



BEST-SELLING BOOKS

KINOKUNIYA BOOK STORES (MALAYSIA) SDN. BHD.

Fiction

- 1 **REMEMBER ME?** – Sophie Kinsella
- 2 **THE WHITE TIGER** – Aravind Adiga
- 3 **WORLD WITHOUT END** – Ken Follett
- 4 **SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE** – Vikas Swarup
- 5 **PEOPLE OF THE BOOK** – Geraldine Brooks
- 6 **A PRISONER OF BIRTH** – Jeffrey Archer
- 7 **THE GIFT** – Cecelia Ahern
- 8 **REAL WORLD** – Natsuo Kirino
- 9 **THE BRIEF WONDROUS LIFE OF OSCAR WAO** – Junot Diaz
- 10 **THE VENETIAN BETRAYAL** – Steve Berry

Non Fiction

- 1 **OUTLIERS: THE STORY OF SUCCESS** – Malcolm Gladwell
- 2 **PANIC: THE STORY OF MODERN FINANCIAL INSANITY** – Michael Lewis
- 3 **THE ECONOMIC NATURALIST: WHY ECONOMICS EXPLAINS ALMOST EVERYTHING** – Robert H Frank
- 4 **THE JAPANESE SKINCARE REVOLUTION** – Chizu Saeki
- 5 **WRISTWATCH ANNUAL 2009**
- 6 **LIFE'S A PITCH: HOW TO SELL YOURSELF AND YOUR BRILLIANT IDEAS** – Stephen Bayley, Roger Mavity
- 7 **THE WORLD WITHOUT US** – Alan Weisman
- 8 **GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS 2009**
- 9 **FENG SHUI FOR 2009** – Joey Yap
- 10 **HOW TO HAVE STYLE** – Isaac Mizrahi

You don't get to choose. I stumbled on the crime aspect of this story and thought that I used to care about this stuff (reptiles) and it used to be interesting to me and then I started to look into it.

– Bryan Christy

Champion of reptile world

BRYAN CHRISTY WEAVES AN INTERESTING STORY ABOUT REPTILE SMUGGLERS AND THE DEDICATED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS WHO GO AFTER THEM

by **S. Indra Sathiabalan**

LIFE has a funny way of coming full circle. As a young boy living in southern New Jersey, Bryan Christy had a fascination for reptiles. In fact, bringing a five-foot long King snake to school made him the most popular boy around.

Who knew that this childhood fascination would eventually lead him to write his first book, *The Lizard King: The True Crimes and Passions of the World's Greatest Reptile Smugglers*.

Christy has previously worked as a morticians' apprentice (his family business) and then later as a lawyer. He then started writing articles for *Playboy Magazine* and *National Geographic*. It was while researching for *The Lizard King* that Christy decided to give up his career as a lawyer and concentrate full-time as a writer.

Christy was in Kuala Lumpur recently on an invitation from MPH. One would think that he would have started writing his first book on the mortician business or even a legal thriller.

Christy said: "You don't get to choose. I stumbled on the crime aspect of this story and thought that I used to care about this stuff (reptiles) and it used to be interesting to me and then I started to look into it."

"That's when all my childhood memories started coming back and I felt like a kid again. Maybe if I planned it more, I would think I should write about the mortician thing."

He is not discounting the fact that he might write about the world of morticians in the future but said that issues behind *The Lizard King* were fascinating.

The Lizard King touches on how smugglers employ every means possible to smuggle rare reptile and bird species across borders illegally.

The biggest perk is that it reaps as much profit as drug smuggling but when caught, the punishment is just a mere slap on the wrist as there are too many legal loopholes that these smugglers can use to escape persecution.

Even Malaysia is covered as one of the suppliers of rare and endangered reptiles with one of the key players running his lucrative business in Penang.

The book focuses on how special agent Chip Bepler of the US Fish and Wildlife Service pursues reptile smuggler Michael Von Nostrand and eventually brings him down.

Von Nostrand is depicted as a family man who took over his family business, Strictly Reptiles (which supplies reptile and creepy crawlies to zoos and pet shops), when his father landed in jail.

Bepler, on the other hand, is a dedicated enforcement officer who diligently pursues his quarry despite the numerous red-tape and legal loopholes that are

thrown his direction. Unfortunately, Bepler passed away due to a rare form of brain cancer and Christy never got to talk to him.

It took three and a half years of research and about four months to write the book.

"I started reading criminal court files and looking at all the worst guys that have been arrested. Over and over again I kept seeing the name of this special agent (Bepler). So I said great, I will speak to the bad guys first and then this agent," said Christy.

"When I stopped by his office and asked to speak to agent Bepler, they said he was dead.

For me it felt like a loss because I had researched his work."

One of the reasons Christy wrote *The Lizard King* in the style that he did was because he felt the loss of such a good enforcement officer and the fact that Bepler also left behind a young son.

"His father was a hero and I was going to write this story so that he will know that."

While researching for materials for *The Lizard King*, Christy had his own share of adventures or misadventures depending on how you look at it.

He was bitten between the eyes by a blood python; chased by an alligator; and sprayed by a bird-eating tarantula. However, this aspect of his investigations never made it into the book.

"The first draft was that story. My editor read it and said that is not what they want. They want the crime story and an objective story. I feel he was right because it was a strange story. If you told my story, it would dilute the strangeness of these people."

Christy's writing style reminds you a bit of Elmore Leonard (*Get Shorty*, *Out of Sight*) where even "the villains" are portrayed with a human face and not painted entirely black. It all goes back to Christy's days as a mortician when he saw that even the nastiest person had grieving family or friends.

Christy is currently working on another book but won't divulge much details other than that it is not a sequel to *The Lizard King*.



in a capsule

The Venetian Betrayal

Author: **Steve Berry**
Publisher: **Ballantine Books**

THIS is a gripping novel by lawyer-turned-writer Steve Berry who has written five equally interesting books before this, including *The Romanov Prophecy* and *The Templar Legacy*.

Based on the legend of the mysterious lost tomb of Alexander the Great, Berry has developed an intriguing plot, that is both captivating as well as tantalising, with *The Venetian Betrayal*.

It is a compelling thriller that starts with Cotton Malone, a former Justice Department agent-turned-rare-book dealer, escaping incarceration in a devastating fire that destroys a Danish museum.

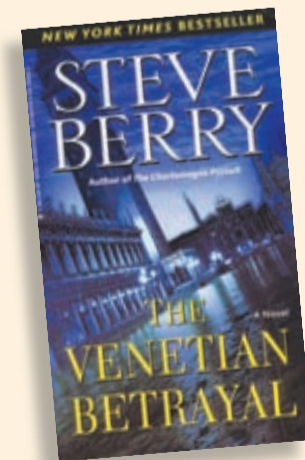
He finds out from his friend, the beguiling adventurer Cassiopeia Vitt, that the blaze was not an ac-

cident or isolated case but part of a sinister campaign of arson intended to mask a more diabolical agenda. Soon buildings across Europe are also destroyed by similar infernos.

Malone finds himself at the crossfire of a shadowy cabal of power brokers. And the prize lies buried with the mummified remains of the great warrior, Alexander the Great – in a tomb lost for more than 2,000 years.

Intertwined in the geopolitical game is the greed of two individuals – one tries to wage a biological warfare by releasing the HIV virus to dominate the world while the other wants to monopolise the market to get rich by controlling the "cure" or "draught" used by Alexander to cure his illness.

Trekking from Denmark to Venice to Central Asia, Cotton and Cassiopeia are determined to solve



an ancient puzzle whose solution could either destroy or save millions of lives – depending on who finds the lost tomb first.

Full of action and suspense, *The Venetian Betrayal* offers readers plenty of thought-provoking twists. An interesting read. – **Isaac Zulen**

Something to Tell You

Author: **Hanif Kureishi**
Publisher: **Faber & Faber**

KUREISHI has given us great literary works in the past such as the Whitbread Prize-winning novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and also screenplays such as the Oscar-nominated *My Beautiful Laundrette*.

Something to Tell You is a slow-moving tale about a psychoanalyst called Jamal who reflects on his life, in particular his first love Ajita.

However, he is also haunted by a dark secret which involves the sudden death of Ajita's sexually-abusive father.

It all comes back to haunt him when he meets Ajita again and her father stands like a spectre in his attempts to rekindle old times.

Kureishi doesn't go straight to the heart of the matter, preferring to let us get to know Jamal through the telling of his past and his relationship with his estranged father and over-dramatic sister.

This book is not for those looking for page-turning action. The story just plod along with too many characters and sub-plots. Things only pick up later when the secret threatens to expose itself.

To be fair, the writer's style of writing enables you to envision his many characters clearly and, hence, offers a better understanding of what Jamal is undergoing.

Still, it may not rock everybody's boat. – **S. Indra Sathiabalan**

