Hattori has sworn to protect a Jesuit priest in medieval Japan in this absorbing and beautifully researched series.

Have to start at the beginning? The first book, CLAWS OF THE CAT, immediately immerses us in the sights, sounds, norms and culture of medieval Japan.

Recommended favorite: In BETRAYAL AT IGA, as political rivalries threaten peace, trained shinobi assassin Hiro leads Father Mateo from danger in Kyoto to the false safety of Hiro's clan of trained assassins in Iga. Japan has never been this lovely, this dangerous, or this exciting.

Find on Amazon >>> [CLAWS OF THE CAT](#)

11 Superintendent Chris Le Fanu series by Brian Stoddart

Main character: Le Fanu is a British police officer in 1920's Madras who must navigate through a minefield of colonial intrigue and growing Indian restiveness.

Have to start at the beginning? Yes. The scene is set and historical issues explained in A MADRAS MIASMA.

Recommended favorite: No favorite here—the series simply gets better with each book, as the reader is plunged deeper and deeper into the danger posed by Britain's unraveling colonial authority. A STRAITS SETTLEMENT was longlisted for the prestigious 2017 Ngaio Marsh Award.

Find on Amazon: >>> [A MADRAS MIASMA](#)

BRITAIN & IRELAND

12 DI John Rebus series by Ian Rankin

Main character: Rebus is a hard drinking loner cop in Edinburgh, with a nemesis from the city's underworld and a female partner who grows a bit more like him every day.

Have to start at the beginning? No. While the later books bring back characters introduced before, there is enough context to follow without any trouble.

Recommended favorite: RESURRECTION MEN is a great novel in which Rebus, whose superiors are fed up with his maverick behavior, is shoved off to a cop charm school with other troublemakers to investigate an old crime that no one wants solved.

Find on Amazon >>> [RESURRECTION MEN](#)

13 Dublin Murder Squad by Tana French

Main character: Set in Dublin, Ireland, the books showcase a revolving door of cops rather than the typical mystery series built around one particular character.

Have to start at the beginning? No. Each book stands alone, with a different narrator, but most reference characters and events from other books.

Recommended favorite: IN THE WOODS is the first in the series, and sets a fast pace and unique narrative style. FAITHFUL PLACE was gritty perfection.

Find on Amazon >>> [IN THE WOODS](#)

14 George Smiley series by John LeCarré

Main character: George Smiley is a polite and self-effacing spymaster in Britain's intel service known as "the Circus," whose demeanor masks his cunning, ruthlessness, and brilliant tradecraft during the Cold War with Russia.

Have to start at the beginning? Although Smiley first surfaces in A PERFECT MURDER, start with TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY.

Recommended favorite: SMILEY'S PEOPLE is a tour de force. Smiley finally matches wits against Karla, the Russian spymaster who recruited moles inside the Circus to bring down British intelligence.

Find on Amazon >>> [TINKER TAILOR SOLDIER SPY](#)

15 Shetland series by Ann Cleeves

Main character: Jimmy Perez is a Scottish police detective serving the stormy and remote Shetland islands between Scotland and Norway.

Have to start at the beginning? No, but I would. RAVEN BLACK starts the series with a shocking murder and a plunge into Perez's personality, empathetic investigative techniques, and a wild and unique landscape.

Recommended favorite: Each one is a whodunit triumph, largely because Cleeves makes everyone a suspect by using quirky personalities and the restlessness of confined and gossipy island communities.

Find on Amazon >>> [RAVEN BLACK](#)

16 The Lewis Trilogy by Peter May

Main character: Raised on the Isle of Lewis in the remote Hebrides islands off Scotland's Atlantic coast, Fin Macleod is an emotionally damaged Edinburgh detective who returns to investigate a copycat murder and stays.

Have to start at the beginning? Yes, read the three books in order, starting with THE BLACKHOUSE.

Recommended favorite: THE BLACKHOUSE is a gripping thriller that uses seemingly random flashbacks to tell Fin's backstory; yet each memory is part of a puzzle that comes together in a brilliant and blindingly shocking climax.

Find on Amazon >>> [THE BLACKHOUSE](#)

FRANCE, ITALY & RUSSIA

17 Arkady Renko series by Martin Cruz Smith

Main character: Arkady Renko is an ageless Moscow cop who has survived the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of a Mafia-riddled Russia. The series is dense and absorbing, with rich descriptions of Russia, the Russian character, and decrepit Lada cars.

Have to start at the beginning? No. The first is GORKY PARK, but it's a bit slow, especially the last 10%. The last two in the series are missable.

Recommended favorite: The second book, POLAR STAR, is a tour de force--all the action takes place on a rust bucket of a Soviet fishing vessel--but WOLVES EAT DOGS, set in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster, is hauntingly memorable.

Find on Amazon >>> [POLAR STAR](#)

18 Commissario Guido Brunetti series by Donna Leon

Main character: Guido Brunetti is a commissario of police, equivalent to a detective, in Venice, Italy. The city, with its mildew, high tides, lost aristocracy, immigrant populations, and decaying art and architecture, is a stunning backdrop to the series.

Have to start at the beginning? No, Leon does a good job of building every book as a stand-alone story. The first, DEATH AT LA FENICE, is a whodunit at Venice's legendary opera.

Recommended favorite: Leon's books are very consistent but a favorite is DRAWING CONCLUSIONS, which builds to a different style of ending than is her norm.

Find on Amazon >>> [DEATH AT LA FENICE](#)

19 Genevieve Lenard series by Estelle Ryan

Main character: Dr. Genevieve Lenard is the world's leading authority on body language, a skill she developed as a way of dealing with her autism. She works for an elite insurance company in Strasbourg, France.

Have to start at the beginning? Strongly suggested. THE GAUGIN CONNECTION sets out Genevieve's carefully ordered life and then demolishes it when she meets a reformed art thief.

Recommended favorite: The books link into one long narrative during which Genevieve joins a team of specialists working for the president of France to solve art crimes and catch international terrorists, relying heavily on cyber techniques.

Find on Amazon >>> [THE GAUGIN CONNECTION](#)

20 Commissario Salvo Montalbano series by Andrea Camilleri

Main character: Montalbano is a detective in Sicily, where the Mafia, loose women, and endemic corruption complicate every crime.

Have to start at the beginning? No, every one of the 24 books in the series stands alone with a clever cast of regulars and sinister newcomers.

Recommended favorite: All the books deal with significant issues in Italy such as illegal immigration, drug smuggling, prostitution, money laundering, but with a streak of humor that keeps our hero afloat.

Find on Amazon >>> [TREASURE HUNT](#)

21 Aimée Leduc murder mysteries by Cara Black

Main character: Aimee Leduc is a fashion-forward private detective in Paris juggling single motherhood, disappearing lovers, and a shadowy organization called The

Hand. Her late father was a Paris cop killed by the group, while her super-spy American mother pops in and out of Aimée's life.

Have to start at the beginning? No, each book stands alone, with preceding events put into context. MURDER IN THE MARAIS starts the series.

Recommended favorite: MURDER ON THE LEFT BANK, is a non-stop action roller coaster that leads us into the famed Gobelins tapestry weaving atelier.

Find on Amazon >>> [MURDER IN THE MARAIS](#)

NORDIC COUNTRIES

22 Harry Hole series by Jo Nesbo

Main character: Harry is a police detective in Oslo, Norway. His heavy drinking, some-time drug use, belligerent attitude, and maverick ways hurt him when it comes to personal relationships and other cops, yet often help solve crime.

Have to start at the beginning? Start with THE REDBREAST, which is actually Book 3. Skip the first book, THE BAT, as it neither takes place in Oslo nor is as well written as the rest.

Recommended favorite: POLICE was a tour-de-force, with virtually every chapter a cliff-hanger and secondary characters given fresh leading roles. Follow immediately with KNIFE.

Find on Amazon >>> [THE REDBREAST](#)

23 Kurt Wallander series by Henning Mankell

Main character: An over-the-hill, heavy drinking Swedish cop from the small town of Ystad, Wallander constantly struggles with alcohol, self-doubt, and the gray Swedish landscape. Kenneth Branagh played him in a pitch-perfect BBC series.

Have to start at the beginning? There are a lot of Wallander books. Start anywhere.

Recommended favorite: THE WHITE LIONNESS and THE DOGS OF RIGA are both excellent. The latter not only pulls you into multiple murders, but took Wallander to Riga, where Mankell does a fantastic job of viewing the Soviet-era Estonian city and its political corruption through neutral eyes.

Find on Amazon >>> [THE WHITE LIONNESS](#)

24 Department Q series by Jussi Adler-Olsen

Main Character: Copenhagen detective Carl Mørck heads up Department Q, a political invention of a cold case unit, with the help of a motley group of assistants, including Assad, a Syrian enigma.

Have to start at the beginning? Yes, THE KEEPER OF LOST CAUSES begins this fantastic series, showing us Carl's complicated personal backstory, the origin of the unit, and how Assad became Carl's crime-fighting wingman.

Recommended favorite: THE MARCO EFFECT is a favorite because of a clever young Gypsy boy who becomes a fugitive after witnessing a murder. Carl and Assad must follow his clues to solve the case.

Find on Amazon >>> [THE KEEPER OF LOST CAUSES](#)

25 Inspector Anita Sundström series by Torquil Macleod

Main character: Anita Sundström is a police detective in the Swedish city of Malmö, where she wrangles murder investigations, single motherhood, relationships with the wrong men, and *snuss*, the popular Swedish version of chewing tobacco.

Have to start at the beginning? Yes. MEET ME IN MALMO is a richly twisted story told from multiple points of view, with a jaw-dropping ending.

Recommended favorite: MISSING IN MALMO, the third book, hits the mark with multiple strings of danger and suspense all having to do with missing persons cases.

Find on Amazon >>> [MEET ME IN MALMO](#)

Author Carmen Amato draws on 30 years with the Central Intelligence Agency to craft crime fiction loaded with danger and deception.

Beginning with *CLIFF DIVER*, the Detective Emilia Cruz series pits the first female police detective in Acapulco against Mexico's cartels, corruption, and social inequality. Optioned for television, it's a two-time winner of the Outstanding Series award from CrimeMasters of America as well as a Silver Falchion award from Killer Nashville.

Standalone books include political espionage thriller *THE HIDDEN LIGHT OF MEXICO CITY*, which was longlisted for the 2020 Millennium Book Award.

Carmen's new Galliano Club historical fiction series was inspired by her grandfather, a deputy sheriff during Prohibition.

Find out more at carmenamato.net or email Carmen carmen@carmenamato.net.

DETECTIVE EMILIA CRUZ SERIES

[CLIFF DIVER: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 1](#)

[HAT DANCE: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 2](#)

[DIABLO NIGHTS: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 3](#)

[KING PESO: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 4](#)

[PACIFIC REAPER: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 5](#)

[43 MISSING: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 6](#)

[RUSSIAN MOJITO: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 7](#)

[NARCO NOIR: Detective Emilia Cruz Book 8](#)

[MADE IN ACAPULCO: The Emilia Cruz Stories](#)

[THE ARTIST/EL ARTISTA: A Bilingual Short Story for Language Learning](#)

[FELIZ NAVIDAD FROM ACAPULCO: A Detective Emilia Cruz Novella](#)

[THE LISTMAKER OF ACAPULCO: A Detective Emilia Cruz Novella](#)

GALLIANO CLUB SERIES

[ROAD TO THE GALLIANO CLUB: Prequel](#)

[MURDER AT THE GALLIANO CLUB: Book 1](#)

[BLACKMAIL AT THE GALLIANO CLUB: Book 2](#)

[REVENGE AT THE GALLIANO CLUB: Book 3](#)

THRILLERS

[AWAKENING MACBETH](#)

[THE HIDDEN LIGHT OF MEXICO CITY](#)

NON-FICTION (EDITOR)

[INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE BEST OF MEXICO](#)

[INSIDER'S GUIDE TO THE BEST OF MEXICAN HOLIDAYS](#)