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Editor in Chief of *Parade* magazine, TV producer, and established author, Janice Kaplan knows what it takes to assemble a winning plot, and *A Job to Kill For* is proof positive. In Kaplan's sophomore mystery, L.A. decorator Lacy Fields witnesses the startling death of Cassie Crawford, a young and wealthy client. Soon Lacy discovers that it wasn't an accident that killed Cassie: It was a murder. Lacy embarks upon her own private investigation, focusing upon Cassie's ultra-wealthy and oft-wed older husband, along with other potential suspects. She also has reason to consider her best friend a possible suspect. To compound matters—or, rather, to confound them—Lacy's son becomes involved in a secret and dangerous college fraternity that proves to be connected to the crime.

While the plot takes numerous unexpected twists and turns, the prime feature of this novel is Kaplan's wholly credible characterization of Lacy. A soccer mom and dedicated parent, married to a handsome, supportive plastic surgeon, Lacy has it all, but she is still down-to-earth, witty, and someone I would love to count as a friend. Kaplan's ability to bring Lacy alive in the face of death makes this a book to kill for.—*Lynne Maxwell*

Mama Does Time

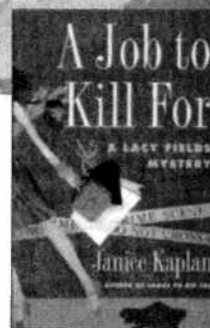
by Deborah Sharp

Midnight Ink Books, October 2008, \$13.95

USA Today reporter Deborah Sharp knows how to write family dynamics, as displayed in *Mama Does Time*, the debut of her Mama series. As the title suggests, Mama Bauer is a real pistol, and her adult daughters Mace, Maddie and Marty have a difficult time keeping her in check. It may take a village to raise a child, but it takes a triad of sisters to minister to Mama, who, true to form, gets arrested because she's carrying a corpse in the trunk of her car. How could this feisty church-going woman possibly be guilty of murder, and how can her daughters prove her innocence despite the rigid certainty of the police? Series heroine Mace, the rugged sister who works in a nature preserve, takes on the burden of proving Mama's innocence, with a little help from mild librarian sister Marty, and Maddie, the harridan sister from hell. As the women play out their drama of stereotypical sibling rivalry, something strange occurs: Each sister takes on positive traits of the others, as they work together, for once. Mild-mannered Marty becomes assertive like Mace and Maddie, while Maddie, like Mace and



Janice Kaplan



Marty, becomes softer and less of a narcissistic perfectionist. And Mace is able to give her sister a chance, recognizing that Maddie has the potential to become a more caring person. As the sisters learn about themselves and each other, they remain steadfastly united throughout by their love for Mama. *Mama Does Time* is a humorous, touching reflection on familial love and politics.—*Lynne Maxwell*

Caravaggio's Angel

by Ruth Brandon

Soho Press, October 2008, \$25.00

Curator Regine Lee of the National Gallery in London plans to mount a small exhibit centered on Caravaggio's painting, *Saint Cecilia and the Angel*. Of the three versions in existence, one must be borrowed from the Louvre, a loan usually arranged without problem. However, when Regine gets to Paris, she is told that the offer has been withdrawn—no explanation given.

Determined to learn the reason for this high-handed behavior, Regine attempts to track down Antoine Rigaut, the curator who denied the loan. Unfortunately, before she can speak to him, he is murdered. Regine seeks out Antoine's octogenarian mother in France. In one of the funniest scenes in the novel, she tells Regine how she masterminded (at age 18) the "borrowing" of one of the Louvre's Caravaggios.

The plot is interesting (though probably