

hotchpotch of thoughts and experiences" — from the time as a child when he set fire to a clergyman, to his views on pronunciation. And there are marvellous anecdotes about the musicians he has met, such as Louis Armstrong, who, when talking about the death of an assistant, answered the question "What was wrong with him?" with the irrefutable, "When you're dead, pretty well everything's wrong with you" (Robson £7.99). **SB**

THE MAN OF MY DREAMS

by Curtis Sittenfeld

introducing
the
man
of my
dreams



Hannah Gavener is an awkward 14-year-old who has been sent to live with relatives after her father ejects

his wife and daughters from the family home. This novel examines the life of a young woman crippled by lack of confidence and almost incapable of dealing with social situations. The story leaps months or years ahead with each chapter, to Hannah at college, an internship, and her mother's remarriage. Sittenfeld's writing shows great subtlety as she follows her character towards womanhood, tackling issues such as depression, jealousy and abusive relationships. Hannah is not always likeable, but she is very real, and it is this that makes the novel so engrossing (Picador £7.99). **JC**

SOVEREIGN LADIES: The Six Reigning Queens of England

by Maureen Waller



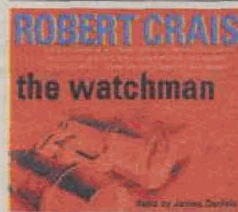
"Famous have been the reigns of our Queens," wrote Winston Churchill in 1952 as Elizabeth II prepared to follow in the footsteps of five female predecessors on the throne (an Elizabeth, two Marys, an Anne and a Victoria). Certainly, queens seem to have presided over some of the most dramatic events in British history, and at least two have given their name to an era. Waller packs concise biographies of the six queens regnant into

fewer than 500 pages. Thanks to her talent for lively narrative and gift for throwing new light on familiar stories, she has written a book that reveals as much about our female monarchs and their historical importance as a whole shelf of individual biographies (J Murray £9.99). **NR**


Reviews by Mia Aimaro Ogden, Phil Baker, Steve Boyd, Jo Caird, Ian Critchley, Nicolette Jones, Nick Rennison, Karen Robinson and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann. All titles available at Sunday Times Books First prices (including p&p) on 0870 165 8585

Audio book of the week

THE WATCHMAN by Robert Crais, read by James Daniels



The "cashmere breeze" of pre-dawn Los Angeles is shattered when the "celebutante" Larkin Barkley crashes her Aston Martin into another vehicle. Who was in that car, and what they were up to, make this no ordinary accident, and Joe Pike, definitely the strong-but-silent type, ends up protecting the pouting heiress as attempts are made on her life by some extremely nasty — and determined — people. Pike is aided by Elvis Cole, his long-time partner in crimebusting, a positively skittish voice compared to Pike's strictly utilitarian approach to the spoken word. James Daniels's reading points up the contrasts between the two men, and this American production sparingly deploys clever audio effects and groovy mood music to complement the switchback plot. A satisfying hit for Pike and Cole fans (Orion £14.99, 5 hours 25 minutes, abridged). **KR**

 Hear *The Watchman* on timesonline.co.uk/books