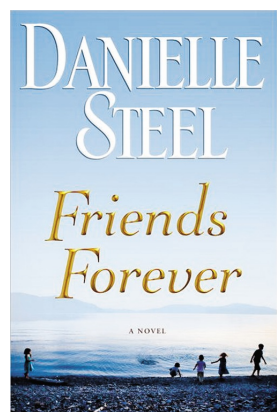


Sandy Mahaffey is the editor of the Books page. She may be reached at 374-5410 or via email at smahaffey@freelancestar.com.

BEST-SELLERS

HARDCOVER FICTION



- 1. Friends Forever.** Danielle Steel. Delacorte, \$28. Weeks on List: 1.
- 2. Where We Belong.** Emily Giffin. St. Martin's, \$27.99. Weeks on List: 1.
- 3. Gone Girl.** Gillian Flynn. Crown, \$25. Last Week: 3; Weeks on List: 8.
- 4. Black List: A Thriller.** Brad Thor. Atria, \$27.99. Weeks on List: 1.

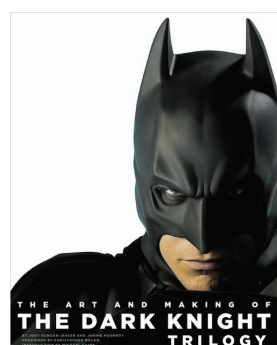
- 5. The Fallen Angel.** Daniel Silva. Harper, \$27.99. Last Week: 1; Weeks on List: 2.
- 6. I, Michael Bennett.** Patterson/Ledwidge. Little, Brown, \$27.99. Last Week: 2; Weeks on List: 3.
- 7. Broken Harbor.** Tana French. Viking, \$27.95. Weeks on List: 1.
- 8. Shadow of Night.** Deborah Harkness. Viking, \$28.95. Last Week: 4; Weeks on List: 3.
- 9. Backfire.** Catherine Coulter. Putnam, \$26.95. Last Week: 5; Weeks on List: 3.
- 10. Judgment Call.** J.A. Jance. William Morrow, \$25.99. Weeks on List: 1.
- 11. Creole Belle.** James Lee Burke. Simon & Schuster, \$27.99. Last Week: 6; Weeks on List: 2.
- 12. A Dance With Dragons.** George R.R. Martin. Bantam, \$35.00. Last Week: 10; Weeks on List: 55.
- 13. The Next Best Thing.** Jennifer Weiner. Atria, \$26.99. Last Week: 7; Weeks on List: 4.
- 14. Wicked Business.** Janet Evanovich. Bantam, \$28. Last Week: 8; Weeks on List: 6.
- 15. Calico Joe.** John Grisham. Doubleday, \$24.95. Last Week: 13; Weeks on List: 16.

HARDCOVER NONFICTION

- 1. The Corruption Chronicles.** Tom Fitton. Threshold Editions, \$26.99. Weeks on List: 1.
- 2. Wild.** Cheryl Strayed. Knopf, \$25.95. Last Week: 1; Weeks on List: 19.
- 3. The Mobile Wave.** Michael Saylor. Vanguard, \$25.99. Last Week: 5; Weeks on List: 3.
- 4. Killing Lincoln.** Bill O'Reilly. Henry Holt, \$28. Last Week: 3; Weeks on List: 44.
- 5. The Amateur.** Edward Klein. Regnery Publishing, \$27.95. Last Week: 4; Weeks on List: 11.
- 6. Wheat Belly.** William Davis. Rodale Press, \$25.99. Last Week: 26; Weeks on List: 28.
- 7. How: Why How We Do Anything.** Dov Seidman. Wiley, \$27.95. Last Week: 7; Weeks on List: 2.
- 8. Steve Jobs.** Walter Isaacson. Simon & Schuster, \$35. Last Week: 10; Weeks on List: 40.
- 9. Cowards.** Glenn Beck. Threshold Editions, \$28. Last Week: 9; Weeks on List: 7.
- 10. The Skinny Rules.** Bob Harper. Ballantine, \$26. Last Week: 8; Weeks on List: 11.
- 11. Bailout.** Neil Barofsky. Free Press, \$26. Weeks on List: 1.
- 12. The Art & Making of the Dark Knight.** Jody Duncan Jesser. Abrams, \$40. Weeks on List: 1.
- 13. Dream Team.** Jack McCallum. Ballantine, \$28. Last Week: 13; Weeks on List: 3.
- 14. Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt.** Chris Hedges. Nation Books, \$28. Weeks on List: 1.
- 15. The Great Destroyer.** David Limbaugh. Regnery Publishing, \$29.95. Last Week: 14; Weeks on List: 8.

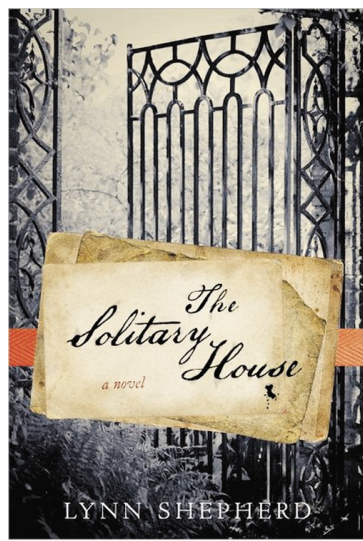
- 1. Happy Birthday.** Danielle Steel. Dell, \$7.99. Weeks on List: 1.

PAPERBACKS



- 2. The Litigators.** John Grisham. Dell, \$9.99. Last Week: 1; Weeks on List: 5.
- 3. Lethal.** Sandra Brown. Grand Central, \$7.99. Last Week: 3; Weeks on List: 2.
- 4. Safe Haven.** Nicholas Sparks. Grand Central, \$7.99. Last Week: 2; Weeks on List: 5.
- 5. Private Games.** James Patterson. Vision, \$9.99. Last Week: 5; Weeks on List: 5.
- 6. Split Second.** Catherine Coulter. Jove, \$9.99. Last Week: 4; Weeks on List: 5.
- 7. Savor the Moment.** Nora Roberts. Jove, \$7.99. Last Week: 6; Weeks on List: 4.
- 8. An Unsuitable Bride.** Jane Feather. Pocket Books, \$7.99. Weeks on List: 1.
- 9. Family Affair.** Debbie Macomber. Avon, \$6.99. Last Week: 7; Weeks on List: 5.
- 10. Sleepwalker.** Karen Robards. Pocket Books, \$7.99. Weeks on List: 1.
- 11. The Silent Girl.** Tess Gerritsen. Ballantine, \$9.99. Last Week: 8; Weeks on List: 5.
- 12. Gun Games.** Faye Kellerman. Harper, \$9.99. Last Week: 9; Weeks on List: 5.
- 13. Explosive Eighteen.** Janet Evanovich. Bantam, \$8.99. Last Week: 10; Weeks on List: 11.
- 14. The Dark Knight Rises.** Greg Cox. Titan Books, \$7.99. Weeks on List: 1.
- 15. Trace.** Patricia Cornwell. Berkley, \$9.99. Last Week: 15; Weeks on List: 4.

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RETURN TO THE WORLD OF DICKENS

DETECTIVE CROSSES PATHS WITH SOME WELL-KNOWN CHARACTERS

BY LUCIA ANDERSON
FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

THE WORLD of Charles Dickens—ragged urchins, unwed mothers, autocratic noblemen, slippery lawyers—lives on in Lynn Shepherd's "The Solitary House."

The hero of Shepherd's tale is one Charles Maddox, great-nephew of a celebrated thief of the same name. He has learned detecting at his great-uncle's knee, and, after a short-lived stint with the new Detective Department of Scotland Yard, is now engaged in private investigations.

He is hired by Edward Tulkinghorn, the sinister lawyer from "Bleak House," to find the man writing threatening notes to one of Tulkinghorn's clients.

Charles finds the man and informs Tulkinghorn of the man's identity and where he may be located. Hours later the man is dead in a fire that has killed several of his neighbors.

It's clear to Charles that this is why he was hired—to find a man so he could be killed.

Furious, he sets out to find out why this man was so dangerous to Tulkinghorn and his clients.

Before he finds the answers he's looking for, he discovers a grave full of newborn infants, there's another gruesome murder and Charles himself is attacked and maimed.

Shepherd has obviously done her homework. Tulkinghorn is not the only character from "Bleak House" to show up in "The Solitary House." There are Sir Leices-ter and Lady Dedlock, Dr. Woodcourt, Jo the street sweeper, Inspector Bucket and Trooper George as well. Additionally, Shepherd makes reference to Sir Percival Glyde and Anne Catherick from Wilkie Collins' "The Woman in White."

As in "Bleak House," "The Solitary House" is told by an unidentified, third-person narrator following Charles' investigations and by seemingly unrelated journal entries written by a young girl. In "Bleak House" the girl is named Esther; in "The Solitary House" she's named Hester, but the similarities end there.

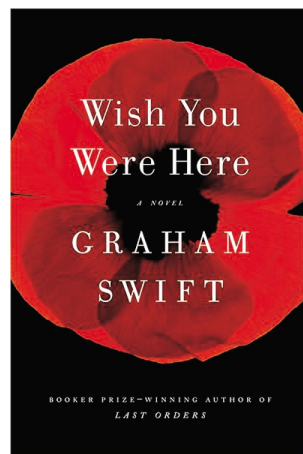
In her acknowledgments Shepherd speaks of creating "a space between" ["Bleak House" and "The Woman in White"] where I could locate a new and independent story of my own, and explore some of the same 19th-century themes of secrecy, madness, power, and abuse . . . and "I have interleaved my own mystery with the characters and episodes of [Dickens'] novel."

Charles Maddox is an engaging hero and "The Solitary House" poses an intriguing puzzle. One is encouraged to believe that the story's end promises another adventure for young Charles.

Lucia Anderson is a freelance writer in Woodbridge.

THE SOLITARY HOUSE

By Lynn Shepherd
(Delacorte Press, \$26, 352 pp.)



NOVEL WILL DRAW YOU DEEPLY INTO ITS WORLD

POWERFUL STORY FROM GIFTED WRITER

BY LISA McLENDON
McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

GRAHAM Swift has given us another great novel in "Wish You Were Here." His newest novel is an intimate portrait of relationships, family and romantic, complicated and happy. Triggered by one event, a death, the story unfolds over the course of years, a little here, a little there, and soon it feels as if the characters are a part of your life.

Set in England in the recent past, "Wish You Were Here" opens with Jack Luxton, a former farmer nearing middle age, in his bedroom with a shotgun, obviously in a moment of extreme personal distress. What has precipitated his crisis, we don't yet know. We learn, though, that Jack and his younger brother, Tom, lost their mother at an early age; that their father was not a warm or loving presence in their lives; that their family dairy farm was devastated first by mad-cow disease and then by hoof-and-mouth.

We learn about Jack's secret-at-first romance with the girl next door, Ellie, who later became his wife. We learn about the two Luxton ancestors who died in the first World War and the medal that one of them won; we learn that early on the morning of his 18th birthday, Tom fled the farm and joined the army, leaving Jack, "the big, obedient brother," behind to explain, or not, to their father. We learn that after Jack's father died and Ellie's father died, they gave up their adjacent farms and moved to the Isle of Wight to run a vacation campground Ellie inherited. And we learn that Tom has been killed in Iraq, leaving Jack the last of the Luxtons.

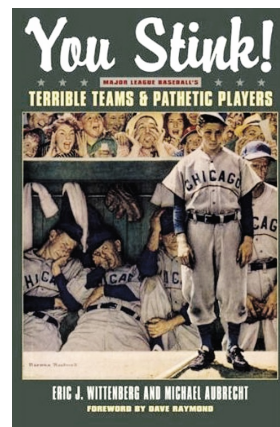
Tom's death is the catalyst, setting the story in motion. Jack must go claim his body at a military base, return it to their hometown, and arrange the funeral. Usually a go-along-to-get-along kind of person not given to waxing philosophic, Jack becomes pensive and reflective:

"Death, Jack thought . . . was in many ways a great place of shelter. It was life and all its knowledge that was insupportable." The story hops around between time periods and shifts focus among the characters. Swift doles out pieces and gradually the whole puzzle takes shape. His writing has a quiet beauty to it, never showy but harnessing the power of the well-chosen word.

It's a book to be savored, mulled over, reflected on, not plowed through. Perhaps the best testament to how strongly entwined with the book I felt was that I put off reading the last 50 pages or so for two whole days because I was so afraid of what might happen to Jack—if I didn't look, he necessarily stayed all right. To have a reader so invested in a character: I can't think of a much higher compliment to an author's skills than that.

WISH YOU WERE HERE

By Graham Swift
(Knopf, 319 pages, \$25)



THE ABSOLUTE WORST OF THE GAME

MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL'S BIGGEST FOUL-UPS

BY KURT RABIN
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

LOTS of books have been written about major league baseball extolling the achievements of players and managers. Now a pair of Civil War historians—and big-time baseball buffs—have done the necessary digging to produce a volume of the most-shameful contributions to America's pastime.

Eric J. Wittenberg and Michael Aubrecht's entertaining "You Stink!" is replete with pages of statistics, making it perfect for the hard-core devotee and casual fan alike.

Growing up around Philadelphia, I became accustomed to the way athletics and futility are inextricably linked. My dad took me to Phillies games when I turned 10, in 1964, the year the team's rebuilding efforts finally paid off . . . until the Phils nose-dived with just 12 games left to play. Up 6½ games on their competition, they lost 10 straight to finish third in their division.

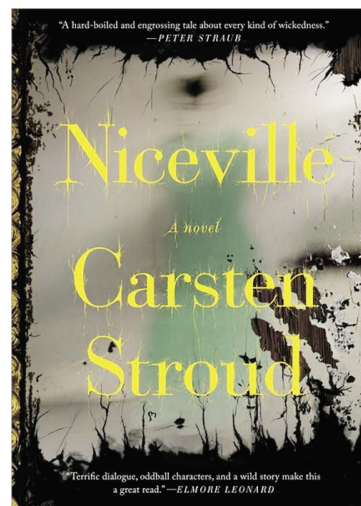
However, it's the '61 Phils (who went 47-107, while losing 23 games in a row, an MLB record that still stands) that are immortalized in the "terrible teams" listing.

Worst all-around player honors go to a 1961 Phillie—Clarence "Choo-Choo" Coleman, a no-hit, no-glove catcher who also played for a '62 Mets team with baseball's worst modern-day won-lost record. Baseball scribe Roger Angell said Coleman, a career .197 hitter who spent just five years in the majors, "caught as though he were fighting a swarm of bees."

Kurt Rabin is a copy editor with The Free Lance-Star.

YOU STINK! MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL'S TERRIBLE TEAMS AND PATHETIC PLAYERS

By Eric J. Wittenberg and Michael Aubrecht
(Kent State Press, \$24.95, 256 pp.)



NICEVILLE MOVES INTO DECLINE

GHOSTS AND MACHINES CO-EXIST IN SOUTHERN TOWN

BY ELIZABETH RABIN
FOR THE FREE LANCE-STAR

IN the town of Niceville, a community known for its disappearances, a young boy vanishes in front of the unblinking eye of a surveillance camera. Ten days later, he's found alive in an old sealed tomb in the local Confederate cemetery, embraced in the arms of a skeletal corpse. The phenomenon starts a unique genre-bending novel that will haunt readers long after the last page.

Trying to explain the plot of "Niceville," Carsten Stroud's eighth novel, would be a lot like trying to explain a Robert Altman movie. Stroud creates multiple characters and interlocking plots that are difficult to separate from one another.

But simply speaking, "Niceville" is about a Southern town under surveillance. The ghosts of the past remember and re-enact the wrongs of the founding fathers while computers, cellphones and cameras record the locals' actions digitally. There are deep, frightening connections to be found if a person only dares to look.

"Niceville" is a novel that can appeal to many different readers without being too broad. The heart of the novel is a mystery, but there are elements of Southern Gothic, techno-thriller and realist fiction that flavor the text. But these varied storytelling angles don't detract from Stroud's ability to get his grand ideas about memory and the fallen state of man across in powerful, simple ways.

"Niceville" is a town readers have to visit for themselves in order to believe it.

Elizabeth Rabin is a freelance writer in Spotsylvania County.

NICEVILLE

By Carsten Stroud
(Knopf, \$26.95, 400 pp.)

GHOSTS CAUSE HAVOC

DETECTIVE DEALS WITH OCCULT

BY CHELYEN DAVIS
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

WHAT IF, one day, a ghost appeared to everyone in the world? A ghost each individual only could see, one usually known to that person, a ghost that never went away but was just there, every day, watching.

In Stephen Irwin's new novel "The Broken Ones," the appearance of the ghosts leads to a breakdown in the global economy, government crises and a new job for Detective Oscar Mariani—he's in charge of trying to see through occult alibis for crimes.

It's not a very popular job, and Mariani's relationships—both at home and in his department—are shaky at best. But when he becomes intrigued by the murder of an anonymous victim, things get

worse. The death of that victim slowly begins to point to broader conspiracies and secrets, and could even point to the identity of Mariani's own ghost.

This is Australian Irwin's second novel, after "The Dead Path." "The Dead Path" was a truly creepy, spooky ghost story; "The Broken Ones" reads more like a crime thriller that happens to have some ghosts in it. It's a well-paced, imaginative story.

Chelyen Davis is a reporter for The Free Lance-Star.

THE BROKEN ONES

By Stephen Irwin
(Doubleday, \$26, 352 pp.)

