

## ***HardScape***

From Publishers Weekly

Crackling with energy, this double-barreled mystery from the author of *Many Happy Returns* auspiciously launches an appealing new hero lightly brushed with sleaze. Benjamin Abbot III, a former investigator for Naval Intelligence and a Wall Street bond trader who served time for insider dealing, now runs the family real estate agency in his upscale hometown of Newbury, Conn. A New York City PI working for wealthy businessman Jack Long, who owns a weekend estate in Newbury, offers Ben \$5000 to videotape Jack's artist wife Rita with her lover. Ben, who wants to winterize his barn, uneasily accepts. Midway through the job, however, his conscience wins out and he destroys the tape. The next day, the lover is found murdered on the Long's property and Rita is arrested. That evening, the body of Ben's reputable cousin Renny is discovered in a small plane, shot through the head and sprinkled with cocaine. Are the murders connected? Rita hires Ben to find her lover's killer, retaining him even after he tells her about the taping. As the decent--and not so nice--citizens of Newbury, who have lifted gossip to a new art form, talk about the crime, Ben picks up key information from an unlikely source. This is a tightly knit, continually engrossing mystery, with a warm-hearted sleuth who deftly blends skills gleaned from prep school, Wall street and Leavenworth.

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