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Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter: A Novel (P.S.) by Tom Franklin,
Harper Perrenial, 2011

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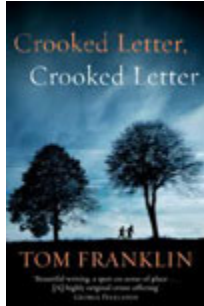
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Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter: A Novel (P.S.)

by Tom Franklin, Harper Perrenial, 2011

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

Authored by Tom Franklin, who won an Edgar award for an earlier short story collection, the novel *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter* is set in present-day Mississippi and involves an unsolved cold case from the 1970's. Larry Ott, the child of lower-middle-class white parents and Silas Jones, the son of a poor black single mother, were unlikely childhood pals and high school classmates when tragedy struck. Larry took a girl on a date and she disappeared, never to be heard from again. Despite any evidence, Larry was suspected and Silas left town for college. Twenty-five years later, that disappearance still unsolved, Larry, now a loner mechanic, and Silas cross paths again. Another girl disappears, Larry is suspected yet again, but now Silas is the local constable. The two are forced to examine their broken friendship and the buried past. While *Crooked Letter, Crooked Letter* has a mystery at its core, it is not a mystery novel; rather, Franklin, who holds the John and Renee Grisham Chair in Creative Writing at the University of Mississippi, displays some of the best characteristics of Southern literature with excellent character development, pitch-perfect dialogue, and unexpected plot twists. (By the way, the title refers to a mnemonic device used to teach Southern children how to spell "Mississippi," as in M-I-crooked letter-crooked letter-I-crooked letter-crooked letter-I-humpback-humpback-I.)

- Judi Morrel is Professor of Mathematics at Butler University.