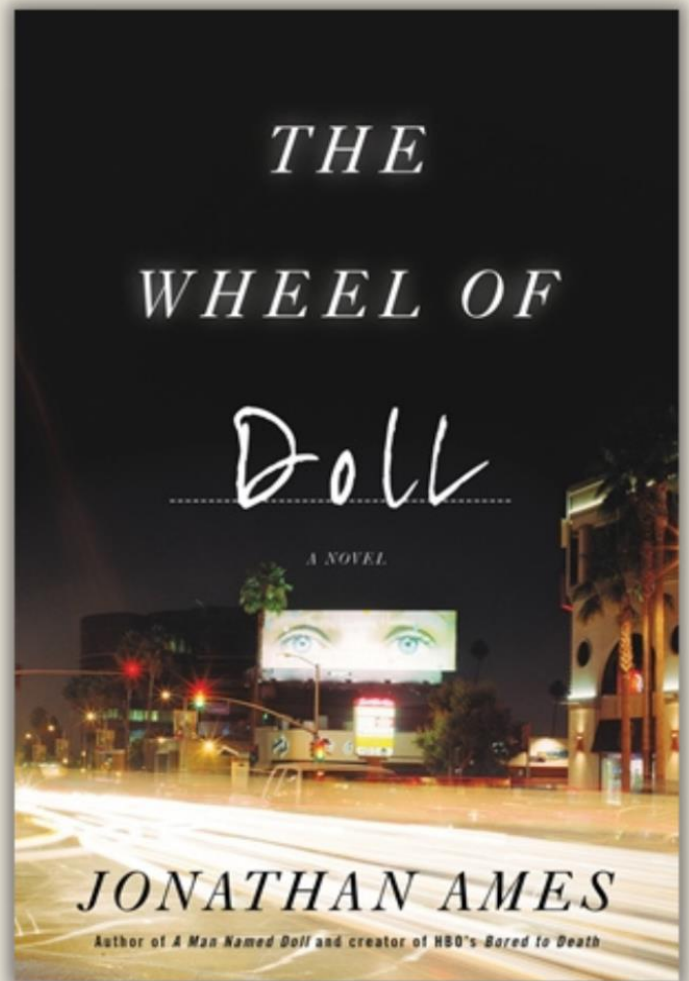
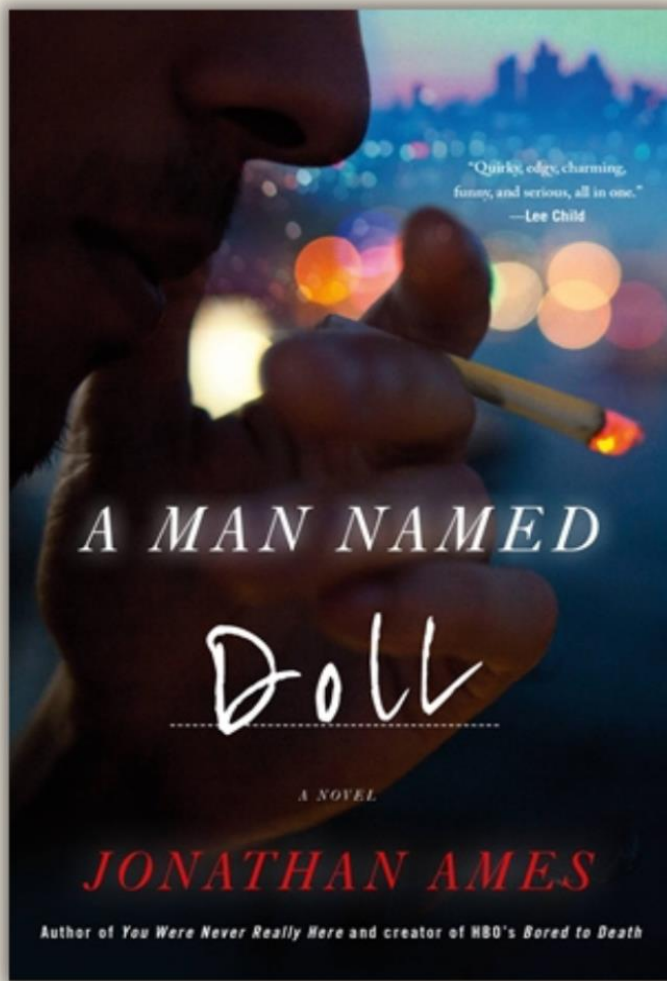




# Mulholland Books Presents....

## PARTNERS IN **CRIME**

*Conversations between our authors and  
favorite booksellers*



Featuring Third Place Books and Jonathan Ames

**This installment of *Partners in Crime* is brought to you by Robert Sindelar, managing partner at Third Place Books and Jonathan Ames, author of *A Man Named Doll* and *The Wheel of Doll*, now available wherever books are sold.**

**Robert Sindelar:** In the Happy Doll novels, I love how you blend the classic LA detective novel with the modern day. What elements of those Chandleresque novels was it most important for you to honor? Where did you have the most fun breaking free from that traditional style?

**Jonathan Ames:** I may not be consciously honoring things, but subconsciously the DOLL books are very much a Rorschach blot of my mind after reading Chandler over and over for years...But perhaps consciously what I try to do—in my own way—is convey the atmosphere of places, like when Doll goes into a bar at the Tower Hotel, I think I was probably somewhat conscious of trying to describe it vividly, in much the same way that Chandler always brought his locations to life. Also, whenever Chandler introduces a character, he gives such a beautiful and poetic depiction of their features, and I try to mimic that as well, in my own voice, or, rather, Doll's voice. And I do try to convey my sense—Doll's sense—of Los Angeles, this odd sprawling megalopolis, with its many hidden beauties, and, of course, Chandler wrote about LA and its different neighborhoods in all his books. And one thing I consciously honor is that Philip Marlowe often gets hit on the head and loses consciousness, and Chandler saved some of his best poetry for these moments, which I wrote about here: <https://www.novelsuspects.com/author-essay/the-knock-out-blow-with-jonathan-ames/>

**RS:** Where did you have the most fun breaking free from that traditional style?

**JA:** My main departure from the Chandler model may be that Happy is vulnerable and confused and often makes bad decisions. Sometimes Marlowe might make a bad decision, but it never seems like he makes an out and out mistake or you can't really fault him for his missteps, as he's often operating in the dark or with misleading information from his clients. But you never feel like Marlowe is in over his head or isn't up to the task. But with Happy, my detective, he's often overwhelmed, and he acknowledges this...And he's sensitive. Quite sensitive. Marlowe was also sensitive, but he put up a tough front. Happy's front isn't so tough, but he is rugged. I think this somewhat speaks to the departure I make from the Marlowe role model: the fact that Happy is a bit of a mess. Marlowe, a tough loner, knew himself and was quite self-contained and capable. And while Happy is a mess, he does try to work on himself, he does try to grow...

**RS:** Happy's body gets put through the ringer in these books. I was genuinely worried about him. Was there research involved in seeing how far you could push him?

**JA:** I do ask a doctor friend sometimes about medical things and I do the modern writer thing of doing research on the internet, and so, more or less, I think Happy can survive the traumas I put him through, but I really do put him through his paces, this is true. But the books are meant to be cathartic for the readers, exaggerations of our own lives, our anxieties and fears, and I think my hope is that the reader is rooting for



Happy to make it, just as the reader roots for herself or himself to make it through their struggles and difficulties. Now most of us don't go through what Happy goes through, but the books are exaggerations and metaphors of our own fears, and if we see Happy persevere, maybe, unconsciously, it reassures us—the reader—that we can also persevere through our nerve-wracking lives, because all of us do feel so challenged by life, no matter how easy we might have it on the surface.

**RS:** Happy makes good use of his telescopic baton. Have you ever owned or used one of those yourself?

**JA:** I've never owned or used one of those batons, but I saw one once and it struck me as an interesting tool of defense. Also, I fenced in college, so I think the baton's sword-like applications speak to me.

**RS:** LA is the heartbeat of these books, but you made a nice detour to Washington state in the last book. Any chance we'll get Happy to visit Seattle (our fans up here would love it)?

**JA:** Maybe Happy will make it to Seattle! The waterfront there can be very mysterious and dangerous, I imagine...and the ferry rides to remote islands seems ripe for noirish misadventures. Well, thank you for your questions!!! Through troubles and into more troubles—that's my motto. And: onward and inward! (Which is also my motto!)

