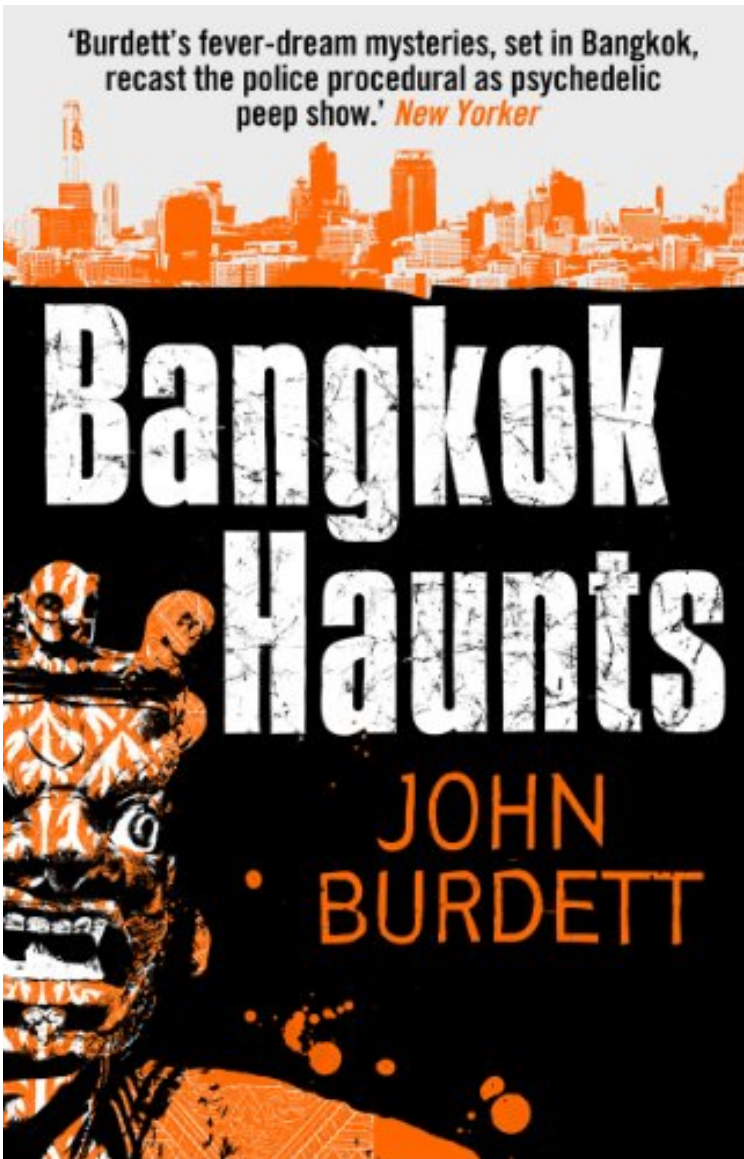


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Bangkok Haunts



Par John Burdett
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurFrom the author of the bestselling, Bangkok Eight, John Burdett, an exotic, intoxicating new novel featuring Sonchai Jitpleecheep, Thai Buddhist detective extraordinaire.Detective Sonchai Jitpleecheep has seen just about everything on his beat in Bangkok's crime-riddled District 8. But the video he's been sent anonymously is something else: it's a snuff movie, and the person who dies is Damrong, the beautiful woman he once loved and whom he still dreams about. And there's more: slayings turn the ensuing investigation into a murder inquiry, and Sonchai into an obsessed and haunted man. Sonchai's inquiries follow a dizzying route from his own apartment, where he sleeps next to his pregnant wife while his fantasies deliver him up to Damrong; through the office of his corrupt and worldly wise boss,

Captain Vikorn; to the backstreets of Phnom Penh, where street gangs are only the most visible threats; to the gilded rooms of the most exclusive men's club in Bangkok, whose members will do anything to protect their identities while exploring their darkest fantasies. Caught in a multi-dimensional web of intrigue and deception, Sonchai confronts the terrifying consequences of a lesson he should have learned long ago. In Bangkok nothing is as it seems...ExtraitChapter One

Few crimes make us fear for the evolution of our species. I am watching one right now. In a darkened room in the District 8 Police Station with my good friend FBI agent Kimberley Jones, a forty-two-inch Toshiba LCD monitor hangs high up on a wall, out of the reach of villains. The video I'm sharing with the FBI uses two industrial-quality cameras that between them seamlessly provide all the tricks of zoom, angle, pan, et cetera, and I am told that at least two technicians must have been involved in its production. The color is excellent, thanks to however many millions of pixels that contribute to their subtle shading; we are looking at a product of high civilization unknown to our forefathers. At the end of the movie, though, tough-guy Kimberley bursts into tears, as I'd rather hoped she would. I did. She turns her head to stare at me wild-eyed. Tell me it isn't real. We have the body, I say. Oh, god, Kimberley says. Oh, sweet Jesus, I've seen things bloodier, but never anything this demonic. I thought I'd seen everything. She stands up. I need air. I think, In Bangkok? But I lead her through a couple of corridors, then out into the public area, where brown men and women not much more than half her size wait to tell a cop of their homely grievances. It's not exactly a festive atmosphere, but it's human. An American extrovert, Kimberley doesn't mind dabbing her red eyes with a tissue in front of an audience, who naturally assume I've just busted this female farang on some minor drug charge—cannabis, perhaps. Like my own, her eyes naturally seek out any attractive young women sitting in the plastic seats. There are three, all of them prostitutes. (No respectable Thai woman dresses like that.) They resent the attention and glare back. I think Kimberley would like to hug them in gratitude that they're still alive. I take her out into the street: not quite what the words fresh air normally invoke, but she fills her lungs anyway. My god, Sonchai. The world. What monsters are we creating? We have achieved that rare thing, Kimberley and I: a sexless but intimate rapport between a man and a woman of the same age who are mutually attracted to each other but, for reasons beyond analysis, have decided to do nothing about it. Even so, I was surprised when she simply got on a plane in response to a frantic telephone call from me. I had no idea she was specializing in snuff movies these days; nor did I realize they were flavor of the month in international law enforcement. Anyway, it's great to have a top-notch pro familiar with the latest technology on my side. She's not intuitive, as I am, but owns a mind like a steel trap. So do I treat her like a woman or a man? Are there any rules about that where she comes from? I give her a comradely embrace and squeeze her hand, which seems to cover most points. It's great to have you here, Kimberley, I say. Thanks again for coming. She smiles with that innocence that can follow an emotional catastrophe. Sorry to be a girl. I was a girl too, the first time I saw it. She nods, unsurprised. Where did you get it, in a raid? I shake my head. No, it was sent to me anonymously, to my home. She gives me a knowing look: a personal angle here. And the body, where was it found? At the crime scene? No. It had been returned to her apartment, laid neatly on the bed. Forensics says she must have been killed somewhere else. Now the American Hero emerges. We're gonna get them, Sonchai. Tell me what you need, and I'll find a way of getting it to you. Don't make promises, I say. This isn't Iraq. She frowns. I guess a lot of Americans are tired of hearing those kinds of jibes. No, but that movie had a certain style, a certain professionalism about it, and if that alpha male isn't North American, I'll turn in my badge. A Hollywood production? For something like that, frankly the U.S. is the first place I would start looking. Specifically California, but not Hollywood. San Fernando Valley, maybe, with international connections. This could tie in with what I'm doing stateside. What would you look for? He was wearing a gimp mask. The eyeholes are quite large. Light had to get in. You have isometric surveillance at all points of entry to this country. Give me a copy of the DVD. I'll get our nerds on the case. If they can make a good still of his eyes and enlarge it, it's as good as a fingerprint. Better. Are you going to let me see the body? If you want. But how deeply involved do you want to get? Look, I don't know much, but Chanya told me you're very upset. That touches me too. If I can help, then that's what I want to do. Chanya spilled her guts? She loves you. She hinted that you need a little moral support from a fellow professional. I said okay, I'll do what I can, so long as he lets me in. The FBI has no idea how many points she's accumulated with me for treating a pregnant third-world ex-prostitute as a friend and equal. That kind of heroism leaves us slack-jawed in these parts. Chanya loves her too, of course, and when a Thai girl loves, she tells all. A tuk-tuk passes, spilling black pollution from its two-stroke engine. They used to be a symbol of Thailand: three wheels, a steel roof on vertical struts, and a happy smiling driver. Now they're a tourist gimmick catering to a diminishing number of tourists. So far the new

millennium has not delivered much in the way of new; instead we have a certain foreboding that a return to old-fashioned grinding poverty might be our share of globalism. Kimberley hasn't noticed this yet she's been here only two days, and already the work ethic has gripped her. She's not seeing the tuk-tuk or even its pollution. I'm not going to use our guys to copy the DVD, I say. She looks at me. That kind of thing is produced in very limited numbers, sold to a specialized international market. She is still looking at me. I feel blood rising up my neck, into facial blood vessels. This is a poor country. Still the look: I have to come clean. They would sell it. She turns away to save me from her contempt. A couple of beats pass, then briskly: I'm okay now. How are you going to copy it? I'm not. I'll put it in my pocket. You can use the business center at the Grand Britannia to e-mail it straight from the disk. She waits in the public area while I go back to retrieve the disk: five point seven megabytes of distilled evil. Out on the street she pauses to stare at a young monk in his early to mid-twenties. He is tall, and there is an exotic elegance about him incongruous with the Internet caf he is about to enter. Using the Net is frowned on by the Sangha, especially in public areas, but it's not a serious offense. Often monks use it to check Buddhist websites, I explain, glad to talk about something lighter than a snuff movie. Is he a regular around here? Somehow this doesn't seem like the kind of place a monk would want to hang out. Kimberley feels the need for small talk too. I saw him for the first time yesterday. I don't know which wat he's attached to. From the Hardcover edition. *Revue de presse* "Brilliantly atmospheric and pacy." (Daily Mirror for BANGKOK HAUNTS) "An exciting and fascinating exploration of the underbelly of a totally alien culture." (Irish Independent for BANGKOK HAUNTS) "One of the most startling and provocative mysteries I've read in years." (Carl Hiaasen for BANGKOK 8) "Cracking East meets West thriller introducing a half-Thai, half-American cop. Terrific" (Observer for BANGKOK 8) "Open Bangkok Tattoo and you will read on and on with wide-eyed fascination, some horror or disgust, and considerable delight" (Washington Post for BANGKOK TATTOO)