



ON THE EDGE OF YOUR SEAT

Richard Hopton reviews three intriguing crime thrillers

1 SO SHALL YOU REAP by Donna Leon

This book marks the 32nd case for Donna Leon's Venetian detective, Commissario Guido Brunetti. Like all its predecessors, this novel invokes the spirit and the feel of Venice, to the extent that the city itself is almost a character in the story. Commissario Brunetti is a thoughtful, bookish, self-effacing family man – the antithesis of a fictional detective like the late Philip Kerr's coarse and cynical Bernie Gunther – who goes about his business quietly and without fanfares. His latest case concerns the murder of an undocumented Sri Lankan immigrant who has been living in the garden house of one of the city's many palazzi. His body is found floating in a canal but there are few clues as to who might have murdered him, or why. The story of Brunetti's investigation is elegantly told, subtle and satisfying. £22, *Hutchinson Heinemann*

2 THE LIGHT OF DAY by Eric Ambler

Eric Ambler (1909-98) was an English thriller writer whose influence on the genre has been acknowledged by such masters of the art as John Le Carré, Len Deighton, and Frederick Forsyth. Now his books, three of which have recently been republished, deserve a new readership. *The Light of Day*, first published in 1962, is the story of Arthur Abdel Simpson, a petty criminal of indeterminate nationality who earns a crust robbing gullible tourists in Athens. One botched scam results in Simpson being pulled into a dangerous international conspiracy. Cornered – and played – by both the criminals and the authorities, Simpson fights to survive as the action moves to a shadowy world in the back streets and waterside villas of Istanbul. Unfailingly exciting, the novel is literate, understated, wryly humorous, and wonderfully atmospheric. £9.99, *Penguin Modern Classics*

3 AGE OF VICE by Deepti Kapoor

Sunny Wadia is the debauched, feckless son of an immensely wealthy, wholly unscrupulous businessman-gangster, Buntty Wadia. Sunny lives in New Delhi in gilded, air-conditioned luxury, his life dominated by booze, drugs and sex, and regulated by his faithful valet-butler, Ajay, a Dalit raised in grinding poverty in rural eastern Uttar Pradesh. Kapoor's novel is a gripping tale of money, greed, power, family conflict, and moral confusion told in her vivid, modern, unsparing prose. The novel lays bare the enormous gulf between rich and poor which exists in India and plays on the corruption and violence with which its political and business classes all too often conduct their affairs. For the most part, *Age of Vice* keeps up a rattling pace as the Wadia family fights itself and everyone else. No one is safe; nothing is sacrosanct. £20, *Fleet*