tion. Though Ustinov skewers "the English administrative mind, with its affectation of ignorance and cultivation of distance in the face of emotional or violent behavior," dogged Inspector Mudgeon is wiler than Glasp. The dark farce ends with Glasp caught in his own trap, stoically contemplating a future on the run. Not as effective as the first story, "A Nose by Any Other Name" concerns the daughter of a Kurchak family living in New Jersey, where the father teaches at a small college. Irritated by her parents' intellectual pretensions and proprietary attitude about her life, Thamar Atoulia decides to get rid of her ethnic nose (the genetic gift of both parents) via plastic surgery. Here Ustinov's tone is too arch and his farcical depiction of the uncouth Atoulas and their rebel rebellious daughter too broad. The O. Henry-like ending of his cautionary tale is predictable early on. (Sept.)

THE BASQUE HOTEL

Pete is a boy growing up during the Depression in Carson City, Nev., where his immigrant father, once a sheep rancher in the Basque hills, runs a small hotel and bootleg whiskey to his customers. When Prohibition agents close in, his proud father sets one of the men down on a hot stove. Soon the family sells the hotel and moves six blocks away to the "high-toned" part of town, where they face discrimination. This short, beautifully written, semiautobiographical novel is a small gem, a perfect example of a childhood tranquilly recollected. A bout of rheumatic fever, which nearly leaves Pete an invalid, a painfully funny early sexual encounter and his relationships with five siblings, a dour father and a resentful, firm-jawed mother are among his formative experiences. Carson City has its colorful and eccentric townsies: a natty handyman, an old prospector, a drunk, a cowboy, a near lunatic—but the arrival of desperate Oikies gives the novel a sharp edge. Laxalt's (Sweet Promised Land) is a rare find, a totally genuine, unaffected voice. (Sept.)

MYSTERIES

A LITTLE NEIGHBORHOOD MURDER

The debut of Jason Lynx, a 40ish, Colorado-based antiques dealer and interior designer, offers readers both rewards and disappointments. After Jason's wife disappeared five years ago, her wrecked car was found in the mountains with their infant son, Jerry, in the back seat. Jerry suffered an irreversible brain injury and has been institutionalized. Since then Jason has devoted himself to his business, his mentor Jacob Buchman, his dog Bela, and solving puzzles. In his neighbor's house to feed their dogs, he discovers a bomb inside the front door; the next morning their murdered bodies are found. Unable to fathom why anyone would kill the radio executive and his wife, who showed championship norm blindness. He resents his own inquiries assisted by policewoman Grace Willis. His sleuthing soon reveals a link between the neighbors and his missing wife. Married by an abundance of happenstance, a fast-fetched plot and a lack of suspense, Orde's first novel nonetheless features in Jason a thoroughly engaging multidimensional character, whom readers will look forward to meeting again. (Aug.)

DEAD BY MORNING

Simpson's (Suspicious Death) mastery of the police procedural will again dazzle devotees as she sends Inspector Luke Thanet of Sturrenden CID out on his ninth investigation. After an absence of more than 20 years, Leo Martindale returns to his ancestral estate, Longford Hall, to claim his inheritance, only to find that his sister and her husband have converted his home to a country hotel. Two days later, Martindale is found dead in a snow-covered ditch, apparently a hit-and-run victim. Clues suggesting murder lead Inspector Thanet to the Longford estate, where he composes a list of suspects, all with reason for wishing Martindale dead, and, more importantly, all with opportunity to kill him. While struggling with a web of dark, twisting secrets, Thanet must cope simultaneously with his teenaged daughter Bridget and with his new superior. Skillfully plotted, replete with vivid characters, this mystery is a page turner to the end. Yet once more it's the likable and humane Inspector, and the glimpse into his family life, that gives the novel its rewarding texture. Simpson gets better and better. Mysteries Book Club selection; BOMC alternate. (Sept.)

WORSE THAN DEATH

Bunn's exciting follow-up to his impressive debut in Closet Bones features Jack Bodine, a private eye in Lansing, Mich. Bodine assures Nora Toland he will get back her infant, Mai, taken by Sam Agnew who had arranged the baby's adoption from a Vietnamese refugee. As the gouging owner of an illegal surrogate-parent operation, Agnew demands a huge ransom for Mai, more than Nora and her husband Dirk can afford. The assignment drugs Bodine into crime-ridden places as he follows the trails of Mai's teenaged sitter, Xuan; the baby's biological father, Hung, and others, all with dangerous secrets to hide. When Mai's Vietnamese mother is murdered, Bodine lands in deeper trouble but persists in following the case to the literally bitter end. Readers caught up in the fast, terrifying action will welcome the relief of comic moments with Eddie, Bodine's small son, who inspires the love that makes a parent give up anything but his/her child. (Sept.)

FATAL CHARM

In this last mystery by Morice, who died recently, a renowned theatrical family, the Devorells, celebrates the 80th birthday of its matriarch, actress Evadne Proctor, on a TV show specializing in celebrities' lives. An unexpected guest is daughter Eliza, a former actress now married to an anthropologist and living on a Pacific island. All are a source of tension in a bickering family, Eliza is soon found in her hotel room, dead from a mixture of painkillers and alcohol. Actress Tessa Crichton and her husband, chief inspector Robin Price, become involved, and while Evadne angles for a suicide verdict, Tessa finds that Eliza had a lot to live for. Soon other members of the Devorell clan excite Tessa's suspicions. While preserving her dry wit and