

lacked the courage to do anything about it. She even lost her best friend and business partner, Vickie, over the truth. In a rare show of spine, Rosie throws out the sorry Kent when he misses their third anniversary dinner. Kent isn't sorry to leave ("You're nothing but a fat pig with big feet"), but he slinks back the next day when he discovers that Rosie has won the lottery—a \$302 million jackpot. As she fights to keep Kent's hands off her windfall and resolves to become the pretty woman he never saw in her, Rosie is cheered on by wonderful trainer Jack Silver, housekeeper Luna Mae, and Vickie, with whom Rosie renews her friendship. Kent schemes alternately to get Rosie back and to steal from her, but ends by almost believably growing up, even seeing her transformation as an inspiration for his own necessary changes. Rosie, however, isn't waiting around for him. The concluding triathlon, in which Michaels's likable heroine shows her stuff, is a strong finish to a frothy read. (Apr.)

**PLENTY GOOD ROOM**

CHERI PARIS EDWARDS. *Warner/Walk Worthy*, \$23.95 (322p) ISBN 0-446-57647-6

The protagonist of this debut novel is Tamara Britton, a reserved, devoted child welfare worker. The 30-something's quiet, tidy life is turned upside-down when her boss asks her to temporarily take in a foul-mouthed teen runaway named Sienna. During this stint as a foster mom, Tamara has to supervise homework, discuss teenage sexuality and wade into the murky world of pop culture. She is also motivated to put together some of the pieces of her own interrupted childhood and travels to prisons and hospitals in search of birth parents she never knew. Edwards richly develops the novel's characters, especially those who play supporting parts. Tamara's outrageous friend and colleague, Lynette, is a hoot, and Lynette and Tamara's sharply dressed but racist boss is well drawn. Still, the novel is far from perfect. The two plots—Tamara and Sienna's relationship, and Tamara's own childhood—tie together at the end, but the connections require coincidences that strain credulity. The stock features of CBA fiction are all predictably there: Tamara, who has never dated, is suddenly wooed by two fine men. And she not only finds love but also her faith—at a church altar call. This contribution to the flourishing field of African-American Christian fiction is promising, though it also suffers from first-timer flaws. (Apr. 20)

**A GARDEN IN PARIS**

STEPHANIE GRACE WHITSON. *Bethany*, \$12.99 paper (288p) ISBN 0-7642-2935-4

In this enjoyable story, Whitson, the author of a dozen novels, sets out to show that

it is never too late for someone to start over. Widow Mary Elisabeth McKibbin Davis is 50 years old, unsure about who she is, and at odds with her adult daughter, Liz. Tying with suicide, Mary instead writes a letter to her first love of 30 years ago, the dashing Frenchman Jean-Marc David, letting him know she'll be in their special garden in Paris on Christmas Eve. Taking as her motto "It is never too late to be what you might have been," Mary leaves Nebraska for France to begin revisiting her past and re-creating her life. Liz rather quickly realizes she needs to reconcile with her mother, and, with her agreeable fiancé, Jeffrey Scott, she chases after Mary. While in Paris, Mary searches for love, faith and her true self, while Liz will have to grapple with a family secret, adeptly concealed until late in the book in a surprising plot twist. Multiple points of view are sometimes a little cumbersome, and there is a bit of theology tossed in about God and accidents that will be problematic for some. However, appealing descriptions, faith renewals and conversations, and travelogueish details about Paris make this a pleasant read for an evangelical Christian audience. (Apr.)

**ALIBI**

JOSEPH KANON. *Holt*, \$26 (416p) ISBN 0-8050-7886-X

It's late 1945 at the start of this atmospheric historical thriller, and G.I. Adam Miller, officially assigned to ferret out Nazi war criminals in Germany, joins his widowed mother, Grace, who has recently arrived in Venice from New York to resume her life as a wealthy American expatriate. Together, they flow into the social eddies of the upper class, determined to pick up where they left off in 1939. Grace has met an old flame, Gianni Maglione, a distinguished doctor whom Adam suspects of gold-digging. Meanwhile, Adam himself meets Jewish Claudia Grassini, who survived the Nazi pogroms by becoming the mistress of a powerful Italian Fascist. The novel's languid pace picks up when Claudia meets Maglione, whom she accuses not only of being a Nazi collaborator but also of having condemned her own father to Auschwitz. Further complications arise with the appearance of Rosa, an Italian operative and former partisan. Kanon (*The Good German*, etc.) keeps his complex plot—involving murder, elaborate alibis, false accusations and a web of secrets spinning back to the war—on track, although the various entanglements aren't always neatly unraveled. Adam and Claudia's love affair provides the requisite romance, but there's no sense that they find much to like in one another. More interesting is Kanon's portrait of a pathetic and hopelessly naive group of wealthy people out of touch with the postwar world's re-

ality. *Agent, Amanda Urban. Author tour.* (Apr.)

**CUT AND RUN**

RIDLEY PEARSON. *Hyperion*, \$23.95 (416p) ISBN 0-7868-6726-4

Crime fiction king Pearson's (*The Body of David Hayes*) latest fast-paced thriller finds a smitten U.S. marshal and a vengeful killer chasing after the same elusive woman in witness protection. Hope Stevens, a technical consultant for the Justice Department, helped indict the deadly Romero white-collar crime family in a million-dollar fraud investigation. For six years, she's been in the witness protection program, waiting to testify. Now, the Romeros have infiltrated the program's participant list, and she's in grave danger. Roland Larson, a U.S. marshal in St. Louis who met Hope just before she was admitted to the program, still pines for her and is determined to find her. But close behind him is Paolo, a throat-slasher commissioned by Romero and a scarification fetishist, whittling his way through Hope's acquaintances to get to her. Accidental exposures keep Hope on the run as the vigilant Paolo and heart-heavy Roland grow increasingly desperate. Hope and Roland's heated reunion is marred by the kidnapping of Hope's previously well-concealed five-year-old daughter, Penny, a surprise to everyone, especially "new" father Roland. Separately, gutsy mother and daughter try to outsmart Paolo, then chase electronic messages to Florida and onward to the finale in Washington and Seattle, where protection program names are being auctioned off to mob goons. As seasoned heroes and a league of gangland villains lock horns for the busy wrapup, even fans accustomed to Pearson's heart-pounding pacing will find themselves short of breath. *Agent, Al Zuckerman. 10-city author tour.* (Apr.)

**CORRUPTS ABSOLUTELY**

ALEXA HUNT. *Forge*, \$24.95 (336p) ISBN 0-765-31149-6

Opening with several pages of simulated news stories, this near-future thriller screams its story: "Cartel Targets FBI, DEA, Judiciary!... President Declares State of Emergency." After thousands of Americans die in a coordinated attack by Colombian drug cartel assassins responding to a crackdown on their new drug, Elevator (a popular and often deadly combination of cocaine and Viagra), a new, ruthless super agency, the Bureau of Illegal Substance Control (BISC) is created. Elliott Delgado, former FBI agent, is called back into action when his old boss finds that several FBI agents have been assassinated by BISC agents. The FBI men were investigating intelligence that suggested that the BISC is preparing a strike against the Colombians on their home



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