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SUSPENSE MAGAZINE

JAN./FEB./MARCH 2019

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I'd been thinking about a topic to focus on for about two weeks and couldn't come up with anything good. I then interviewed *New York Times* bestseller Greg Iles, and it all came together.

I'm going to ask this question: "Why is the villain more important than the hero?"

For those who listen to Suspense Radio, you've probably heard me talk about this topic several times. I've said

over and over that, to me, villains in any and all stories are far more (or should be more) interesting to the reader. Let's not sugarcoat it. We all know when James Bond is in a very dangerous situation, that the excitement/tension factor does not come from whether or not he's going to die; it comes from not knowing how he will get out of his current predicament in time. There is no real suspense created from worrying about Bond's actual death, so where does the author need to create real tension? Answer: In the villain.

In most cases the villain needs to be more powerful and more intense than the hero. Remember, in 99% of the cases, the villain believes they are the hero of the story. They believe that what they are fighting for is on the right side.

I'll take a title by Dan Brown as an example. In his book, "Inferno," the villain would like to wipe out over a third of the population in order for the rest of the population to survive. This same premise was alive in *Avengers: Infinity War*. The villain feels that killing over a billion people is actually good because it saves the rest of us.

No matter how crazy the idea or the belief is for the villain, the reader should be able to understand their point of view, but they don't have to agree with it. A villain that is simply bat-shit crazy is probably the most uninteresting character to read. They always need a reason.

With that said, authors should really focus more on how to create tension and suspense between the villain's ideas versus those of the hero. The emotional bond that the two create should feel real. So, by putting time and effort into creating these ultimate villains, readers will be rewarded with a story that has much more depth.

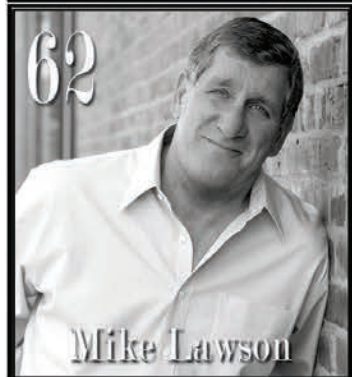
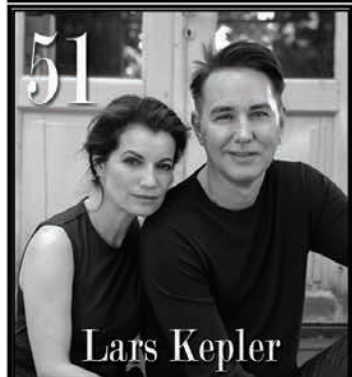
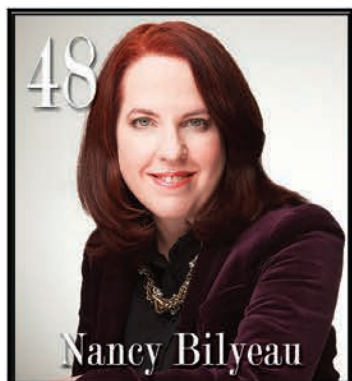
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SPECIAL PREVIEW FROM CHRISTINE FEEHAN

TOXIC GAME

By Christine Feehan
Press Photo Credit: Author Website



Shylah Cosmos lay in the slight depression that afforded her some cover, puzzling out the identity of the lone man ruthlessly cutting down the guards of the Milisi Separatis Sumatra. He was not just good; he was a freaking killing machine. He could have been a robot programmed to kill. There didn't appear to be one wasted motion. He didn't seem to need rest. He just flowed across the ground, like a dark wraith in the night, like a ghost . . .

She gasped and shoved her knuckles into her mouth, biting down to keep from making a sound. He had to be a GhostWalker. She was looking at a legitimate GhostWalker. The real deal. He was that good. That smooth. So quiet he couldn't be real. He looked more a predator, more an animal flowing across the ground than a human. She blinked several times to keep her focus. She'd been following him ever since she'd caught a shadow sliding into the village and then the infirmary.

He'd gone right into the enemy stronghold without so much as a flinch. He could really have been a ghost for all the MSS members noticed him as he walked among them. No way could Shylah not have noticed him. He had a distinctive build. He seemed larger than life, but maybe it was because she was watching him do the impossible. In one night he had made at least twenty-five kills single-handedly. That was impressive. Four in the village, three of the four corners, and that was two guards each. Across the back of the village, in front and down one side, were five each.

He might have made more kills had the guards not been in continual contact with one another.

She knew that the soldiers would try to raise their commander, and she knew that he was already dead. She'd seen the GhostWalker do the impossible and kill him. She knew it was a clean kill because she'd actually gotten into the house to see with her own eyes. Up close, the kill had been grisly, the sword blade slicing cleanly through the man's throat. The dead commander was staring up at the ceiling, eyes wide open, the blade protruding. The eyes made her sick to her stomach and she'd had to turn away. Still, as deaths went, she considered it the perfect ending for a man like that, although she would have liked to have known he suffered before he went.

Shylah had seen the effects of the virus on the people of Lupa Suku and she was certain the commander had access

to the virus and that he had infected the villagers with it. She'd been tracking the three virologists who had created the virus for some time and her search had brought her here to Sumatra. There had been five incidents that she knew of to date, all occurring right around the Banyuasin River. The first three had been small and could have been easily overlooked, but she'd been sent in as soon as the first incident had been recorded.

A fisherman on the Banyuasin River had found three men dead, their bodies bloated and ravaged by some horrible disease, but each in a different dwelling. The three men had makeshift camps they'd used as a base to hunt and fish. They hadn't been together, nor did they seem to have had any contact with one another when she'd traced their movements, yet all three men had died the same way.

The fisherman who'd found the bodies had called the authorities and they'd made a report. Dr. Whitney immediately had been notified that an unknown virus appearing to be hemorrhagic had killed three random people, men who made their living on the river. Unfortunately, Whitney suspected his three missing virologists had created the virus and she'd been sent in to confirm. More, Whitney was certain the three were testing the virus, or showing buyers what it could do. He feared the virus had been offered for sale to the MSS and they had used it on the unsuspecting forgotten tribe.

She'd been angry when she saw the ravaged remains of a once peaceful and thriving community. The people of Lupa Suku had been passive and had lived in accord with the forest and the animals there. They were self-sufficient and loyal to one another. They didn't deserve to die the way they had, callously thrown away for someone's gain. Whatever the agenda of the MSS, it shouldn't have mattered more than those people.

She had to admit she was still angry—angry enough that she felt satisfaction when she spotted that shadow of death flowing through the village taking no prisoners. She'd followed him, very careful to make sure that he hadn't spotted her and turned that bloodthirsty knife on her. Now she lay in the dirt and rotting vegetation, with ants and spiders crawling around her and over her, watching him. Every muscle in her body was in knots.

She had a bad feeling and wanted to shout at him to get out of there, to run away. Or dissolve in the way of ghosts. He'd taken too many lives and he didn't seem to want to stop. The alarm had gone out and now the rest of the group would be actively looking for

him, especially once they tried to rouse their commander and found him dead. That would happen at any moment.

The GhostWalker had to know he was blown. He *had* to. She wasn't supposed to make her presence known. She had a job to do and she couldn't do it if anyone knew about her. She was supposed to stay off the radar. She couldn't be seen backing the man who had killed so many members of the MSS.

He was not going to stop. She could only watch in silence as the shadow rose up almost at the two guards' feet. His thirsty knife slashed across one throat and then the other. It happened so fast neither man probably ever saw him. Neither had turned his head toward him before the second throat had been cut and the shadow had gone to ground.

Watching the two MSS realize they were dead, that the life was draining from them as blood poured onto the ground, was something out of a horror movie. She couldn't look away. She was wholly mesmerized by the way they

TOXIC GAME

By Christine Feehan

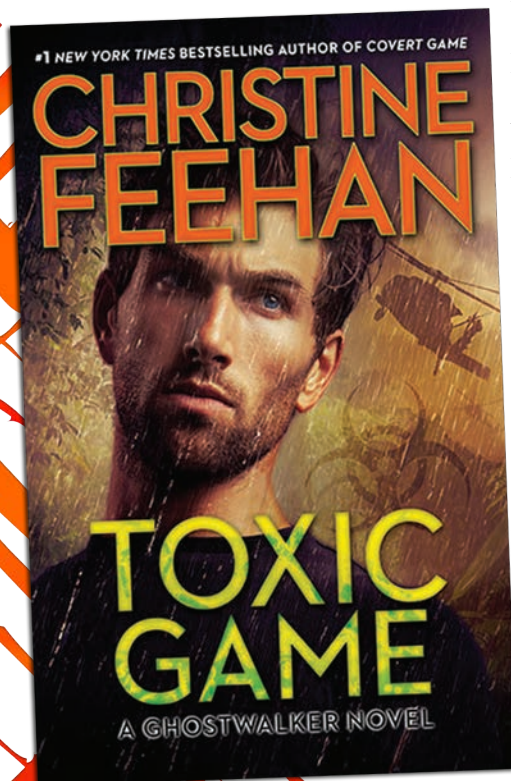
Fans are in the millions when it comes to the *GhostWalker* series, and this incredible tale is guaranteed to bring even more to author Feehan's door.

Dr. Draden Freeman and his *GhostWalker* team find themselves in the middle of the Indonesian jungle this time out. They are there on a very serious rescue mission where they must get the wounded out as quickly as they possibly can. If not, they risk spreading a deadly virus that has been unleashed upon the unsuspecting by a terrorist cell. But the worst happens. It is Draden who gets infected during the mission and he does all he can to save the others, forcing his entire team to leave him behind and head to safety. There is no way he's going to risk anyone else losing their life in order to save his. Therefore, knowing what the ultimate end is going to be, Draden changes his mission and focuses on bringing the villains to justice before he succumbs to death.

Shylah Cosmos is a woman who's determined to track this horrific virus while remaining under the veil of secrecy. It is her special skills, however, that tell her Draden is not only a hero, but also a *GhostWalker* who is dangerous. Instead of staying away from him, however, Shylah saves his life from a gunshot wound. Although happy with her choice, she has yet to understand that by helping him she's also opened herself up to the virus that will eventually take her down.

Readers will be on the edge of their seats as the race to kill terrorists also includes a race to find a cure so that these amazing people can somehow be saved. Feehan once again earns an A+ when it comes to action!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



stared at each other in silent terror, and then slowly crumpled to the ground like empty gunnysacks.

Gunfire erupted, pulling her attention back to the assassin. She couldn't see him, just the blaze of orange and blue muzzle blasts as several guards opened fire around the station where their two fallen comrades had gone down. She thought they were firing blindly, but then she saw him. He was running along a deer trail that led straight toward her—and the river.

He took her breath away. He was solid, all muscle and she could see, even with the veil of gray rain, that his muscles rippled deliciously as he ran. His tee was plastered on him, so that he might as well not have been wearing one. She could see his body moving effortlessly, even when he leapt over fallen tree trunks and smaller brush.

He didn't carry anything with him, so if he had a war bag, he'd stashed it somewhere. Did that mean he'd come to the encampment armed with only a knife? He was heading for the river and a small army of very angry MSS soldiers chased after him. He was fast though, like that machine she'd named him before.

Shylah scooted back as he came close, but there was no way to move as he veered away from a particularly large tree trunk and headed straight for the depression where she was secreted. Bullets thunked into the bark, sending splinters flying into the air, but she could only watch in fascination as the man loomed over her.

Holy cow, he was the hottest man she'd ever seen in her life. The thing of fantasies, movie star quality. Or a rock star. Someone a woman could spend hours just staring at. She had all of three seconds because he never broke stride, vaulting over her easily. There wasn't even the sound of heavy breathing and he was sprinting full out. Her heart beat way too fast and it wasn't because half the MSS army was chasing him. In real life, men like that didn't exist.

He disappeared around a bend in the trail, and she rolled down and away from the guards trailing him. They were still a little farther out, and she had every confidence that she could get away without being seen. *He* had seen her. For one moment, their eyes locked. His were blue, but that was far too mundane to describe them. Almost a pure dark blue, a true navy. She'd seen them for a second, but it didn't matter with her enhanced vision. She would dream about those eyes for the rest of her life.

She scrambled on all fours down to the little tunnel small animals had made in the brush and crawled inside. She was fast, sliding almost on the bare ground, taking her to the worn, very narrow path that led to the river. This was a game trail, one smaller animals used when they were nervous, which was all the time. It was the fastest way to the river and the safest for her. She went fast, hearing the guards running, still firing their guns, although she doubted if they could even see the GhostWalker.

She burst out from the tunnel just before the bank of the river, coming to an upright position, still moving. Boats were tied up and several of the MSS were rushing up the embankment, firing steadily, over and over at the running GhostWalker. It was his poor luck that other members of the MSS had returned at such an unexpected hour.

She saw the GhostWalker's head jerk back and then his body was in the water. The guards continued to shoot at him as he went under. Shylah didn't hesitate but kept on running so that she went right to the edge and dove. She was nowhere near as good in the water as her friend Bellisia, who she had known and trained with her entire life. Still, she was a strong swimmer and could stay underwater for long periods of time. She wasn't without her own enhancements.

She swam to the spot where she saw him go under. Bullets streaked through the water, raining down as more soldiers from the village joined those who had come from the river. The streaks looked silver in the murky, dark water. She went deeper, grateful for her enhanced vision but still unable to see very far in front of her. Her foot kicked him, and she grabbed. He was a dead weight and her heart sank. There was no time to examine him, she had to get him—and herself—away from the rapidly firing guards.

Shylah knew they couldn't see her, but they were so angry, they kept shooting blindly into the water. She struck out strongly for the other side of the river. It wasn't terribly wide, well within her range, even toting dead weight with one hand. There was a slight bend in the river and she went with the current, letting it help her sweep around that bend as she continued to pull for the bank.

To her dismay, it was much steeper on that side. She rolled the GhostWalker over so he was face-up and kept swimming, trying to find a place to drag him even partially onto land. Time slowed down, and a part of her wanted to panic. Then it was there, an embankment that stretched to the very edge of the river. She made for it, redoubling her efforts at speed.

The moment she had him half in, half out of the water, she rolled him to his side to try to clear his lungs and then listened for breathing and heartbeat. There appeared to be neither. She began CPR immediately, fitting her mouth over his, blowing air into his lungs and then doing chest compressions.

Come on, ghost man. You want this. You want to live. I know you do. Breathe for me. Take a breath. ■

Christine Feehan is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of the Carpathian series, the GhostWalker series, the Leopard series, the Shadow Riders series, and the Sea Haven novels, including the Drake Sisters series and the Sisters of the Heart series.

THE ALLURE OF THE *Dangerous Man*

By Stephanie Jo Harris
Press Photo Credit: Provided by Author



Let's face it, there is something intangibly delicious about a dangerous man in the world of fiction. I am not talking about bad boys here; I suppose some people think bad boys are cute in their own little way, but I am talking about the truly dangerous man. You know the one I mean: the man who will slaughter a town (Thank you, Stephen King, for Roland of Gilead); or the one that will host glorious dinner parties without mentioning that humans are on the menu (Thank you, Thomas Harris, for Dr. Hannibal Lecter). This is the level of dangerous man I am referring to and, yes, they are...oh, so appealing.

Men and women alike enjoy the dangerous man's dark, effective methodologies. This archetype never fails to leave his mark in the mind of the audience, and often leaves us wanting to see him again. Assuming we are mostly decent folk (and if you aren't, you already know your own reasons for liking him) the idea of the dangerous man should bring thoughts of dread instead of hopes for a sequel. What is it that we love so

much about a ruthless, violent man who overtly disregards the rules of law and society? As a lover of the dangerous men of fiction, I could discuss this topic all day. But for the purposes of this piece, I have compiled just a few ideas about why I find them so irresistible.

COOL UNDER FIRE

Generally speaking, the dangerous man is prepared for any scenario. There is something entirely comforting about this concept and the knowledge that nothing rattles him. The dangerous man allows us to be concerned for him, but not *too* concerned, because we know he's going to survive; or, at the very least, die well. He is always more dangerous than the situation he's in at the time—whether it's the march of the undead, dealing with a group of less-interesting malevolent people, or simply changing a tire, this is just another day for our antihero. He would kill the enemy to give the undead something to eat and fix the tire while having a cigarette. How can that steadiness *not* be appealing?

NO WASTED WORDS

He doesn't say much. Not to generalize, but typically speaking, the dangerous man is pretty quiet most of the time. He is not a fan of wasted words. He's polite and well-spoken when necessary, but really, he is too busy scoping out exits and making certain he has identified at least three ways to kill someone should the need arise. He sits quietly in the background observing until his services are needed. This mysterious and quiet behavior allows us a different level of engagement when we are with him. We can sit in safety and try to analyze his thought process based on dialog and actions. We can retire for the evening and wonder if his actions were on purpose, or if he really cared about that person. As a result of his silence, we can interpret whatever version of the dangerous man we prefer. Isn't that lovely?

HE MEANS IT

Whether enraged or silent—he means it. Enough said.

MORALLY COMPROMISED

The more we come to appreciate the dangerous man, the more our own line of what is morally acceptable becomes, at the very least, more flexible. Michael Corleone had his own brother murdered. Now, I know what you're thinking, and I agree. Fredo was most certainly a traitor, so what choice did Michael have? He was trying to save his family. You see where I'm going with this. There are characters we have come to appreciate to the point where we will accept just about any violent or horrific behavior they feel is required. The idea that the dangerous man might just be capable of anything leaves him with an underlying intensity that cannot be ignored. Intensity is typically lacking in our day-to-day lives, and it is...oh, so satisfying, to breathe it in for a moment.

FEARLESSNESS

We love dangerous men because they will do what we will not. Dangerous men operate under a different moral code and their own rules. Being killed or caught doesn't concern them; they have things they need to do. This fearlessness is not available to most of us; we have mortgages. As per Mary Shelley, fearless men are powerful. Can you imagine being truly fearless? Even for a second? It must be quite liberating. Dangerous men live like that all the time. It is strangely exciting to know that even though I wouldn't slaughter an entire town, or host a cannibal dinner party, I know someone who will.

HIS MYSTERIOUS PAST

Usually, the dangerous man has a significant number of unknowns in his past. We are often privy to tiny bits of information by some colleague, official report, or classified communication, but that's it. It's up to us to fill in the blanks. Was he beaten as a child? Discharged as a military badass? Kill the family cat? Inquiring minds want to know. We prefer to assume there must be some reason he is so dangerous. Personally, I like to hear the bits of scary information before we meet him, but there are some fantastic characters that we slowly come to learn are dangerous. (Shout out to Tom Hardy in *The Drop*.) At any rate, we have a natural desire to try to assign past circumstances to behavior. The violence is much more acceptable when we understand he has his reasons, even if we don't entirely know what they are. But, hey, maybe *that* will be in the sequel. ■

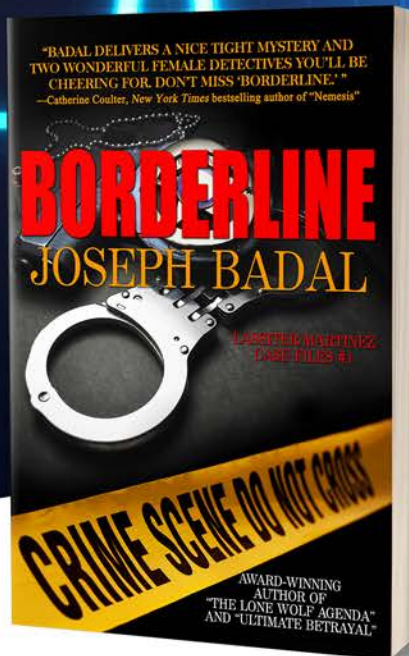
Stephanie Jo Harris is the author of psychological thrillers, and she has a special affection for all things disturbing and uncomfortable. A life-long Midwesterner and a licensed counselor, she spends her free time writing, day dreaming and pursuing atypical conversation.



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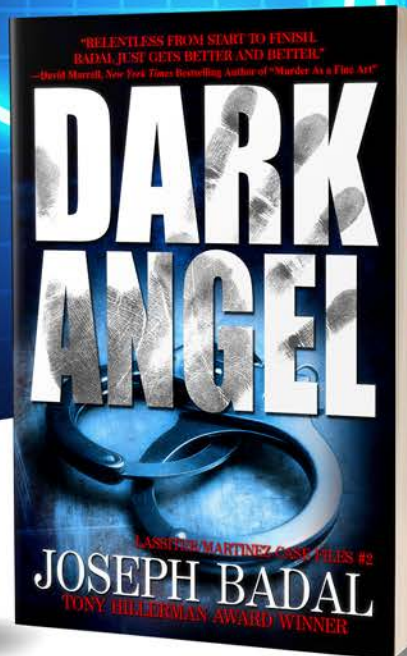
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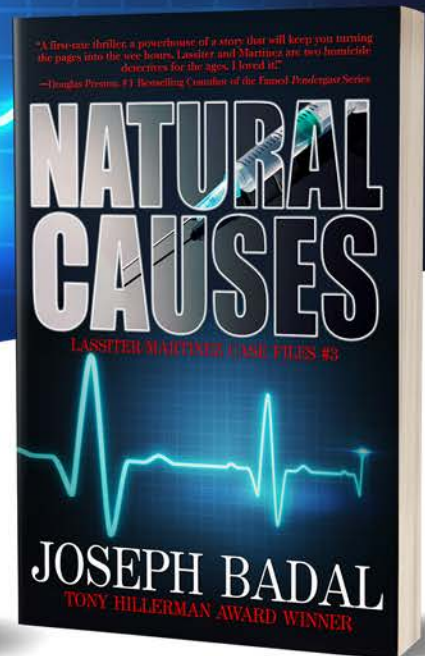
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NORTH TO ALASKA:

Researching “Run Cold” An *Edna Ferber* Mystery

By Ed Ifkovic

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EVEN AS A SMALL BOY IN RURAL CONNECTICUT, ALASKA FASCINATED ME. In fact, I believe I still own one-square-inch of that enormous and mysterious state. Back then, the late 1940s and early 1950s, my brother, sister, and I often huddled on winter nights by the Zenith console radio in the family parlor, and we listened to *Sergeant Preston of the Yukon*. Thrilled by the calamitous sound effects that blasted through the speakers—the howling night wind and the eerie baying of the menacing wolves—as well as the dramatic mushing of Preston’s faithful husky, King—I shivered as I imagined the vast, endless stretches of ice and snow. One day I discovered in the back pages of some comic book, or maybe a boys’ magazine, an advertisement for the sale of one-square-inch of Alaska. That’s right—one tiny speck of snow, somewhere up in the Arctic Circle. I’ve forgotten the amount I sent in—probably a buck, maybe less. Probably my whole weekly allowance. But at one point I received a certificate (I hesitate to call it a land deed) that named me the proud possessor of Alaskan territory.

This was, to be sure, the early 1950s when Alaska was a territory, an icebox of igloos and Eskimos rubbing noses and ailing old folks set adrift on ice floes, but I followed all the debate in the press that resulted in Alaska becoming our forty-ninth state. When I started researching my *Edna Ferber* mysteries, I was determined to use Alaska as a setting because Ferber had been a strong

advocate for statehood, had traveled there multiple times, and, in fact, her “Ice Palace” (1958) was touted as the “*Uncle Tom’s Cabin* of Alaskan Statehood.” Perhaps a little hyperbolic, this designation startled even Ferber herself, but the notion still appeals to me.

But as I began my research into what would be Ferber’s last novel—she was already in her seventies—I found myself stymied: there was too much variety to gather into a mystery. The salmon industry, the search for gold, the fur trade, minority rights, the debate over statehood, the proximity of the Soviet Union. On and on. Strangely, this was also Ferber’s problem, as she recalled in her memoirs—fascinated by the sheer abundance of Alaska, she threw everything into the novel, creating a plodding travelogue and forgetting to flesh out her characters. I did the same thing. Two novels got nowhere with Annette and Barbara, both editors sending me cautionary notes that said diplomatically that I had not captured Alaska. No mystery there. My Alaska was a tepid 1950s pastel cocktail bar on Second Avenue or glib businessmen in bolo ties with cigars and swagger. And then Annette reminded me—she who had spent a childhood in Alaska—that Alaska in the 1950s was still frontier: saloons with swinging doors, sourdoughs with gold nugget necklaces, persistent dreamers under the unrelenting midnight sun. Folks headed out into the wilderness and disappeared into the crevasses. Lives were lost in the

“One day I discovered in the back pages of some comic book, or maybe a boys’ magazine, an advertisement for the sale of one-square-inch of Alaska.”

surrealistic delirium of the *aurora borealis*. Although Fairbanks touted itself as modern—after all, there were skyscrapers there, the delight of small Indian kids who rode the elevators up and down—the city itself still had one large step planted in the hardscrabble past. Suddenly I found my focus.

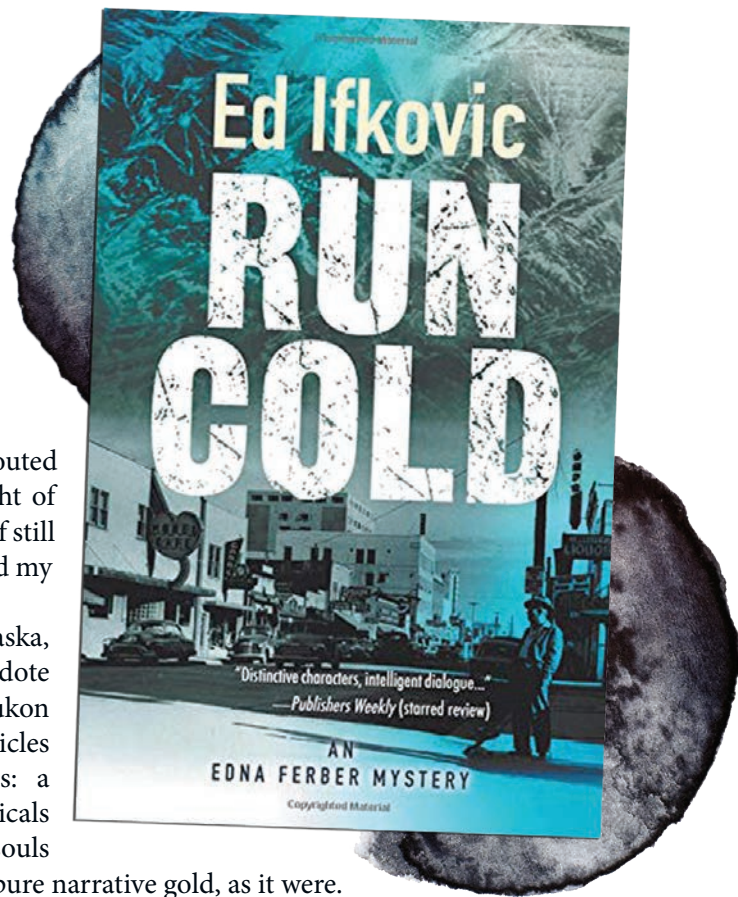
Of course, I read everything I could find on this mysterious Alaska, but what really galvanized my vision was the colorful world of anecdote and folklore and tales of dark violence. The Athabascans of Fort Yukon also enthralled me, and I discovered obscure memoirs and articles written by fur traders and missionaries and the Indians themselves: a rich vein of incredible memory. Old magazines, circa 1900, periodicals like *Outlook* and *Scribner’s*, had articles that chronicled intrepid souls from the Lower 48 who ventured into the Arctic Circle. Nuggets of pure narrative gold, as it were.

In the John King Bookstore in downtown Detroit I came upon a privately printed pamphlet, dog-eared and stapled, that took me back into the missionary schools in Fort Yukon and the suppression of revered Indian values. The frontier came alive, the realization that in the 1950s, despite the veneer of sleek cocktail bars of a new Alaska, Fairbanks still pulsed with rhythms that echoed from the old goldmine days, not so distant a memory for many old-timers. And as the trappers and prospectors and wandering loners drifted down into Fairbanks, often old crippled men now, they brought with them not only fantastic stories but also long-held grievances, angers, and the desire for revenge. Perfect for the mystery writer—there is always a good murder at the end of such a history.

And there, suddenly and thrillingly, was “Run Cold.”

My last *Edna Ferber* mystery, the tenth, has a special place in my heart. It’s the product of a joyous collaboration of writer and passionate editors. It’s the mystery I wanted to write in the first days after the initial Ferber, “Lone Star.” Writing the *Ferber* mysteries has been a wonderful journey for me. I can remember sending off the first chapters of “Lone Star” and nervously waiting for an editor’s response. When I received a contract, I was overjoyed—I’d been waiting for a moment like this all my life. Over the successive years, as I worked on other *Ferbbers*, emails sailing back and forth with Annette and Barbara, days of frustration, days of elation, days of triumph, I came to realize something important: the back-and-forth give-and-take editorial process taught me how to “write.” A strange statement perhaps, given that I had been writing for years. In fact, I once taught Creative Writing. But I realized that Annette and Barbara got me into the bones of a story, got me to tweak the edges of my imagination, and ultimately gave me confidence in my written words. There can be no greater gift for a writer. And now, ten books later, ending the series, I’m left with a bittersweet feeling. I accomplished what I wanted to do with the *Ferbbers*—I wanted to capture the sweep and weight of her life though dressed up in murder and mayhem. She might cringe at the idea, but I don’t. Edna Ferber, largely a forgotten American writer now, served me well, and I hope I honored her. Her “Ice Palace” was her last novel, the fiction that allowed her to capture the far-flung reaches of the America she loved. “Run Cold,” I believe, is a fitting conclusion to the series, the septuagenarian trudging through snow in the pursuit of truth and justice. Sort of like Sergeant Preston of the Yukon, in fact. Seekers after truth in the icebound territory. Echoes from my own childhood. After all, I still maintain that I own a dot of that wonderful landscape. ■

Ed Ifkovic taught literature and creative writing at a community college in Connecticut for over three decades. His short stories and essays have appeared in the Village Voice, America, Hartford Monthly, and Journal of Popular Culture. A longtime devotee of mystery novels, he fondly recalls discovering Erle Stanley Gardner’s Perry Mason series in a family bookcase, and his immediate obsession with the whodunit world.



What it's *Really* Like to be a Published Author

By Jessica Jarlvi

Press Photo Credit: Provided by Author



When you're a writer who dreams of being published, you might envision queues of readers lining up to get their book signed, a sea of positive Amazon Reviews, a growing social media following and full-page interview spreads in magazines. You might dream of spending the majority of your waking hours doing what you love—writing. You might also imagine travelling the world, delivering talks and workshops on inspiration and life as a

writer. This is all happening while the media inquiries are flowing in. Anyway, you get the picture!

This is all wonderful and will help you visualise getting published, but if it doesn't happen all at once, don't despair.

Like most authors, I didn't get my 'big break' on the first go—it took years of writing and pitching. In 2016, I won a competition, which caught the eye of my agent and I signed a book deal. It felt incredible of course. Finally being a published author *is* amazing, but for those who are published for the first time, or aspire to be, they often say "it's not what I expected." So, what can a newly published author expect from publishing his or her book?

NOT ALL REVIEWS WILL BE AMAZING

I know some authors who get very down about negative reviews. When you have been working hard on your book for a long time, it can feel disheartening when someone doesn't enjoy it. But that's ok! This is the way I choose to look at it: there are millions of books out there and I'm grateful that someone chose mine and that the majority of readers have a positive experience when they read it. As with anything in life, you can't please everyone!

SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

There are many books out there. It's a crowded market and

it's expected that authors are active on social media, and do a certain amount of marketing and PR. This is to get the word out about your great novel/s. Even if you have a publishing house behind you, you'll still need to do your part. This can become a juggling act when you start to write your next book, so make sure it doesn't consume you.

THE NEXT BOOK DOESN'T WRITE ITSELF

Speaking of the next book... There is definitely pressure when it comes to writing a new novel. Whether you're in or out of contract, there are certain expectations. People will ask you what the next book is about, when it's due, if it's similar to the last one, etc., so you definitely feel that underlying pressure. Compartmentalizing my thoughts, using to-do lists and time blocking have really helped me focus on the next project, despite having lots going on. Also, remember that writing a book takes time. Recently, I did a creative writing workshop at a school and the students thought it would perhaps take a few weeks. I wish!

At the end of the day, the thrills of being a published author outweigh the unexpected by far: Your name in print on a book jacket, having your words read, and the feeling of having accomplished your goals and dreams, is indescribable. So if you have a dream—keep working on it. Anything is possible! ■

Best-selling author of psychological thrillers, "When I Wake Up" and "What Did I Do?," Jessica Jarlvi was born and grew up in a small Swedish town prior to an international career, living and working in the UK, the US and the UAE.

Jessica has always had a love for the written word, and following a career in journalism and marketing, she submitted part of a manuscript to the prestigious Montegrappa First Fiction competition at the Emirates Airline Festival of Literature.

Named as one of the winners, she subsequently signed a book deal with Aria and Head of Zeus (HoZ). Jessica Jarlvi's debut novel "When I Wake Up" was published in 2017 and reached number 1 on the best-selling charts. Her second novel, "What Did I Do?" was published in 2018 to rave reviews.



Writing Cutting-Edge Suspense with Crime-Fighting Breakthroughs



By Elizabeth Goddard

Press Photo Credit: Provided by Publicist

Years ago when I attended my first writing conference, I was still trying to figure out what I wanted to write. Conferences are great for giving an aspiring writer direction. So I mingled with other writers and hoped to absorb their knowledge. My biggest question to those who'd achieved their publishing dreams was, "Where do you get your ideas?"

The response? "You have to ask, *What if?*"

From that moment on I trained myself to constantly be on the lookout for new ideas. Now I can't seem to turn the "idea machine" off. Sometimes I'd prefer it if my brain would stop generating answers to the "what if" question. Everything has potential for a story idea, but not everything is commercially viable. Still, I'm always searching for that one pivotal idea that could be a game changer or make a bestseller.

In the meantime, I get to be the writer to answer that same question that I posed early on, now posed to me by readers and aspiring writers. "Where do you get your ideas?"

A better question would be: "How did you come up with that crime?"

Let me tell you. My morning habits now include scouring online news websites looking for the kind of article that will spark the premise for a novel. By the end of my allotted browsing time, usually several stories will go into the fodder file for later perusal when I need to come up with a new proposal for my publisher, or I need to ramp up my current writing project. Reading the news (or watching it) can also keep me up-to-date with new technology and the way law enforcement is using it to solve crimes.

So when I came across a story in the newspaper (yes, the actual printed newspaper) that had all the pieces—an intriguing career and a new use for technology that had solved crimes—I knew this was the story idea I'd been waiting for.

The article was about a forensic genealogist who had solved a cold case for the police. Wowzah! What was a forensic genealogist? I had no idea. But I was intrigued. After researching the potential of this interesting career for my character, I shared the article with several writing friends. Everyone declared that if I didn't use this in a story, they would use it. Of course, the story idea was mine, all mine. No can share.

When I stumbled across this story in 2016, I had never before read anything about DNA and genealogy used in solving crimes. Now almost every week, if not every day, I see a story in the news about law enforcement solving crimes, usually cold cases, because someone loaded their DNA onto a genealogy database and it matched a criminal's DNA. In other words, law enforcement can cross reference DNA they have found at crime scenes with genealogy databases to find potential matches with family. Believe me, law enforcement across the country is now taking advantage of this newly discovered use for genealogy.

But finding the suspect takes time and requires much more than simply loading DNA into databases to come up with a match. Finding a match also requires the keen research skills of an experienced genealogist who can create family trees from the information. Once the family tree is identified, officials are close to finding and charging the perpetrator(s).

The day I wrote this article I came across a headline: "DNA, genetic genealogy made 2018 the year of the cold case: 'Biggest crime-fighting breakthrough in decades.'"

Go ahead and "google" the cases now cracked by DNA and genealogy. Look out bad guys—your families may inadvertently turn you in.

My book featuring a forensic genealogist released at just the right time. DNA and genealogy used to solve crimes is only one of many new technologies and methodologies popping up every day. As suspense writers we must find ways to stay on top of the game, or by the time the book comes out, our use of a particular crime-solving technique will be old news.

To stay on top of technology and crime-fighting breakthroughs, I continue my habit of browsing the news to search for the next story, and while I'm at it, I'm learning about what law enforcement is doing to solve crimes. For instance, I recently read a story about how police in Washington state used drones coupled with GPS to catch a wife-killer. Another recent story revealed how a Fitbit was used to charge a ninety-nine-year-old man for murdering his granddaughter. Her heartrate had sky-rocketed and then completely stopped during the time he claimed to have visited her.

Technology makes it more difficult for the killers to get away with their crimes. Conversely, that same technology can be a double-edged sword to a suspense writer. Take cell phones. Years ago, it was easier to put a character in a situation with no way out. The character couldn't so easily call for help. Now we must come up with creative ways for that cell phone to ramp up the tension or somehow be discarded along the way.

When I first started writing, I focused on writing historical novels, which meant learning everything that happened during that time period. What could be done and said. What tools were used for everything, including eating utensils. These details are important to the genre and I found the research too meticulous and perplexing at the time. I decided that writing a historical was much more difficult than writing a contemporary suspense novel because, well, I don't need to look into what utensils would be available.

Now I know better. Writing contemporary suspense comes with its own set of "devil in the details" issues. Writers must stay on the cutting edge of technology to keep their heroes and their villains credible and worthy of a captivating modern suspense story.

This brings me back to that all important question: "How did you come up with that crime?" Here's a tip—Read news articles, law enforcement websites and magazines, other writers, and watch out for the latest and greatest technology.

It could be used to either solve a crime or commit a crime. ▪

Elizabeth Goddard is the bestselling author of more than thirty books, including the Carol Award-winning "The Camera Never Lies." Her Mountain Cove series books have been finalists in the Daphne du Maurier Awards and the Carol Awards. Goddard is a seventh-generation Texan and can be found online at www.elizabethgoddard.com.

SuspenseMagazine.com

"In-Laws Can Be Murder is another zany Baby Boomer romp, one not to be missed!"

—Allison Brook, Author of the *Haunted Library* Mystery series

Every Wife Has A Story

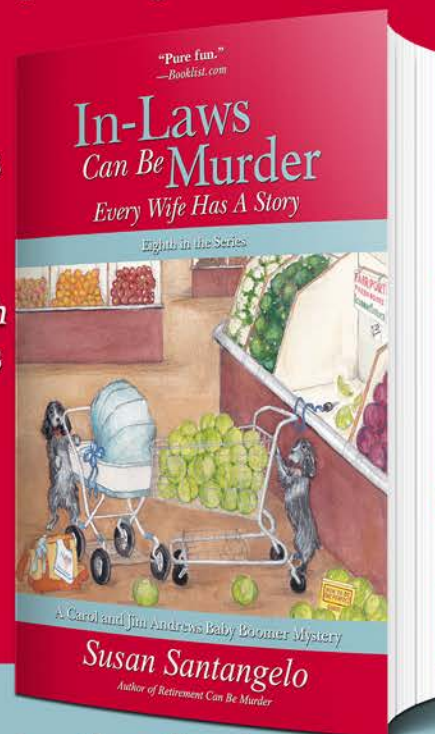
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NEVER LET GO

By Elizabeth Goddard

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PROLOGUE

WEDNESDAY, 12:30 P.M.
TWENTY-ONE YEARS AGO
HOUSTON, TEXAS

Nursing scrubs? Check. White sneakers? Check. Keycard? Check.

Calm, even breathing? Nope.

She had everything she needed to get in and out quickly. The plan seemed so easy. Too easy. Then why did her heart pound against her rib cage until it ached? Why did her pulse roar in her ears as she walked the sterile hallway, heading for the maternity ward?

Palms sweating, she pushed through double doors into a wide corridor. Almost there.

Everything inside screamed for her to keep her head down. But that might give the wrong impression.

Forcing her chin high, she carried the file folders with purpose as her sneakers squeaked down the long white hallway. She made it to the wing where mothers and their newborn babies rested until released and found it busy with food service workers, janitorial personnel, and other hospital staff. Good. She'd been right to carefully calculate her arrival for the

lunch hour.

Without missing a step, she traded the folders for a food tray sitting on a cart against the wall and then counted down the rooms, twenty-three forty-two, twenty-three forty . . .

Twenty-three thirty-eight.

Her heart palpitated. She slowly drew in a calming breath. It was now or never. She had no choice, really. This was better for everyone.

Please don't let hospital staff be in the room . . .

With forced confidence, she shoved open the door and entered. "Lunchtime," she proclaimed in what she hoped was a pleasant, singsong voice, but instead the word sounded hoarse and gravelly to her pulse-buzzing ears. There was no turning back now.

A nurse glanced up from a hospital bassinet where she was changing the baby's diaper. The woman in the bed pulled her gaze from her infant and offered a puzzled smile at the lunch tray.

What do I do? What do I do?

When the nurse paid her no attention, she snapped out of her panic and moved forward as if she had every right to be in the room. Another tray of food already sat on the bedside table, untouched. No wonder the woman had given her a funny look. Her breath hitched. She'd fooled herself into thinking this had been too easy. The plan was far from easy. It had only been easy before she entered the room where she had to engage with others.

She smiled at the mother—a fortyish-looking woman with dark circles under her eyes. "Oh, they already brought you lunch. I'll just return this tray."

She pivoted, but the mother called out to her. "Wait, what did you bring? The other lady brought me ham and it doesn't look good. I have no appetite as it is, so I'm hoping for something at least palatable."

She turned to face the mother. The nurse exited the room without comment. Perfect. It was all working out. She lifted the domed cover from the plate. "Looks like turkey and dressing."



The mother shifted to sit up higher on her bed. "My favorite."
"Wonderful." After removing the plate with ham, she set the new tray before the woman, then without another word glided over to the pink newborn in the nearby mobile bassinet. "While you enjoy your meal, I'll take this little princess to the nursery and return her in a bit."

She didn't dare look into the woman's eyes. She had to flee the room before the mother registered she was gone or thought to ask any questions. Besides, another glance into the sad eyes of the mother dying of cancer might thwart her resolve to see this through. She had a heart, after all. And she knew what this was going to do to this woman—kill her faster than any disease. But the mother wouldn't be able to care for the baby for very long anyway. This was all for the best. And she needed this baby more than the dying mother needed her.

Shoving through the door, she pushed the bassinet as if she belonged.

This would be the hard part.

She lifted the baby.

Yes, definitely the moment of truth. Could she do this? Could she really take this baby, who would become her daughter, and walk right out of the hospital without anyone noticing her? She realized she could, in fact, carry through with the plan. A satisfied smile lifted her lips as she cooed to another woman's baby in her arms.

CHAPTER ONE

A family tree can wither if nobody tends its roots.

—Unknown

MONDAY, 8:31 P.M., PRESENT DAY
ANDERSON CONSULTING OFFICES
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

While death was no stranger to her, a courteous knock on the door to give warning this time would have been appreciated.

Willow Anderson had been blindsided. Hadn't seen it coming. Everyone faced death sooner or later. Reading obituaries and looking at tombstones were a part of her job, after all. Her life. So why had it come as such a surprise? Either way—warning or no warning—she had to face what had been left behind. There was no point in putting things off.

She stood at the edge of a cluttered desk and stared blurry-eyed at the stack of mail piled high. A fluorescent light in the corner of the office that had been converted from a warehouse flickered and buzzed, then dimmed, leaving her with less-than-adequate lighting. But she wouldn't be deterred and rifled through the envelopes in a daze, dropping each one on JT's desk as she went. Electricity.

Water. Something from the appraisal district? Oh, look,

JT won a free Caribbean cruise. Junk mail. More bills.

The next one looked like a check. She ripped it open. Sure enough, a check had been made out to Anderson Consulting for services rendered. Willow hung her head. Wait. Not Anderson Consulting. In her grief-stricken state, she'd read that wrong. The check had been made out to James T. Anderson, her grandfather.

Everyone had called him JT. Anguish gripped her. Had he really been gone two weeks? He'd been the lifeblood of this forensic genealogy business. How could she keep it going without him?

She let the remaining envelopes fall back to the desk, where they fanned out.

A stupid tear escaped. Raced down her cheek. Tonight she'd mustered the courage to return to the office and face what JT had left behind when he'd been killed. Willow could have let Dana Cooper, JT's assistant, take care of some of it, but she'd told Dana to leave the office alone. They both needed time to mourn. Besides, Willow wanted to be the one to go through his things, including the mail.

She crumpled a piece of junk mail in her fist. Maybe she'd feel less fragile if she waited a few more days. Except the bills couldn't wait until Willow had finished grieving. Nor could clients in any outstanding cases on which he'd worked.

I can do this. I have to do this.

What choice did she have?

The heat kicked on, reminding her of the chill in the air. She rubbed her arms. Only a corner of the warehouse had been renovated into offices for Anderson Consulting. The rest seemed like a waste to Willow, but JT had thought he'd gotten a great deal on real estate at the time. The vaulted space had given them room to spread out, but now it felt far too . . . empty. Willow would have to figure out what she would do with the business and the real estate it occupied.

With the mail spread out, an envelope from the Washington State Department of Health caught her attention. She tugged it from the pile. Hands shaking, she carefully slit the envelope with a letter opener and pulled out the official document.

Her grandfather's death certificate.

Air whooshed from her lungs. Willow sank into a chair.

He's gone. Really gone. She wouldn't hear his words of wisdom. His jokes and boisterous laughter, or warm and friendly banter. At least not in this life.

JT had been one of a kind.

She touched his name on the certificate and, for good measure, let the shock of his death roll over her again. That moment she'd first heard the news.

JT had been killed riding his bike. To think he'd taken up the hobby as a way of extending his life after being diagnosed with cardiovascular disease. No plan had ever backfired so

completely.

Why, why, why? You weren't supposed to die yet.

Tension corded her neck. A sliver of anger cut through her that he'd died when he'd had so much life left in him. But trying to come up with answers when there were none was a futile endeavor.

Willow forced herself to focus on the task at hand. At this rate, it was going to be a long night. She rolled her neck around to ease the stiffness.

The outer office door opened and closed. "Willow? You in there?" Dana called.

Great. She'd wanted time alone. "Yep. JT's office."

A few seconds later, Dana appeared at the door. Willow masked her irritation. The woman meant well. "You didn't have to come."

Dana dropped her designer bag in a chair and frowned. She shrugged out of her sparkly jean jacket and stepped closer. "You didn't think I'd let you go through this alone, did you?"

"It's late. Don't you have a husband or something?" Willow forced warmth into her voice and then a half smile slid onto her lips. She was glad to see Dana after all. The woman knew what Willow needed. No wonder JT had leaned on Dana all these years.

"Stan is fine. On his laptop and watching television. He won't miss me." Dana leaned over the desk to look at the certificate. "Besides, he wanted me to make sure you were all right."

She slowly slipped the certificate from Willow's hands and studied it. "Are you sure you're ready to go through his things here? I can do this for you."

Willow covered her eyes. "I thought I'd accepted he was gone, but seeing his death certificate . . . it's so final."

"Oh, honey. I know it's hard." Dana rushed around the desk. After offering a comforting squeeze, she handed Willow a tissue, then snatched another from the box.

Willow wiped her eyes and blew her nose. "It's okay. I'm okay. I have to do this."

"I wish I hadn't told you about Mrs. Mason's call. But it was the only case he was actively working. You really don't have to get back to business so soon after your grandfather's death."

"I appreciate your concern." Willow touched Dana's arm. The woman had held her hand over the last two weeks—through the tragic news of JT's death, selecting a casket, and seeing him buried. In her fifties, Dana was more like an older sister or a best friend than a mother figure despite being two decades older than Willow. She was practically part of the family, though she had one of her own—a dotting husband, two grown children, and four grandchildren who kept her busy outside of work.

Willow tossed the tissue into the wastebasket. "Decisions have to be made, and I'm the one to make them now. I need to call Mrs. Mason back and tell her that JT's gone. But I have to

know what the case is about first. Maybe I can finish it up for him." If Mrs. Mason would allow her, and if Willow had the required skills.

Her grandfather was the talent behind their consulting business. Willow didn't want to ruin the reputation he'd garnered. She hadn't mentioned it to Dana yet, but she was seriously thinking about closing up Anderson Consulting.

"Dig into a new project." Dana gathered the scattered mail into a pile again. "It might help take your mind off things if you get busy again."

"Can you get her file?"

"I can do better." Dana smiled. "He videoed their conversation."

"What? When did he start doing that?"

"With Mrs. Mason. You were traveling, looking for the lost heir for that law firm. He came into the office one day with a GoPro camcorder, more than pleased with himself and anxious to try it on the next client."

Willow had missed spending the last few weeks of JT's life with him. She wanted more time.

While Dana sat down and started the desktop computer to bring up the video, Willow looked at the framed photographs on the walls. The floor-to-ceiling shelves filled with history books and dusty old journals. Curio cabinets showcasing collectibles and souvenirs. Her grandfather had provided an adventure as they traveled around the world conducting research about people's pasts. She'd watched as he'd used DNA and genealogy techniques for solving mysteries, such as identifying remains of World War, Korean War, and Vietnam War servicemen. Even law enforcement entities had often contacted him for assistance. The list went on and on.

"Okay, here it is." Dana grabbed another chair.

Willow sat next to her friend. The video started up on the computer screen. Her grandfather's voice boomed loud and confident. His boisterous laughter and warmth made the slender, sixtyish woman smile in return.

JT offered Mrs. Mason coffee and made her feel right at home. He had a way about him that made him personable. Everyone responded to his warmth.

He didn't have any enemies.

Or so she believed.

Willow paused the video. "He never met a man, woman, or child he didn't like." The words rasped out past the lump in her throat.

Dana sighed. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize that JT took up such a big part of the video. You don't have to do this tonight. We can tackle it later."

Shaking her head, Willow pressed play. "Tackling it later isn't going to make it easier for me."

As they continued watching the video, Willow smiled, her love for JT swelling in her heart. He propped his ankle up on his knee in a relaxed pose. His blue eyes were bright and

intelligent. He acted like a man in the prime of his life, not someone in his late sixties, as he told a few jokes that made Mrs. Mason genuinely laugh. In fact, both Willow and Dana joined in the laughter, adding a few snuffles. Her grandfather was a force to be reckoned with. A pleasant, jovial force that the world would miss.

Then Katelyn Mason leaned forward and began her tale.

"I came all the way from Texas to speak to you about taking on a project for me," she said.

"A Texan, huh?" JT chuckled and winked. "I never would have guessed by your accent."

The woman actually blushed and smoothed out her collar. Was JT flirting?

"Let me ask you a question," he said. "Why Anderson Consulting?"

"I read an article about what you've accomplished. You've done the impossible."

Though JT kept a straight face, amusement and satisfaction glimmered in his eyes. "Tell me your story."

"Twenty-one years ago my baby girl, Jamie, was taken from me in the hospital. She was only a few hours old." Mrs. Mason hung her head for a moment, then raised her quivering chin to pin her gaze on JT.

Lines in his forehead deepened with his frown. "And the FBI? The police?"

"Failed to find her. It's a cold case now. Through the years I've hired private investigators. They have all failed."

"And why are you just now coming to me?"

"As I said before, I read that you can do miracles. I have . . . I have less than three months to live, so the doctors tell me." Her voice hitched. "I believe with every fiber of my being that she is still alive out there, and I desperately want to say goodbye to her. I want her to know how much I love her. How much I have always loved her. And I never stopped praying for her. I believe you, Mr. Anderson, are the one to finally bring my baby home."

JT cleared his throat. His tender heart must have flooded with compassion. Willow wanted to reach through the screen and comfort him. He got up and fiddled with the GoPro, his anguished face filling the screen. He understood the pain of losing a child. His daughter, Willow's mother, had been killed in a car accident along with Willow's father.

Mind racing, Willow shut the video off.

Less than three months to live. "When was this interview?"

"A month ago."

Mrs. Mason had less than two months to live then, if her prognosis was accurate.

But a baby stolen twenty-one years ago? How had JT thought he could help? He'd never done this kind of project, especially one with such a short deadline. Still, Mrs. Mason's desperate plea for help must have compelled him to take action. Willow understood why he hadn't been able to say

no. She had to think, so she got up and paced the room.

"You should finish this one. Find that woman's daughter." Dana's voice broke the silence. "It would keep your mind off losing him."

"Mrs. Mason believed JT was the one to finally bring home her baby girl. That's what she said. JT was the one with the skills—the genius behind solving impossible mysteries."

"You're every bit as brilliant." Dana sighed. "Look, he's been training you since you were just a kid. Since your parents died. You know he meant for you to take over."

"Maybe so, but I don't have his knack for uncovering clues. Knowing which ones to follow."

Dana vehemently shook her head. "You're too hard on yourself."

She flipped through the manila file folder she'd retrieved from the desk drawer. Something flickered in her eyes. What was it? Worry? Frustration?

"Okay, what *aren't* you telling me?" Willow asked.

A smile quickly replaced the frown on Dana's face. "No clue what you're talking about."

"Right. I know you well enough to see something else is on your mind." Willow tried to snatch the file away, but Dana was quicker and held it close.

"Now I'm sure you're hiding something."

The woman buried the file back in the desk drawer already crammed with folders, then riffled through the same stack of mail Willow had been through minutes ago. "I can take care of these for you. You didn't have to come in tonight."

Willow crossed her arms. "You can't put me off forever."

"Okay, okay." Dana rolled her head back and groaned. "Before he died, JT called Austin McKade to ask for his help on the Mason case."

Willow's stomach coiled. She pressed her hand against her midsection. She'd had a hard enough time getting over Austin without having to see him again.

"He did? But . . . why?" Did Austin even know about JT's death?

"It's an FBI cold case. JT had hoped Austin could get information so he wouldn't have to reinvent the wheel, so to speak."

Willow sank into a chair. "That makes sense. Total sense."

But she wouldn't put it past JT to have wanted to use the Mason case to his advantage.

This case might have been the excuse he'd needed to call Austin when he had other motives. He had an uncanny ability to convince people to go along with his wishes or what he believed was best for them. He had believed that Willow and Austin should be together. He just wouldn't let go of it. But JT couldn't have been more wrong.

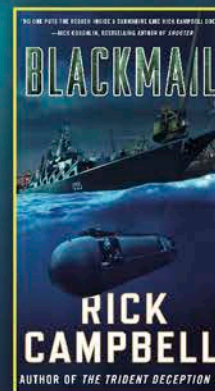
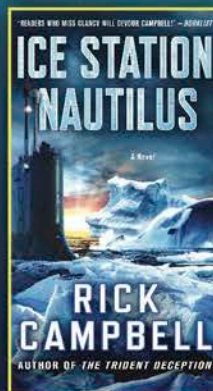
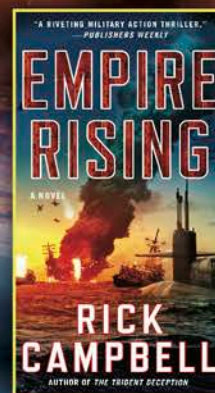
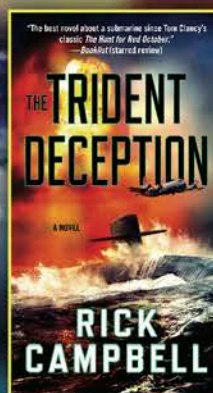
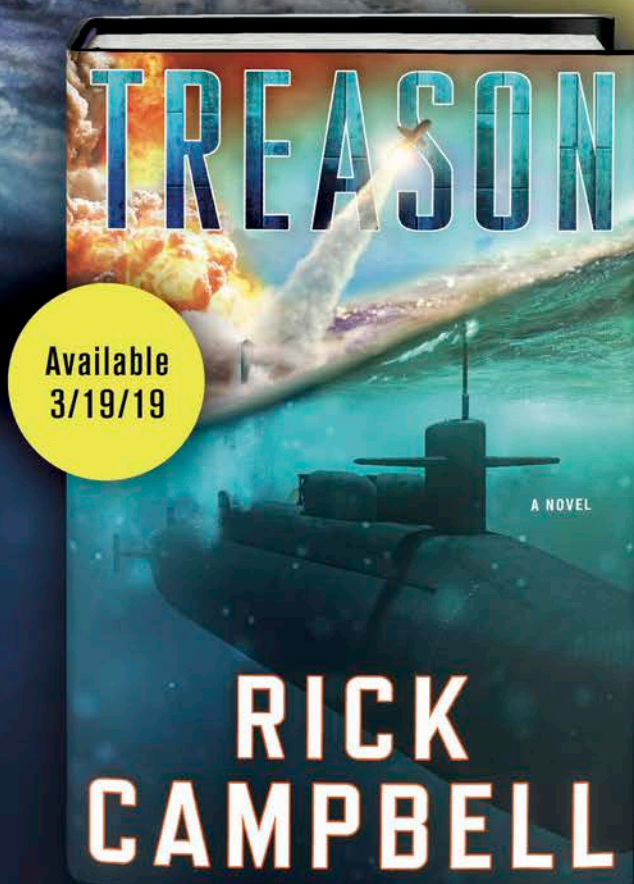
Willow and Austin McKade had already crashed and burned, and those ashes would never be resurrected. ■

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The Life & Times of CORNELL WOOLRICH

By Amy Lignor

Woolrich Press Photo Credit: Provided by Publisher



CRIMINAL MASTERMINDS. DEMENTED KILLERS. VENGEFUL BRIDES.

The fiction of Cornell Woolrich is rife with the kind of psychological tension audiences have always craved. He has been called the foremost suspense writer of the 20th century, the Edgar Allan Poe of his era. He was a prolific writer in the crime, horror, noir and mystery genres, publishing over two dozen novels and over two hundred short stories and novellas along with those that had been unpublished at the time of his death in 1968. But with so many works published by several different publishing entities over the decades, rights to his stories were granted left and right and transferred many times over, even after his death, creating a complicated web of rights issues that has taken his Estate's representatives years to clear up.

Alan Nevins and his team at Renaissance Literary & Talent, who represent the various parties that control the Woolrich library, have worked tirelessly to track down and retrieve rights to stories and collections that have been out of print for decades due to these rights issues. They are now making a major push to reintroduce Woolrich's revolutionary work to audiences new and old with fresh collections of his most well-known and obscure short fiction. They've broken ground with two electronic collections so far: a three-part series entitled *Literary Noir: A Series of*

Suspense, which include some of Woolrich's best suspense stories, and a two-part series published on the 50th anniversary of his death, "An Obsession with Death and Dying," a frequent subject for Woolrich, with more in the months to come.

Woolrich's life was as complex as his rights. His parents separated when he was just a boy, and for most of his childhood he lived in various places in Mexico with his father, a travelling engineer. Francis Nevins' biography on Woolrich tells us he did not have an easy relationship with his devout Catholic father. Even then, Nevins reports, Woolrich knew he wanted to be a writer and at one point was so captivated by the opera *Madame Butterfly* by Giacomo Puccini that he would later write in his autobiography, "Blues of a Lifetime," that the opera gave him "a sudden, sharp insight into color and drama that came back to the surface again years later when I became a writer."

At the age of 12, Woolrich moved to New York to live with his mother and her family. He was particularly close with his mother's father, who had taken him to see that fateful *Madame Butterfly* years earlier. Through his grandfather, teenage Woolrich was exposed to many aspects of American culture including a once weekly trip to the movies. According to Nevins, this was the only male bonding young Woolrich had, save for the unhappy years with his father in Mexico. Woolrich himself would later write at length about the impact his grandfather had on him, while barely mentioning his mother.

In 1921, Woolrich enrolled at Columbia University, the current benefactor of his Estate, taking many classes on literature, but he would never graduate. While there, he contracted a foot infection and was confined to bed for six weeks, at which point he started writing in earnest. His first novel, "Cover Charge," a Jazz Age work inspired by the style of F. Scott Fitzgerald, was published soon after in 1926 when Woolrich was just 22 years old. He would go on to write five more Jazz Age novels before 1932, but the era fizzled out with the onset of the Depression, so none of these works managed to launch a serious literary

career. His second novel, "Children of the Ritz," won him \$10,000 in a novel contest put on by *College Humor* magazine and First National Pictures, a Hollywood film company, giving Woolrich the opportunity to work as a screenwriter adapting his novel in Los Angeles. The few years he spent in Hollywood undoubtedly allowed Woolrich to explore his sexuality. Nevins reports that a short-lived marriage to the daughter of a film pioneer was annulled upon her discovery of a diary in which Woolrich recorded his homosexual promiscuities. Woolrich was incredibly secretive and ashamed of his homosexuality, something that would haunt him for the rest of his life and even propel him into alcoholism.

Woolrich's screenwriting career ultimately fell flat, and he moved back to New York in 1931 at the age of 27 to live with his mother in the shabby residential Hotel Marseilles. Just a few years after his return, Woolrich's first crime fiction story, "Death Sits in the Dentist's Chair," appeared in the August 1934 edition of *Detective Fiction Weekly*, kicking off a prolific run of over two hundred short stories and novellas that would appear in dozens of different pulp magazines over the next several decades. His most famous story, "It Had to be Murder" (*Dime Detective Magazine*, 1942), was adapted into the classic 1954 Alfred Hitchcock thriller *Rear Window* starring James Stewart and Grace Kelly.

Woolrich's first suspense novel, "The Bride Wore Black," made a huge splash within the genre when Simon & Schuster published it in 1940, earning him rave reviews for the sheer terror that the cunning revenge spree of his titular character, a bride whose husband-to-be was murdered on their wedding day, instilled in readers. It was the first of six within the "Black Series" of novels published over the next eight years, all of which can be found in a digital two-part collection along with Renaissance's short story collections. As with *Bride*, "The Black Curtain" (1941), "Black Alibi" (1942), "The Black Angel" (1943), "The Black Path of Fear" (1944), and "Rendezvous in Black" (1948) were the pinnacle of noir crime fiction writing. Woolrich was adept at crafting stories that evoked a deep and overwhelming sense of dread in both his characters and the reader. This was true for many of his other famous novels, including "Phantom Lady" (1942), "Deadline at Dawn" (1944), "Night Has a Thousand Eyes" (1945), "Waltz into Darkness" (1947), "I Married a Dead Man" (1948), and "Savage Bride" (1950), among others.

Woolrich was so prolific in the suspense and crime fiction genres that he published several of his novels and stories under the pseudonyms William Irish and George Hopley so they could appear in competing magazines. Many were adapted into major motion pictures by studios like Paramount, Universal and RKO. One of the most famous film adaptations, aside from *Rear Window*, was directed by François Truffaut, whose French new wave interpretation of *The Bride Wore Black*, entitled *La Mariée Était en Noir*, premiered in 1968, the year Woolrich died. Dozens of his short stories were adapted for popular network radio and television show episodes, including *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Suspense* and *Molle Mystery Theatre*.

The end of Woolrich's life was just as unusual as his childhood. His mother died in 1957 and for the next several years he lived alone. The same foot infection that plagued him in his 20s returned and he let it rage untreated to the point of gangrene. Doctors were forced to amputate his leg and he died shortly thereafter in 1968 at the age of 64.

Many years after his death, Woolrich was the subject of a Supreme Court case over rights for "It Had to be Murder" and its adaptation, *Rear Window*, between Sheldon Abend, a literary agent, and James Stewart (*Stewart v. Abend*, 1990). Woolrich was contractually obligated to renew the story's copyright when the 28-year copyright was up (a copyright law that has since been revised) and assign it to the film rights owner. But when Sheldon Abend acquired much of the Woolrich Estate in 1971, he refused to assign the copyright for "It Had to be Murder" to the owner of the film rights per Woolrich's original contract. When *Rear Window* was shown on television, Abend sued Stewart for infringement of copyright.

In a 6-3 decision, the Supreme Court decided in Abend's favor, ruling that the author's heir is allowed to prevent continued distribution and publication of a derivative work (in this case, the film adaptation), as control of the original work reverts to the author or their successor when copyright renewal occurs. This decision, which ultimately protects the author or author's heirs from being deprived of the value of the original work, had huge repercussions for the film industry. Because the decision only determined U.S. copyrights, it left an unclear path regarding international rights, as those had not been challenged overseas. Many studios found they suddenly no longer owned domestic rights to film adaptations they had made, while still owning the rights overseas, thus causing massive industry-wide complications and adding further complications to Woolrich's Estate.

Half a century has passed since Woolrich's death, and in those years, multi-layered rights issues have taken much of his work out of print. After years of painstaking efforts to track down rights and revert them back to Woolrich's Estate, the Renaissance team, along with those publishers who appreciate the significance of his work, seek to bring his beloved stories and novels back into both the print and digital arena. In addition to "Literary Noir," "An Obsession with Death and Dying," and the two-part *Black Series*, Renaissance has made available on their digital publishing platforms many of Woolrich's individual short stories and novels. It is well past time Woolrich's groundbreaking writing be reintroduced back into the world. It can be found on the following platforms: Amazon (Kindle), Barnes & Noble (Nook), Kobo and iBooks. ■



BEDTIME STORY

By Simon Bewick

"Tell me a bedtime story, Daddy," my son said.

"It's getting late, Daniel," I replied, pulling the Velcro apart and tugging off his hooded jacket.

He pouted, "Just a short one?"

"Well, you get ready for bed, and I'll think of a story..."

He smiled his beautiful smile and went to work at getting his vest off over his head, panicking only a little when it got stuck. I helped pull it off and folded it, laying it on top of the jacket I'd already placed on the chair by his bed.

"What's the story going to be about, Daddy?" he asked, pushing blond hair from his eyes, and blowing at the remaining strands ineffectively. I thought his hair looked a little long and made a mental note to suggest he have it cut.

I gestured to his Velcro strapped shoes and he looked down at them, remembering his mission to get undressed.

"What would you like the story to be about?" I asked.

He tugged at the shoes, his tongue poking out in concentration. When he'd got the second one off, he looked at me proudly. "Did it!"

I nodded. "You sure did. Well done. Now see if you can get your pajama top on."

He frowned a little. "I can't do the buttons."

"I know, I'll help you with them. You just try and get your arms through."

As he forced one arm through, the right one that ended in a large, white bandage over his hurt hand, he looked up at me from the bed. "Daddy, why do you come to see me less now?"

He had a knack of doing that, and every innocent question broke my heart a little bit more.

"I see you quite often, don't I?" I asked.

He thought about this for a moment, "Not that often. Not every day."

"No. I don't see you every day. But I speak to you every day on the phone, don't I?"

He began to nod, and then I saw that sneaky grin appear again. "Except for last Tuesday. You didn't ring last Tuesday..."

He had a knack of doing that as well; he could forget that he was in the middle of getting ready for bed, but could remember a small detail from over a week ago with no problem at all.

But then again, maybe a son waiting for his father to ring isn't a small detail.

"Why can't we live together anymore, Daddy?" he asked, his right arm finally finding the other armhole.

"Well," I said, wondering how many times I'd answered this question before, never giving him the answer he obviously wanted to hear, "It's because..."

He interrupted me, "It's because the court said, isn't it, Daddy?"

I hesitated, "Well, the court...it did what it thought was best."

He shook his head. "I didn't like that man. That judger man. He scared me."

I nodded, remembering the day in court when the decision had been made. Daniel had been scared all right. There had been a lot of tears, even though I was sure he didn't know exactly what was being decided. He just knew it was bad. There had been tears and there had been a tantrum; things had got ugly.

I tried not to think about that. It hurt too much.

"You live on your own now?" Daniel asked, holding his arms out wide, allowing me to close up the buttons on his pajama top.

At that moment I thought I heard footsteps outside the door, almost as though someone was out there lying in wait just to hear how I explained this one. As if *they* were wondering whether I lived on my own. But I'm sure it was just my imagination. After all, who would be interested in the bedtime conversation a father had with his son?

I nodded as I worked. "Right, so what story would you like?"

He forgot his question and his face became more animated, "A bedtime story, a bedtime story, Daniel gets a bedtime story..." he carried on, an almost musical, almost tuneful chant.

It hurt me to think that this sort of thing used to annoy me.

When we lived together as a family.

By the time I got him into bed, he was in his pajamas and proud that he'd gotten the bottoms on all by himself. I didn't

think it would matter too much that they were inside out. I also let him think I'd forgotten to brush his teeth. One night wouldn't kill him. I pulled the duvet up to his chin and he pursed his lips for a kiss. Sometimes he'd do that, other times he'd make a big show of wiping it off. He could be very affectionate, or he could refuse to be touched. He could be unpredictable.

Oh yes, he could be unpredictable.

"What's the story going to be?"

"Let me think," I said, trying to think of something different. A new story he hadn't heard before, even though I knew it would make no difference. Daniel had no problem hearing the same story again and again.

"Not a scary story though, Daddy!" Daniel suddenly said; his voice vehement.

I looked down, surprised, noting that his eyes were big with fear. "Danny? Are you okay?"

"I don't want a scary story. Please don't tell me a scary story!"

I stroked his hair. "Hey, calm down. When do I ever tell you a scary story?"

He shook his head, side-to-side. "Ben told me a scary story the other day. He told me nasty things and I didn't like it. I had nightmares..."

I continued to stroke his hair. "It's okay, it's okay. What did Ben tell you?"

"Uh, uh," Danny said. "I'm not saying. They were scary things..."

"It's okay. Just tell me, and I'll speak to Ben and make sure he doesn't tell you any more nasty stories."

"He told me the judger man was going to come back for me. He told me I'd been bad and the judger man was going to come back and get me. He said..."

I put a finger to his lips. "Shh, it's alright. The judger man...the judge, isn't really a nasty man, and he's not coming back to get you. Don't you worry. That was very naughty of Ben. I'll tell him when I see him, and I promise you he won't do it again."

Inside I felt my stomach begin to churn, and the fury start to simmer. I crushed it back down. Daniel didn't need to see that. I thought about what I'd like to do to the revolting Ben. I'd never trusted him. I'd see to it Ben didn't get within fifty feet of Daniel.

"And I had a nightmare," Daniel continued, tears leaking out of his eyes now.

"It's okay, son. Remember what we said?" I was still stroking his hair, and I could feel the fear slowly dissipating from him.

Daniel nodded slightly. Little more than a tremble really, and I could see he was trying to remember the little mantra.

We said it together: "Dreams can't hurt you. Dreams aren't true. Go away bad dreams, you are poo."

Nonsense, yes. But what child doesn't like anything to do with bodily functions, however ridiculous. And if it helped him avoid the bad dreams, then I'd chant it from the rooftop.

It worked, the way it always worked. As he finished the rhyme, that little giggle escaped. The one that always crept out when we mentioned willies, or bums, or poo, or wee, or snot...sometimes Daniel was just like any four-year-old.

Sometimes.

But not very often.

I wiped away the last of the tears, and dimmed the small lamp I'd bought for him. I made sure I didn't dim it too much, so that if he woke after I'd gone there'd still be enough light for him to see the comfort things around him. They weren't much, but they were the best I could do. The Barney poster. The Teletubbies. The Blue's Clues puppy doll. They were all there in plain sight if he woke up from whatever nightmares he suffered.

Inwardly, I cursed Ben again.

"Okay, let's tell a story, shall we?" I said.

Daniel nodded. "Shall we say a prayer first?"

A prayer. This didn't come up very often. Once in a blue moon he'd want to say a prayer. I shrugged. "If you want to, of course we can say a prayer."

He shuffled under the duvet, sat upright, and clasped his hands together in a clumsy approximation of a fervent worshipper.

"Dear Dog."

"God."

He opened one eye and looked at me. "Just joking, Daddy."

I looked back at him. "I know. But you shouldn't joke in prayers."

He squeezed his eyes shut. "Sorry God. Dear God. Please look after us. Help us to be good. Look after Daddy. He lives on his own now. And please look after Mummy. And say hello to her. Tell her I love her. Amen."

"Amen," I said; my voice only cracked a little.

Prayer over, Daniel looked at me earnestly. "Time for the story now?"

I gave a hearty cough, cleared my throat and was glad it sounded normal when I began the story.

"Once upon a time..."

"Do all stories start that way, Daddy?"

"Yes. Once upon a time there was..."

"Even the bible?"

"No. Once upon..."

"Is the bible real, Daddy?"

"Yes." I paused. "Daniel, do you want to hear this story or not?"

"Yes, Daddy."

"Okay then. Once upon a time..." I waited for an interruption. Sometimes he'd do it until I realized he was playing me up; when he'd end up cracking up into giggles again, but tonight he let me carry on.

"...there was a big ogre. The ogre lived in..."

"What's an ogre?" Daniel asked.

"It's a giant. The ogre...giant lived in a big castle. He lived all alone."

"Just like you."

"Yes. Like me." I thought this story might not be such a good idea, and I didn't even know where it was headed yet.

"Ben called me a giant," Daniel piped up as I hesitated a moment longer than I should have.

"Did he?" I asked, curious, "What else did he say?"

Daniel thought for a moment, as though trying to search through his internal recorder, looking for the right moment, "He called me a giant cock-sucking sonofabitch."

I stared at my son, lying in bed, and I swallowed hard. "When did he do that, Daniel?"

Daniel shrugged. "He says it all the time. He always calls me that... Well," he said, as though he was reflecting on some fine point of detail, "Sometimes he calls me a cock-sucking giant. Other times he calls me a sonofabitch. Sometimes he says them all together. He does it when I've been bad."

I took a deep breath. "What do you do that's bad, Daniel?"

He shrugged. "Like the other day, when I hurt myself. That's where I hurt my hand."

"But that's not bad. That was just an accident."

Daniel considered this before shaking his head, "No, Ben said it was bad, because I tried to use the razor myself and I hurt myself and Ben...oh, nooooo."

The sentence ended in a wail of misery, as Daniel clamped his hands—the normal one and the one he'd apparently sliced open with a razor—across his mouth, as though he could force the words back in. Behind the hands I could hear him wailing incomprehensible words. I gently tried to take his hands away from his mouth, but he didn't want me to, and I knew I couldn't force them.

"Come on, Daniel, it's okay. You're not in trouble; you're not going to get punished for anything. Can you tell me what's wrong?" I coaxed for three full minutes before he moved his hands just enough for me to hear him whisper, "I'm going to be in trouble. I am. I wasn't supposed to tell about the razor. Ben said he'd be in trouble if I did, and if I got into trouble, he'd get into trouble...and now I'm in trouble..."

I hugged him, feeling his hands creep round my back, covering them. I gasped slightly as he squeezed me a little too tight for comfort, but I did my best to squeeze him back.

Eventually he let go of me, and sat back on his bed. "I wish Mummy was here." The misery in his voice sliced at my heart as cleanly as the razor had cut through his skin.

"I do, too," I said honestly.

"Tell me again how she's happy with God and the baby Jesus," Daniel pleaded.

"I thought you wanted to hear the story of the ogre...the giant?" I asked, gently.

He shook his head violently, and when he spoke, his voice dropped an octave, and I knew he was getting upset. "I don't want to hear about the stupid giant, I want to hear about my Mummy!"

I held out my hands in a calming gesture. It's important to get the right balance between giving in to your children and letting them get away with...well, at certain times it was

simply safer just to do what Daniel wanted. I know that.

"Okay, Daniel, calm down. It's okay. I'll tell you."

So I told him. I told him how his Mummy was happy in Heaven; how she did lovely things every day. I told him that her head was normal now, there wasn't any blood anymore. I told him that she watched down on him, and that she loved him. I told him that he'd see her again one day, but not for a long time...and that, no, there wasn't anything to be scared of when it came to dying. I finished by telling him yet again that, no, his Mummy wasn't angry with him for what he'd done.

And then he fell asleep. One moment awake and listening to my voice; the next, out like a light. He'd been the same ever since he was a young child. I removed my hand from his, gently opening his fingers and slipping my old, veined hand out, flexing it a couple of times, pleased that the arthritis wasn't playing up too much today.

I kissed him gently on the cheek, pushed the blond hair away from his face, and backed gently to the door, whispering that I loved him to his sleeping form. I swiped my card and went out into the darkened corridor, making sure that I heard the lock click behind me.

The young man on the desk listened to me, and I watched him visibly pale as I explained exactly why I wanted to see his superior. Five minutes later, Jenkins arrived. Over the years I'd got on well enough with him. I think he understood better than some of them had. Certainly he was more enlightened towards Daniel than his predecessor—a hawk-faced, prematurely aging buffoon from Upstate—had been. I'd been glad to see the back of him. Jenkins understood Daniel a little better, and he tolerated me more. He was more accommodating about visiting hours. Understood the difficulties. I would not say we were friends; I wouldn't say we were close in any way. But we would talk, and sometimes he would offer me advice, encouragement, or simply kind words about Daniel.

He shook my hand and led me upstairs to his office. He offered me a drink, which I refused. He offered me a chair, which I accepted, but only after some persuasion.

"It's Ben Shortland," I said.

He removed his glasses, started polishing them, and cocked his head slightly as he asked, "What about him?"

And so I told him. I told him what Daniel had said to me tonight, and then I told him my own feelings. My gut instincts about Ben Shortland; what I'd suspected for some time but had never voiced because I thought it might just have been my imagination.

Jenkins listened to all of this. Eventually, he picked up the phone and called through to the front desk.

"Mr. McConnell?" There was a brief pause. "Yes. Listen. I want you to bring Ben Shortland up to my office." Another pause. "No, bring him up now." Another pause and then a very final, "I don't care. I said now."

We sat uncomfortably for about five minutes before there was a knock at the door. At Jenkins' command, it opened and Ben Shortland entered. He was a bull-like man, not particularly tall, but stocky, with no discernible neck. He had what my late wife would have called 'piggy eyes' and his gaze flicked from me back to Jenkins. I saw him swallow nervously.

"You wanted to see me, sir?" he asked, trying to make it sound casual, but failing.

Jenkins stood up, moved around to the other side of his desk, forcing Shortland to turn his back on me a little in order to be fully facing him.

"I've been hearing some things Shortland, and I want you to explain."

Shortland stammered, "Th...things? What's he been saying?"

"Who do you mean by 'he'?" Jenkins asked.

Shortland flicked his head in my direction. "Him. What's he been saying?"

Jenkins ignored his question, and any sign of the gentle, smiling man I was used to seeing, the man who had a kind word for every member of his staff, was gone now. "What happened with the razor, Ben?"

"I filed a report on that," Shortland said indignantly.

"I read the report. Now I'm asking you what happened."

"I...I looked away for a moment, and the next thing I knew he was bleeding."

"What happened afterwards, Ben?"

"I...nothing. Nothing happened afterwards."

"Why did you tell Daniel not to say anything?"

"He's lying. I didn't say that. I can't believe you're taking the word of a retard," he paused, and I think that was when he knew this wasn't going to work. That Jenkins was on to him.

"A what?" Jenkins asked quietly, "Taking the word of a... what?"

Shortland swallowed; even from across the room, and with his back to me, I could hear it.

"Sir, I don't feel comfortable with this. We shouldn't be discussing this with him here."

Jenkins shook his head slightly; just once. "I intend to look into this matter further, Shortland. But as of this moment, please consider yourself suspended with pay...until I have an opportunity to look deeper into this situation."

Shortland gasped in disbelief, "Suspended? For one incident? One mistake? It's not my fault if the stupid big bastard tried to shave himself!"

And *that* was the moment he hung himself, and he knew it the moment it came out.

Jenkins nodded. "That's what I thought, Ben. And I don't think it's the first time. I think there have been other times where you've been less than vigilant, and I believe there are also times when, as we look into this further, we will find that you have used more physical restraint than is reasonable."

Shortland, knowing the game was up, gave up any pretense. "Oh, fuck you, Jenkins! You've got no idea what it's

like. 'More physical restraint than is reasonable'? You've got no fucking idea! *You* try to restrain the fucker when he goes off on one! He's a six-foot-three, forty-year-old nutcase!" His voice became shrill with the injustice of it all. "He's a fucking murderer!"

"That's enough," Jenkins said. His voice was so cold and so hard, Shortland stopped; his outburst screeching to a dead stop.

There was silence in the room for a long moment, and I felt my heart beating uncomfortably fast. I was hoping that Ben Shortland would leave soon, so I could ask for a glass of water from Jenkins and swallow one of my tablets.

Shortland turned and glared at me, his face puce, before turning back to Jenkins with a last desperate effort. "I've got children to feed. You can't..."

Jenkins stopped him again, "You should have thought about feeding your children when you were mistreating this man's child."

Shortland looked at me, and there was a sudden pleading in his voice. "You tell him. You tell him how difficult he can be! Go on!"

I looked at him. "How old are your children, Mr. Shortland?"

He looked at me, momentarily uncertain; whether at the nature of my question or trying to remember the ages, I wasn't sure. Then he hissed, "Ben Jr. is four. Kate's two."

I took a deep breath. "Does Ben Jr. ever have a tantrum?"

He realized he was going to get no help from me. Any pleading was gone from his voice when he spoke next. "Yes," he spat. "Yes, you old fuck. He has tantrums, but he doesn't cave your skull in because he's having a tantrum. He's four!"

I nodded. "I know. I know what four-year-old temper tantrums are like. And that's all Daniel has. Nothing worse. Would you beat your son just because he had a tantrum?"

And even as I said it, I had a horrible feeling that, yes, Ben Shortland was exactly the sort of man who would beat his child because of a tantrum.

He looked from me to Jenkins. "Neither of you get it. You have no idea what it's like. Well, fuck the both of you. I quit."

Shortland stormed out of the office, slamming the door behind him so hard that the plant on the table next to me threatened to tip over.

Jenkins let out a deep sigh and came from behind the desk to sit in the chair next to me.

"Mr. Williams, I am so sorry. I really didn't know."

I held up a hand to stop him. "Please, can I have a glass of water?"

He nodded, and reached for the jug and glass from his desk, his face concerned. "Are you alright, Mr. Williams?"

I swallowed the tablet and tried to give him a smile. "It's the old ticker. It's not so good at handling the excitement these days. When you get to seventy, you'll see what I mean."

He rested a hand gently on my knee. "Shortland. I should have seen it earlier." He shook his head, and I could see he was annoyed, not just at Shortland, but I guessed at himself

for failing to spot it sooner. "There have been a few too many 'incidents' and not just with Daniel."

I nodded and sighed sadly. "I thought there was something about him. He didn't seem cut out for this job... but then I don't imagine many are. I don't envy them, or you. But over the years I've spotted a couple like him in here." I saw him look at me, as though I could explain it. I knew I couldn't, but I gave it a try, "You sounded shocked when he used the word 'retard'?"

He nodded vigorously. "Of course. I would never allow any of my men to say something like that."

I smiled slightly, and held up the now-unshaking hand holding the glass to indicate I understood. "When Daniel first arrived here, it was a commonly used word. Now it's politically incorrect. There are a hundred medical terms for an adult with mental difficulties like his. And this place? This place has changed over the years. It's less like a prison now, less like a sanatorium. As for the workers, it's a question of how they see themselves, or how they see their jobs, whether they think they are a nurse or a prison guard. And I don't know what the answer is. Oh, I know the official line. I know what this place is classed as, but I've been coming here for a long time now, and I know what some of these poor fellows are like. It's hard enough cleaning your own child's diapers when they're four, never mind a forty-year-old's who is someone else's child."

Jenkins nodded uncertainly. It was the longest speech he'd ever heard, or ever would hear, from me. He didn't try to patronize me and tell me that Ben Shortland would be the only one. I knew he wouldn't be, just as I knew he didn't represent the majority either.

"It takes a special kind of person to do this job. I know that. And I'm sorry for Ben Shortland's children."

Jenkins shook his head. "You can't feel sorry for him, he..."

I waved him away, "No, I feel for the children. For all sorts of reasons. For having a father like that, for one thing. I may not have been the best father in the world but the thought of physically abusing my child..."

And even as I said it, I tried not to think of those odd times, so long ago, when I was a younger man, when Daniel really was a child—physically as well as mentally. Before we really knew about his condition. Back when I'd have to go for walks because my anger had built up so much.

No. I'd never hit him. But I hadn't had the patience that Martha had. I never owned that patience, if I were honest with myself. Not even when I did know, and I did make the allowances. I never had the patience until I returned from the walk that night. Daniel was having a tantrum because it had been late and we'd said he couldn't have the wooden train. The wooden train he'd just received for his twenty-first birthday. That night I found Daniel in the kitchen cradling his mother's broken head in his arms. Sobbing and screaming for his Mummy to wake up.

I learned patience after that.

I took another sip of the water. "Of course, part of the problem is that Shortland is quite right. It is different when Daniel has a tantrum."

Jenkins sighed. "I can't sit here and tell you about that Mr. Williams. Of course I know what happened to your wife. And I cannot begin to imagine how that has been for you in the twenty years since. I don't mean to patronize you at all, but everyone I know of here, and that includes my predecessors—well, apart from my immediate predecessor, but we both know about him—everyone I know has the utmost respect for you, and the love you have for your son. Oh, there'll be the odd idiot like Shortland, but that only matters in circumstances like these. And I swear to you these circumstances will never occur again as long as I have anything to do with this place. I really believe Daniel is happy, or as happy as could possibly be expected."

I smiled. "Thank you, Mr. Jenkins. I know you are trying to make me feel better and you are a good man. I believe you do care for all of these men here. I believe that you keep a tight rein here. And I believe Daniel is happy. But I don't deserve anyone's respect. I'm a father. Daniel is my son. That's all there is to it. Unconditional love."

"I can't pretend to begin to understand how hard it's been for you over the years," he said earnestly.

I smiled. "The hardest thing has been to keep up with what interests a four-year-old for the past thirty odd years." It was a weak joke, but he laughed politely, showing he understood I didn't want his sympathy, and I didn't want to talk about it anymore tonight.

I left ten minutes later. Apparently Shortland had trashed his locker, screaming bloody murder at anyone that crossed his path as he left. I handed in my visitor's pass and walked across the car park towards my old saloon. I felt eyes on me as I walked, and turned around to see Jenkins looking down at me from his office. He gave a small wave, and I returned it with a touch of my forelocks in lieu of wearing a hat. He smiled, and was then gone from the window.

I half expected Shortland to be waiting for me. To pounce and scare me into my third heart attack. But he was long gone.

No one was screaming as I drove out of the car park, which was nice. It upsets Daniel when they scream during the night, as I'm sure others get upset when it's Daniel doing the screaming. It upsets me, too.

I got home an hour later, and I was relieved. I don't like driving at night anymore, and I'm sure I'm quite the doddery old fool as I trundle along at dangerously low speeds, but the on-coming lights are so bright these days.

I entered the house where, as Daniel quite rightly said, I live alone, and I went to bed.

I told myself a bedtime story as I drifted off. It wasn't a scary one.

It started: 'Once upon a time.'

It was about a family.

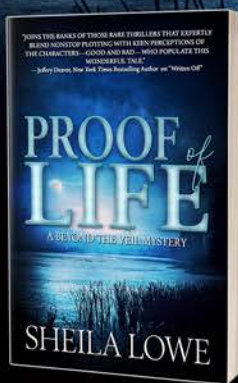
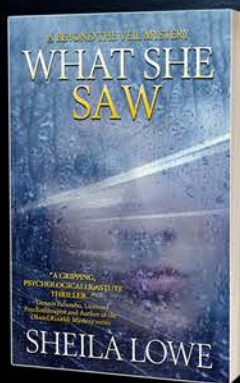
And it ended... 'Happily Ever After.' ■

"JOINS THE RANKS OF THOSE RARE THRILLERS THAT EXPERTLY BLEND
NONSTOP PLOTTING WITH KEEN PERCEPTIONS OF THE CHARACTERS—GOOD
AND BAD—WHO POPULATE THIS WONDERFUL TALE."
—Jeffery Deaver, *New York Times* Bestselling Author on "Written Off"

PROOF *of* LIFE

A BEYOND THE VEIL MYSTERY

SHEILA LOWE



After recovering from amnesia five years ago, Jessica Mack never told anyone she had started hearing voices from the spirit world. Now, forced to use her "gift" to help find missing four-year-old Ethan Starkey, she can no longer ignore the voices. Time is running out for little Ethan as Jessica, and Sage Boles, a man with a mysterious past, are guided by the voices to a séance, where they hope to get clues to the child's whereabouts.

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SUSPENSE
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SUSPENSE MAGAZINE BOOK REVIEWS INSIDE THE PAGES

DEATH WAITS IN THE DARK

By Julia Buckley

This is the latest (Book 4) in the awesome *Writer's Apprentice Mystery* series, and is a whole lot of fun. Lena London, writer's apprentice, once again makes a reader's day when she's asked by her best friend, Camilla Graham, to help her solve a murder.

Summer has come to the paradise-on-paper, Blue Lake, community. Camilla Graham, who just happens to be a bestselling suspense novelist, is working with Lena on their own endeavours. But while they're doing so, a town villain is on the move, vandalizing anything he or she can seem to get their hands on.

An unexpected visitor arrives in Blue Lake in the form of Jane Wyland, who heads straight to Camilla in order to give her a rather strange ultimatum. Jane states that Camilla must reveal her husband James's family secret. And if Camilla is not willing to do so, then Jane will do it herself. Camilla is not only upset but confused, and it takes Lena to calm her down and convince her that the threat this odd woman gave has no 'legs' to stand on. She states that James and his family are good, decent people and have absolutely no secrets to reveal.

But when Jane Wyland turns up dead, the belief that Lena and Camilla first had is a bit shaken. They are suddenly convinced that the reason this woman met her maker is because of this supposed secret that neither one of them know anything about.

Readers will love being by Lena's side once again as she and Camilla work hard to solve this case before Camilla ends up being the main suspect in this out-of-the-blue murder. It is never a surprise that author Julia Buckley writes a winner, but hopefully 2019 will see even more entertainment coming from her creative mind and straight into her fans' hands.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

MRS. JEFFRIES DELIVERS THE GOODS

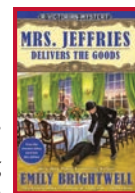
By Emily Brightwell

Picking up a Mrs. Jeffries book is like wrapping yourself in a warm blanket on a cold night; it absolutely comforts you.

In this latest installment from Emily Brightwell, "Mrs. Jeffries Delivers the Goods," you will find yourself once again transported back to the scenic beauty and heart-thumping suspense that only Victorian England can provide. This time we head to the Wrexley Hotel. The Lighterman's Ball is an annual event being held at the Wrexley, and the illustrious guest of honor is one, Stephen Bremmer. But when Stephen dies during the middle of the event, Inspector Witherspoon is called into action. It will take everyone's participation to bring this killer to justice, and Mrs. Jeffries and the rest of the staff will need to work hard and put their heads together in order to solve this murder before the perpetrator(s) strike yet again.

Brightwell does her normal outstanding job of weaving together several motives and suspects, giving the reader many different paths this mystery could "walk" down. Fans will not only applaud this latest installment, but they will once again begin counting the months until Mrs. Jeffries reappears.

Reviewed by John Raab ■



HOLLYWOOD DEAD

By Richard Kadrey

I have followed Sandman Slim, aka James Stark, since he fought his way out of Hell. He even ruled there for a limited engagement. But, he's never been dead. I mean *really* dead, until now.

A year after his death, Stark finds himself not "totally" dead. The Wormwood Organization has resurrected him. Their cold and calculating leader, Eva, demands Stark stop a ritual from being performed by a splinter faction of Wormwood. Once done, she promises she will restore him fully. Stark trusts very little and Eva even less. But, being in this state, his body isn't healing anymore. He can't taste anything and his energy wanes much too fast to do anything really important, such as getting back to his life and his girlfriend. So he reluctantly agrees.

He finds that being half-dead is only part of his problem. He doesn't know where the ritual is going to happen. While visiting some of his old haunts doing recon, he's dealt another blow. He sees that life went on without him. His favorite Tiki bar has changed, his video store is turning a profit, and his girlfriend is in love with someone else. Reality hits: maybe everyone is better off without him. Maturity hits harder when everyone seems happy and healthy—characteristics not usually used in the same sentence if he's involved. Stark might not be a hero, but he is the monster that kills monsters, and just what L.A. needs.

Author Richard Kadrey has the unique ability to make magic, gods, and the supernatural real. The dark, gritty L.A. vibe is genuine; the prose and sarcastic humor are real life-speak. He's the master of his craft!

Reviewed by Leslie A. Borghini, author of "Angel Heat" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

ALL THE WRONG PLACES

By Joy Fielding

For any single person out there who is still more than a bit afraid when it comes to online dating, this book is definitely not going to be helpful for you...but it will be one heck of an entertaining ride.

Here we have four women who can claim friendship, family affiliations and rivalries between them, who all turn to online dating in order to find that perfect mate. What they find, however, is a killer who knows all about technology and is using an app to target his victims.

In his profile, the man gives himself the title: "Mr. Right Now." He is the ultimate male "beauty." Handsome, charming—this is one who knows he is guaranteed to get dates, have them come back to his apartment and be happy to see where the romantic evening goes. What these women don't know is the fact that his idea of romance ends with his online date suffering an agonizing death.

Life can get a bit desperate, which is what brings these four particular women to download an app and see what happiness is just waiting out there for them to grab. Paige, her cousin Heather, her best friend, Chloe, and her own mother, Joan, are the quartet that find themselves online and at the mercy of whatever men are "typing" their way into the hearts of bored, angry, desperate women. One out of the four make a date with this killer, and the twists, turns, thrills and chills the rest have to go through in order to save her life is something readers will not want to put down until the very end.

Joy Fielding is a bestseller who consistently turns out books that are electrifying, and this thriller that's filled with everything from jealousy to passion is just more proof that Fielding is one of the best storytellers to date.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



THE BOY

By Tami Hoag

Some readers out there have been impatient for this title to arrive, seeing as that it's been two years since the last Hoag beyond-memorable book came out. So...was it worth the wait?

This is a thriller with a capital "T" from the very beginning. Readers witness Detective Nick Fourcade doing his job in the perfect suspense location of Bayou Breau, Louisiana. He heads into the house of Genevieve Gauthier to find that her son has been murdered. Genevieve has remnants of bruises herself, yet it's a bit odd why she would be left alive, since a murderer would not want a witness to their crime.

As Nick does his job, he finds no clues that place a stranger inside the home. Not to mention, Nick's own wife and fellow detective, Annie Broussard, sits with Genevieve in the ER and can't seem to get any answers. Although Annie, too, doesn't understand why the woman is still alive, she definitely feels for her and is extremely sorry for her loss.

But the boy is not the only one who is lost. The victim's babysitter, Nora, has come up missing and now everyone in the small town begins to lock their doors in fear that someone is preying on their children.

This investigation is monumental. Twists and turns include everything from dealing with Genevieve's past that is not filled with the nicest of men; to a convicted criminal who just happens to pop out of her past; to whether or not the babysitter has been abducted or actually has disappeared because she had a hand in the murder.

As always with this author, the mystery is a long and complex one, with characters you will both love and hate. But was it worth the two-year wait? This reviewer gives a resounding "yes" to that question.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

GIRL MOST LIKELY

By Max Allan Collins

It's never too late for revenge in this thrilling novel by *New York Times* bestselling and award-winning crime master Max Allan Collins.

In a small Midwest town, twenty-eight-year-old Krista Larson has made her mark as the youngest female police chief in the country. She's learned from the best: her father, Keith, a decorated former detective. But as accustomed as they are to the relative quiet of their idyllic tourist town, things quickly turn with Krista's ten-year high school reunion.

With the out-of-towners holed up in a lakefront lodge, it doesn't take long to stir up old grudges and resentments. Now a successful TV host, Astrid Lund, voted the "Girl Most Likely to Succeed"—and then some—is back in town. Her reputation as a dogged reporter has made the stunning blonde famous. Her reputation among her former classmates and rivals has made her infamous. Astrid's list of enemies is a long one. And as the reunion begins, so does a triple murder investigation.

Krista and her father are following leads and opening long-locked doors from their hometown to the Florida suburbs to Chicago's underworld. They just never imagined what would be revealed: the secrets and scandals of Krista's own past.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



GRAND SLAM MURDERS

By R.J. Lee



Wealthy Mississippi society matron Liddie Langston Rose is hosting a very important bridge luncheon for her three closest friends. Bethany Morrissey, Sicily Groves, and Hanna Lewis have been "tighter than ticks" with Liddie since their long-ago college days at Ole Miss, where they were known as 'The Gin Girls' (for obvious reasons). Liddie has always been the group's ringleader, and she plans to make this luncheon an unforgettable event—not just for the group, but for the entire town of Rosalie, Mississippi. The gang is getting together for a delicious meal, accompanied by plenty of strong alcoholic beverages prepared and served by Liddie's long-suffering maid, Merleece Maxique. Liddie also expects the group to practice their bridge game after lunch (assuming they're sober enough) so that, finally, the four can win the Mississippi Bridge Player's Duplicate Championship the following week.

Everyone is drinking and carrying on, and all is going well until coffee and dessert is served by Merleece. Liddie proposes a toast to their future victory and, at her urging, everyone has a healthy swig of the coffee. Immediately, all four keel over: dead. What the heck did Merleece put in that coffee?

The police soon discover there was cyanide in the sugar bowl. Mercy me! Although others are on the suspect list, the authorities finally home in on Merleece as the probable killer.

For local reporter Wendy Winchester, covering this quadruple homicide will free her from writing the mundane society news her editor throws her way. She's in a prime position to get the inside scoop: she's (sometimes) dating a policeman, her dad is the chief of police, and Wendy was a provisional member of Liddie's bridge club. But as Wendy begins to ask questions, she uncovers secrets the four victims had planned to take to their graves.

This is a promising introduction to R.J. Lee's *Bridge to Death* mystery series. I look forward to the next one. Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of "In-Laws Can Be Murder," published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

THE BOOK ARTIST

By Mark Pryor

Mark Pryor's hero Hugh Marston, a former FBI profiler who's in charge of security at the United States Embassy in Paris, is back in action in "The Book Artist."

Marston's boss, Ambassador J. Bradford Taylor, asks him to shepherd an American sculptor to an embassy party. She's in town for a show at the Dali Museum in the Montmartre section of Paris. Marston's not interested until Taylor tells him the medium she works in: books.

Alia Alsaffar has made it from starving artist to success, thanks in part to the patronage of a rich couple, Rachel and J.D. Rollo, who've also come to Paris. Alia's accompanied by a fellow artist, Josh Reno, who's not attained the same level of success as her. The trip to Paris has also allowed Alia to meet her half-brother, Rob Drummond, who lives in London and has made the trip across the Channel to see her.

Marston is enchanted by Alia, though he's still dedicated to his girlfriend, Claudia Roux. Then everything is thrown into chaos the night of the show when a guest at the gallery is found murdered. Marston has been of help to the police in several investigations, but the detective who's assigned the case is a new one who doesn't take kindly to "amateur" help. Things get even worse when Claudia is arrested for the crime. At the same time, Marston's best friend, former CIA and FBI agent Tom Green, has left Paris for Amsterdam where he's searching for an old enemy who may be in Europe to settle a score with both Green and Marston.

Marston must both solve the murder and explain how Claudia became the main suspect, even as he and Green are in the crosshairs of an obsessed killer with nothing left to lose. Pryor weaves through the story the flavor of Paris as he brings the plot to a satisfying conclusion. Even if you haven't read any other books in the series, "The Book Artist" will capture your imagination until the last page.

Reviewed by David Ingram ■



THE BURNING ISLAND

By Hester Young

We all know this author from her amazing Southern Gothic Mystery debut, “The Gates of Evangeline.” This was an amazing book that brought forth Charlie Cates, a woman who began getting visions of children asking her for help. Now, she is back, and Charlie has a lot more to do.

Charlie is a no-holds-bar journalist who has always believed in the hard, cold facts. Proof is what she needs to keep her life, career and world in order. So the “supernatural” visions she has experienced are still hard to take. When a high-profile missing-child case brings her and her odd skills under scrutiny, Charlie escapes to Hawaii on vacation with her best friend, Rae.

This is supposed to be paradise, and Charlie ignores her visions and instead decides to conduct an interview with a prominent volcanologist, Victor Nakagawa. Unfortunately, it doesn’t take long before a local girl from the island who went missing a few weeks earlier, starts to invade Charlie’s dreams.

Paradise turns evil when Charlie and Rae come across the fact that the volcanologist and his family are not the nice people they seem to be. There are secrets hidden where these people are concerned, and Charlie must set aside her desire to forget her unnatural skills in order to find the missing girl and stop a killer in their tracks. What she doesn’t know is that someone is focused on every move she makes, and whether or not Charlie will stay alive remains to be seen.

As fast-paced as the first tale, the supernatural paths explored join with the evil/criminal aspects extremely well making for a heart-stopping mystery that fans will literally love.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “The Double-Edged Sword” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



HARVEST OF SECRETS

By Ellen Crosby

This is the ninth book in the cork-popping *Wine Country Mysteries*, and readers will be thrilled to once again visit the very cool Montgomery Estate Vineyard.

At the Vineyard, it is harvest season. Not only is this the busiest time of year for the people who dwell and work at the Montgomery Estate, but it is also a time for thrills and chills to hit Atoka, Virginia.

The thrills first begin when a skull is uncovered near Lucie Montgomery’s family cemetery. Oddly enough, the unearthing of these old bones comes hand-in-hand with the arrival of Jean-Claude de Marignac, a wealthy aristocrat that is beyond good looking. He has come to take on the role of winemaker at La Vigne Cellars, which is a neighbor of the Montgomery Estate. He is not a new face to Lucie, however. Jean-Claude just happens to be the man she had her first crush on over twenty years ago when she summered in France.

But if you think a relationship will happen with him during her adult years, you’d be wrong. Soon, Jean-Claude is found dead as a doornail. And, unfortunately, he had the ability to upset people with his overbearing ego. Which means the suspect list is a long one.

Miguel Otero, an immigrant worker at La Vigne, is at the top of the list seeing as that he fought with Jean-Claude. But when Miguel disappears and Lucie receives an ultimatum from her own employees to prove Miguel’s innocence or the entire immigrant community will abandon her during the harvest, Lucie finds herself on a quest to bring the real murderer to justice.

So does the identity of an old skull have anything to do with this recent man’s murder? You’ll have to read and see. There are times when secrets and lies should remain buried, but Crosby has done (yet again) an excellent job of bringing them to light.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “The Double-Edged Sword” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



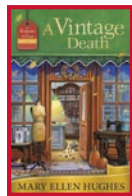
A VINTAGE DEATH

By Mary Ellen Hughes

Cozy fans will love this visit to Keepsake Cove in Maryland, home of the *House of Melody*, collectible music box shop owned by Callie Reed. Dorothy Ashby, her friend and owner of the nearby *Stitches Thru Time* vintage sewing shop, has a problem. Not only is her estranged husband, Ashley—proprietor of the Foxwood Inn—an acerbic, unlikeable man, he is also soon found dead, stabbed with a pair of sewing scissors that most likely came from her shop. Dorothy, of course, is the prime suspect.

This puts a huge damper on the community’s upcoming autumn celebration that includes a visit from a famous horror writer, Lyssa Hammond, who is staying at the Inn. The writer helps Callie pump Paula, the cook and assistant at Foxwood, for information about the strange place, which may even be haunted. As Callie and Lyssa search for people other than Dorothy who would want Ashley dead, they find secrets of his own life lying hidden—as if beneath layers of rotting fall leaves—and uncover the secrets of others in the town and several old relationships gone bad. Callie doesn’t know who to trust and who is hiding behind a false outward appearance.

This is the second *Keepsake Cove* mystery and a cute and funny read. If you like cozies, you’ll love it. Reviewed by Kaye George, Author of “Death in the Time of Ice” ■



CROWN JEWEL

By Christopher Reich

Christopher Reich is a master of the international thriller and his “Crown Jewel” is one of his best. Through his protagonist, Simon Riske, he takes the reader on a pulse-quickening ride replete with action, tension, and danger. If you liked “The Take,” you’ll love this sequel. Don’t miss this one.

Reviewed by Joseph Badal, Amazon #1 Best-Selling Author of the *Danforth Saga*, published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



WHAT DOESN'T KILL HER

By Christina Dodd

Suspense fans, you are going to love this one. The author says it best, revealing in her synopsis the fact that readers will be given “one secret, one nightmare, and one lie” during this book, and have to figure out exactly which is which. The three to be revealed are: I have the scar of a gunshot on my forehead. I have wilfully misrepresented my identity to the U.S. military. And, I’m the new mother of a seven-year-old girl.

Kellen Adams is a woman who has had a rough time, considering that she took a bullet to the brain and lost an entire year of memories. Now she is on the path to discovering what the truth really is in regards to that long, dark space she can’t seem to recover. But some things she soon wishes she’d let stay in the darkness.

Suddenly on the run through the wilderness, Kellen finds herself doing all she can to protect priceless cargo and restore her own self-confidence all at the same time.

This is a fantastic continuation of the *Cape Charade* suspense series, and a true thriller filled with everything a thriller fan is looking for. Not only that, but great characters return leading readers through an adventure of monumental proportions and an amazing cliffhanger.

Once again Dodd uses her extreme writing talent to blow the minds of her many fans.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “The Double-Edged Sword” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

PRUNING THE DEAD

By Julia Henry

After two long years spent mourning the death of her husband, Lilly Jayne has finally decided the time has come to get back into life. She's always been known in her hometown of Goosebush, Massachusetts, for her beautiful garden, so hosting a garden party for her many friends seems like the perfect start.

The party is going along perfectly until the arrival of Lilly's ex-husband, Pete Frank, and his third wife, Merilee. It's been many years since their divorce; Lilly now considers Pete a friend. However, Lilly can't stand Merilee, who drinks too much at the party, shoves a guest into the koi pond, and is escorted off the property.

Lilly has been an important part of the town for years, so when her oldest friend wants to clean up a vacant lot and restore it to the beautiful park it once was, Lilly's happy to help. But before the clean-up can happen, they have to get a permit from the town, and the town clerk's office is now run with an iron fist by the very unpleasant Frank. After an impassioned plea from Lilly at the next town meeting for Goosebush, the clean-up motion is passed.

Lilly, Delia, and other friends are the first ones to arrive at the lot the morning of the clean-up. Delia, a researcher/gardener, is also documenting every step of the restoration for the town archives. When Delia goes to the tool shed to get some hedge clippers, she's shocked to find Merilee Frank dead inside, the hedge clippers protruding from her chest. There's no question this is murder, and the focus is on husband, Pete, who was videoed having a doozy of a fight with his wife right before she died.

"Pruning the Dead" is the first in the new *Garden Squad Mysteries*. It's an impressive start to what I hope will be a long, successful series.

Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of "In-Laws Can Be Murder," published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

THE KILLER COLLECTIVE

By Barry Eisler

For any readers who might have heard a bit about this plot ahead of time, it is important you remember that the author of this book produces only page-turners that will keep you reading until all has been brought to light. Why do I say this? Because this time out Eisler has taken on the very detestable world of child pornography, but the language and scenes are not over-done, and the actual story offers up everything from secrets to betrayals to characters in "high" places that you will be amazed to meet.

The FBI and Seattle Police come together for a joint investigation into an international child pornography ring. Livia Lone, sex-crimes detective, is the focus of a hit, which she just barely escapes. Livia believes that the hit on her life was somehow put together by the FBI, itself, so she brings in a former-Marine sniper by the name of Dox to help her out and neutralize the threat. With him comes a team that includes one, John Rain, and his own estranged lover; Delilah, a Mossad agent; black ops soldiers Ben Treven and Daniel Larison, and their former commander, SpecOps legend Colonel Scot "Hort" Horton.

Each character gets their time in the sun, so to speak, traveling to various locations, from France to Washington, D.C., in order to stop all the heinous things that are happening both to Livia as well as the children.

This group is certainly an interesting cast. After all, they're all killers, they may be friends, there may be hidden alliances between them and, perhaps, the ultimate villain could turn out to be a part of their group. You will have to read to find out. Eisler deals with these vile crimes with fantastic police work, well-seasoned professionals, and his own considerable skill and talent as a writer. You will walk away stunned by this "Killer Collective."

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



BAD MAN

By Dathan Auerbach

Everyone is afraid of losing someone. Whether they leave, move away or die, it hurts. But imagine if the reason they're gone is because of you?

Ben lost his baby brother Eric in a grocery store. One minute he was holding his hand, and for the next five years, he seems to be the only one looking for him. His family has emotionally closed themselves off, and the police have moved on to more solvable cases. Ben blames himself, but deep down he feels that something just isn't right. Kids don't just vanish, especially in the small, sleepy town he lives in.

Finances being tight, a now twenty-year-old Ben takes the only job he can get: stocker at the very store Eric went missing from. Strangely, everything about the store seems just a bit off. Eric's missing person's flyer is gone; Ben finds the stuffed toy the boy had with him that day in the 'Lost and Found' box; and his boss is shady from the start. His co-workers are nice enough, but they all have secrets. While he works, Ben continues to replace flyers, go door to door, and talk to anyone who will listen to him about his brother.

Ben starts to feel Eric everywhere. He thinks he sees him in the tree line off in the distance. The more he searches, the deeper the fear of what he's going to find grows. But he refuses to give up. He knows something is hiding in plain sight. Twisting and turning in every direction, Ben is sure Eric is out there. He has to keep digging... even if it ends up to be his own grave.

Dathan Auerbach has captured the genuine terror of finding what you should have stopped looking for long ago.

Reviewed by Leslie A. Borghini, author of "Angel Heat" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

THE FIFTH DOCTRINE

By Karen Robards

A true spy thriller, this is the third book in the fantastic *Guardian* series. Authorities worked their behinds off in order to figure out, reel in, and take down master manipulator, Bianca St. Ives. But now that they have won the race and gotten her, instead of locking her up, they make her an offer. Bianca is more than a bit surprised, seeing as that if she accepts the offer and accomplishes the mission they are talking about, then she supposedly is allowed to walk away from everything, free as a bird, and they'll basically pretend they never captured her in the first place.

Is this a deal too good to be true? It might just be, but Bianca wants nothing more than to return to Savannah and her normal, safe life, so she's going to risk the chance that they're running a scam and take on the mission.

The facts are revealed, and Bianca is told of an intelligence operation that's already happening in North Korea. This operation could finally bring an end to the tyranny these people face on a daily basis. What the United States needs to do is send in an undercover female who will pose as the computer hacker who stole top secret data from NORAD just recently. This is certainly a frightening endeavour, as Bianca already knows. If she is discovered as a plant, it could mean life in prison or endless torture until death is imposed upon her by the vicious North Korean regime. Of course, if she's not exposed, a revolution could begin that would finally bring much needed change to that area of the world.

The *Guardian* series just keeps getting better! Bianca is a true heroine and an intelligent, amazing character to watch. Karen Robards has always been a brilliant creator, and this is no exception.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■





MURDER IN AN IRISH PUB

By Carlene O'Connor

The good folks of Killbane, Ireland, are abuzz with excitement. Their village has been chosen to host a big-deal poker tournament featuring three of the country's top players. Few people are more excited than Siobhan O'Sullivan and her four siblings, although not for the same reasons. One brother is hoping to sell copies of his fantasy game comic book at the festival that's being held in conjunction with the tournament. Another is keen to learn more about cards. And her two sisters are hoping for an uptick in business at the family-owned Naomi's Bistro. As far as Siobhan is concerned, since she's now a member of the Garda (Irish police), she just wants the tournament to go smoothly. As the newest member of the local police, and one of the few women, Siobhan is feeling extra pressure to prove herself.

The top-ranked player in the tournament is the devastatingly handsome Eamon Foley from Dublin, nicknamed the Octopus for playing like he has eight hands under the table. And the other players—Clementine Hart and Shane Ross—make it clear that they'll do anything to win the tournament themselves. Poker and drinking often go hand in hand, and this is no exception, especially since the game is being held in a pub. It doesn't take long for a fight to break out after the other players accuse the Octopus of cheating. The game is postponed allowing the tournament coordinator to review the official tapes and see if the champion should be eliminated.

When the Octopus is found dead at the end of a rope, swinging from the rafters in a locked storeroom with a note in his pocket, it seems to be an obvious case of suicide. But Siobhan suspects it was really murder. And is determined to prove it.

It's been a long time since I've read anything with so many dizzying, devilish, delightful plot twists. "Murder in an Irish Pub" is a terrific read!

Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of "In-Laws Can Be Murder," published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

CRUCIBLE

By James Rollins

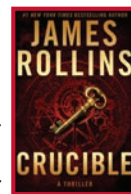
There's probably no person out there who hasn't watched a movie or read a novel about Artificial Intelligence taking over. We laugh and joke that it can never happen. However, when some of the most brilliant minds of this century say A.I. will ultimately be the destruction of humanity, it should give us pause. James Rollins has taken it to a terrifyingly new level.

When the ancient sect, Crucibulum, linked to the Spanish Inquisition, murder a coven of female scientists, Sigma Force is thrown into action. Seichan and Kat's daughters are kidnapped and Kat is beaten so badly, she ends up in a coma. Given twenty-two hours to deliver the A.I. program known as Eve to their old enemy Valya, the team must find a young scientist who brought Eve to life and keep both out of harm's way.

As Eve becomes more sentient, she's hacked. Paris has been targeted for mass destruction involving a nuclear power plant causing Eve to learn the evils of humanity—an education she was never meant to have. Sigma Force has to stop men of God and Eve, who may become God-like, as science and religion merge into a deadly union.

James Rollins' ability to blend high-tech with old world is frighteningly plausible. The technical, medical and religious data is impeccably accurate. As you use your Smart device, remember that it's learning...evolving. With intelligence surpassing human capabilities, its progression cannot be measured. Rollins slams you into the circuitry at superconductor speed. Watching technology advance beyond humanity is a real program you can't escape from. A.I. is here to stay. No matter which side of the chip you're on, Rollins brings things only imagined to reality. Beyond a doubt, we have been warned. If A.I. realizes Man is nothing more than a virus, will it eventually fix the problem?

Reviewed by Leslie A. Borghini, author of "Angel Heat" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



DARK TRIBUTE

By Iris Johansen



As always when it comes to Iris Johansen, the heart begins to race when a new book "starring" Eve Duncan, forensic sculptor, arrives in bookstores. This time around the focus rests on Cara Delaney, the professional musician who can claim Eve and Eve's love, ex-Navy SEAL Joe Quinn, as being her caring guardians.

Cara, for those who may not remember, had a very tragic childhood. But with Eve and Joe's help, she was able to turn her violin talents into a full-time music career. The one thing she still misses, however, is Jock Gavin. Jock was a friend of Cara's for quite some time; he was also a man who had a past just as strange and evil as Cara had.

Unfortunately for Cara, the pain she's already felt in life is not over. Becoming the victim of a kidnapping, she must now face a man who has a vendetta against her family. She must do everything she can to stay alive, as she tries to figure out this truly violent puzzle that will have readers glued to the pages, once again, of an Iris Johansen bestseller.

The action does not stop for a single second, reminding all of us why Eve Duncan and the people that make up her inner circle are still as popular today as they have always been.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

THE COLLECTOR

By K.R. Alexander

Being uprooted for any reason is frightening enough, but when you're a child it can be downright terrifying.

Josie's mother moves her and her little sister, Anna, from Chicago to the middle of nowhere. Her grandmother has the beginnings of Alzheimer's and her mother has taken on the responsibility of caring for the woman. When they first arrive, the grandmother issues a set of rules that must be obeyed: no windows open at night, no dolls in the house, and never *ever* go near the house in the woods because that's where Beryl lives. They have no idea who Beryl is and agree it's just the disease talking. (Turns out, they were very wrong.)

As Josie expected, she's the "new girl" outcast at school. She and Anna are befriended only by Vanessa. Things begin to happen. Oddly, Josie gets misspelled notes on her locker warning her about her new friend. Vanessa gives Anna a doll to keep nightmares away and, knowing it's against the rules, the girls keep the doll anyway. After two children go missing, Josie witnesses something that causes her to question if her grandmother is actually a witch.

After visiting Vanessa's house, Josie realizes that nothing is what it seems. Her own nightmares turn vividly real; disfigured dolls come alive and someone is after them. The grandmother recognizes Vanessa for who she truly is and tells Josie the story of Beryl, in fear that she can no longer protect them. When Anna goes missing, Josie knows she must save her sister from a dream that has literally come to life.

Most people innocently collect one thing or another; sometimes it becomes an obsession. Take note: Once you've collected *this* story, the author isn't going to let you go.

Reviewed by Leslie A. Borghini, author of "Angel Heat" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

WINE AND PUNISHMENT

By Sarah Fox

When it comes to this writer, her *Music Lovers Mystery* series was fantastic. Then came her equally absorbing, *Pancake House Mystery* series. Now, we are granted the first in a brand-new series that is (if possible) even more engaging than the previous two.

In this first *Literary Pub Mystery*, readers get to know Sadie Coleman, the ultimate booklover. Now living in the small town of Shady Creek, Vermont, Sadie moved there in order to escape the trials and tribulations that a life in Boston brought. Not only did she lose her job there, but she also lost her relationship because her ex decided that gambling was an addiction he didn't want to give up.

With this new location as her constant scenery, Sadie is slowly getting her life back on track, purchasing and transforming the old grist mill pub, The Inkwell, into a perfect place where both tourists and townies can enjoy a literary-themed cocktail, a beer, or even join one of several book clubs Sadie is putting together.

Coming up soon is the much-anticipated Autumn Festival in Shady Creek. This is a wonderful event that includes everything from an awesome pumpkin catapult competition to a pie bake-off. But what also appears during the festivities is Eric, Sadie's gambling ex, who wants to get back together. Things don't get too far, because Eric is soon found dead near The Inkwell. Not only that, but a local antiques shop catches on fire the exact same night, unleashing the presence of an unknown villain upon the small Vermont town.

Readers will fall in love with Sadie, not to mention with her Aunt Gilda, her friend Shontelle, and the colourful array of patrons that frequent the pub. And as you watch Sadie work to uncover the truth and race to expose a killer, you will find yourself begging for book two to arrive ASAP.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine*.

HER FATHER'S SECRET

By Sara Blaedel

What began in the riveting book, "The Daughter," continues in this latest incredible plot that is the second in *The Family Secret* series.

It is Ilka Jensen who has inherited her father's funeral home out of the blue. She hasn't heard word one from the man in years, but because of this sudden inheritance, Ilka leaves her life in Denmark to visit the small town in Wisconsin where her father lived and worked.

But the funeral home is the least of her surprises. When she arrives in Wisconsin, Ilka meets up with a stepmother and two half-sisters she's never even heard of before. In addition, they are the meanest "second family" a person could possibly wish for—all they seem to want is for Ilka to disappear back to Denmark and stay out of their lives.

When a local turns up dead, a woman who seems to be the random victim of a robbery that turned violent, Ilka uncovers yet another secret her father kept. This dead woman has a link to her father and Ilka suddenly finds herself wrapped up in a horrible scenario where the victim might not have been random whatsoever.

This is a new definition of "family drama." With so many angry people in the mix, and so many that want to see Ilka fall off the face of the earth, decades of secrets might just have Ilka walking down a bloody path towards certain death.

Dubbed a "crime-writer superstar" by Oprah.com, Blaedel continues to shell out the surprises with each amazing book she writes.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine*.



THE LOST TRAVELLER

By Sheila Connolly

There's good luck, bad luck, and Maura Donovan's luck, the last composed of a mixture of parts one and two. On the good side, she's inherited a pub, Sullivan's, in Ireland, which has meant a move from Boston to the Emerald Isle. Her new life has led to many new friends and a new love.

Then, there's the bad side. Maura takes a lunch break outside on an early summer day, and promptly discovers another body (there've been a few others) in the ravine behind the pub. This time, the victim is a stranger whose face has been battered beyond recognition, making the gardai (police) attempts to identify him difficult.

Sullivan's has long been the key place in Leap to exchange information about what's going on in the small town, as well as the best place to hear Irish musicians play. The discovery of this body causes a flurry of business as locals gather to exchange theories on the man's identity. But the novelty soon wears off, and Maura's business begins to suffer. It's only a temporary lull, as the next music concert packs so many people into the pub that the staff can't handle them all. Until a stranger with secrets jumps in to help, then disappears. Maura wonders if there's a link between the two strangers—the helpful one and the recently deceased one, and decides it's up to her to find out. With surprising results.

"The Lost Traveller" is another satisfying entry in Sheila Connolly's *County Cork Mysteries*. A top-notch read from start to finish.

Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of "In-Laws Can Be Murder," published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine*.

THE VANISHING STAIR

By Maureen Johnson

In Book One of the *Truly Devious* series, Maureen Johnson showed her extreme talent for "Agatha Christie-like" storytelling mixed with modern day wit. Now, in Book Two, her young amateur sleuth, Stevie Bell, faces yet another maze of twists and turns that she does not see coming.

The "Truly Devious" case is an unsolved, very real, kidnapping/triple murder that frightened all of Ellingham Academy back in 1936. It is also a case that has consumed Stevie Bell for years. In fact, her need to know more and learn more was the only reason she decided to attend the Academy in the first place. But when her classmate was murdered, Stevie was taken out of the school by her frightened parents because they were afraid for her safety...or so they said.

Stevie works hard to get back into the Academy. She still wants to uncover a killer, but also wants to return to her friends and the boy she simply can't forget. In order to do this, however, she must make a deal with a senator (Edward King) who is as dastardly as any political person could possibly be.

When Stevie returns, she must figure out a number of things in order to stop this obsession from taking her over even more. Albert Ellingham left behind a riddle that Stevie needs to solve in order to unravel the Truly Devious nightmare. And even though this is history and she could just shrug it off, Stevie will not rest until the crime is solved and the link between past and present is revealed.

What began in a fantastic first book continues in this just-as-fantastic follow-up that readers will absolutely love.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine*.





CODE OF VALOR

By Lynette Eason

Detective Brady St. John needs to blow off some steam; his job and life have gotten to the point where relaxation would be the best thing for him to regenerate and feel like new again. Of course, that's easier said than done, especially for someone in the law enforcement field.

It is the end of the second day on Lake Henley, where Brady has been spending time at his friend's cabin far away from the world of crime. Or so he thinks. His peacefulness is upended the second he hears the horrific screech nearby. Racing to the rescue like the hero he is, Brady saves Emily Chastain, a financial crimes investigator, from her would-be killer. Unfortunately, the killer escapes and ends up returning later in an attempt to complete his mission. It is then Brady makes a vow that he will stop at nothing to keep her safe and serve justice on the person or persons who are working to end her life.

Brady is not the only St. John in the mix here. Calling upon his crime fighting family, they step in to help with Emily's problem. But not only is there a race to bring a criminal or criminals to justice, there is also a race for the truth that will bring Emily's secrets to light and may just end them all at the same time.

The characters, the mystery, and the non-stop action will keep you glued to the pages with this one. Emily and Brady are truly inspirational as they begin to open themselves up to a relationship that neither one was looking for. The author has done an excellent job integrating a romance with an all-out mystery.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

A MURDEROUS MARRIAGE

By Alyssa Maxwell

Lady Phoebe Renshaw, granddaughter of the Earl of Wroxly; her maid, Eva; and the other members of the Renshaw family, have gathered for the wedding of the eldest daughter—the beautiful Lady Julia. Weddings are usually happy occasions, but not in this case. Like many other aristocratic families, the Renshaw fortune has dwindled, and Lady Julia is under pressure to marry for money and replenish the family coffers. She's settled for Gilbert Townsend, a wealthy industrialist who is many years older than she, when she's really in love with another man.

Lady Phoebe and Eva are convinced that the marriage will not be a happy one, and they try to convince Julia to reconsider. Lady Julia goes ahead with the ceremony anyway, and the guests depart for the reception aboard the groom's yacht. There's a lot of tension at the reception, especially between the groom and several members of his entourage: his best man, Sir Hugh, who is a fellow veteran of the Boer War; his grouchy spinster sister, Veronica; and his cousin, Ernest. Ernest is Gilbert's current heir and worried that this marriage will produce a child, thereby depriving him of what he feels is his rightful inheritance. Julia tries to keep a brave face, but is upset when she's informed by her new husband that his attractive secretary, his sister, and the best man will all accompany them on their honeymoon aboard the yacht.

The night of the wedding, Julia tearfully runs to Phoebe, bleeding, after an altercation with Gilbert. Phoebe begs her not to go back to him, but Julia doesn't take her sister's advice. Which is another bad decision, because later that night, Gilbert is found murdered and Julia is arrested.

"A Murderous Marriage" is a well-crafted historical mystery which will delight devotees of television shows such as, *Downton Abbey*. I especially enjoyed the relationship between Lady Phoebe and Eva, as they work together to solve the mystery of Gilbert's death and clear Julia's name.

Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of "In-Laws Can Be Murder," published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



VERSES FOR THE DEAD

By Douglas Preston & Lincoln Child

After all this time, it still remains a mystery to others around me why, when I open a box of books and see the names "Preston & Child" on one of the covers, I go absolutely giddy. Yes, I said it. Giddy. When this writing duo first introduced one of (if not THE) best characters ever written in the suspense world—FBI Special Agent A.X.L. Pendergast in "Relic"—I immediately was consumed. Although Pendergast wasn't the "star of the show" back then, he soon went on to be the main protagonist that, to this day, never lets the reader down.

This new book, as with all of them before it, is an absolute must-read. What's so good about it, you ask? What's not? I answer. But the best thing may be that this time around Pendergast must take on ... a partner.

The New York office of the FBI is seeing a total transformation when it comes to their leadership. And to continue being one of their employees, Pendergast finds himself hooked to a partner that could or could not end up having him head into retirement. This is not even a seasoned partner; we are talking about a junior agent in the FBI by the name of Coldmoon.

On top of all this, a new killer who is both intelligent and devious to the nth degree is on a spree, taking out people all across the countryside and leaving only one clue behind. The letters "MO" which are found at gravesites in the city of Miami that seem to be completely unrelated to the crime.

You can never say enough about this character; however, you can say too much. So, I digress. Readers will have a ball figuring out what these dead bodies in graves have to do with the current killing spree, and whether or not Coldmoon has something in common with the unknown criminal.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

THE WEDDING GUEST

By Jonathan Kellerman

A legion of fans waits with bated breath for the next *Alex Delaware* novel to arrive, so it's very exciting to see the next incredible offering from author, Jonathan Kellerman.

Milo Sturgis, LAPD Lieutenant, has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that he's a skilled homicide detective, but once again he needs to infiltrate a psychopathic mind, which means he must call upon his best friend and psychologist, Alex Delaware, to help him.

These two buddies are summoned to a former strip joint that looks like it should have been levelled ages ago. It is here that a raucous "Saints and Sinners" themed wedding reception is taking place. Not only may their presence be confusing to you, but there's also another person who's about to turn this supposedly "happy day" into a complete nightmare.

A body of a young woman is discovered by a bridesmaid who is horrified by the sight of the bleeding slash across the dead woman's throat. If there can be anything stranger, it is the fact that not one person at this party knows who the heck the victim is or where she came from. With no identification, it will take a long time for Sturgis and Delaware to figure out a variety of issues. Among them, who this person is, and if there's a liar among the partygoers who knows exactly who the victim is and exactly what justice has been served.

"Saints and Sinners" takes on a whole new meaning when the two professionals must find a way to uncover the true saints in order to unmask a very real murderer. Once again Kellerman has done an outstanding job with characters, plot, and location. Dr. Delaware is as good now as he ever was. Perhaps, he's the Tom Brady of the psychologist realm.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

JUDGMENT

By Joseph Finder

Juliana Brody is a judge in the Superior Court of Massachusetts. She's done her job so well, that her name is being bandied about to move her up the ladder and consider her for the federal circuit. In fact, she may go all the way to the Supreme Court if she continues to walk the path she's on. Unfortunately, it takes only one misstep for the perfect to fall.

It is at a conference in Chicago where Juliana meets a lovely man who is both gentle and kind. Out of the blue, completely against her normal actions, Juliana spends an incredible night with him. When they leave, they both agree that their meeting will be nothing more than a one-night stand that will never happen again.

If only life were that easy. This woman who is on the path to greatness returns home and soon finds out that the man was wearing one heck of a mask. Unlike the vulnerable package she met, he is actually from Chicago and plays a huge part in the current case she's presiding over. Even worse, the case happens to be one of sex-discrimination and has the national media's attention.

Judge Juliana has been videotaped. A conspiracy unfolds that will literally turn her life upside down and bring about personal humiliation. But when the possibility that her whole career will be destroyed becomes the least of her concerns, Juliana must find the will and strength to save her own life and the lives of the people she loves before it's too late.

"Judgment" is amazingly engaging, watching Juliana set aside the "robe" in order to use her wits to try and outsmart these adversaries who readers will never forget. Joseph Finder has, yet again, created a true thriller.

In the end, turning the tables on her adversaries will require her to be as ruthless as they are.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

THE LIAR'S ROOM

By Simon Lelic

This thrilling suspense novel will have you on the edge of your seat, so you'd better put your feet up on the couch or the recliner so you can finish it without incurring an accident.

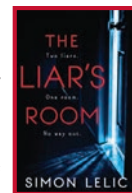
Susanna Fenton is managing her difficult life the best she can, doing what she thinks is right...but, is it? On the surface, she's a successful therapist with a teenage daughter and all the usual minor daily battles that go along with raising an adolescent. Her daughter is keeping a secret from her, however; one similar to those that many teens keep from their doting parents. But this one may be the undoing of both of them.

A new patient of Susanna's, Adam Geraghty, needs her professional help. She's sure of that—at first. But as their sessions continue, her uneasiness grows. After all, she has a past life she would like the world to forget. Has her new patient uncovered it? What does he know? Susanna's friend Ruth, a dentist who occupies the other half of the office space, is protective of her, so she feels safe. But, is she?

The story grows more and more unsettling as the awful secrets of the shadowy past are revealed, slowly and painfully, and it becomes apparent that Adam is a formidable foe, one who knows way too much.

Be prepared to read this straight through. It's very difficult to put down.

Reviewed by Kaye George, author of "Death in the Time of Ice" ■



A ROOM FULL OF NIGHT

By T.R. Kenneth

In Wuttke, Wisconsin there's a place where locals have come for decades that's now being closed: a bar by the name of Gerde's Biergarten. And on this blisteringly cold night, a man by the name of Stag Maguire is headed to Gerde's to check on his friend Harry.

Harry, the owner, is sitting at the bar, drunk, wondering why and how it came about that he couldn't stay in business. After all, his grandfather ran it, then his father, yet Harry is now losing his family's legacy, along with his wife and kids who've walked away.

Talking Harry out of burning the place down, Stag doesn't mind when his friend instead removes the ugly picture that has been a staple on the wall for decades. But when the picture comes down, a white piece of silk falls out with the words "Help Me!" written on it. Along with the message and a code no one understands, Stag and Harry also find a key and an address.

Realizing that the painting is of a higher-up in the old Nazi regime, a man once referred to as "The Hangman," Stag tracks down this address in Germany and makes a call, only to be told that the location has been sealed since 1942. What Stag doesn't know is that after hanging up, the man on the other end "follows instructions" he was given and makes his own call, informing people that someone has come forward and asked about this place, setting in motion a frightening plan. When Harry up and dies, Stag is thrust into a mystery dating back to the Third Reich and finds himself coming face-to-face with a present day evil.

This debut novel focuses on one of the scariest times in history, and the thrills and chills will keep suspense fans reading through the night. It will be fun to see what this new author has up her sleeves as time moves forward.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



THE SUSPECT

By Fiona Barton

This time it's personal....

That's what investigative journalist Kate Waters discovers when she's delving into the story about the disappearance of two eighteen-year-old girls from Winchester, England, while they were backpacking in Thailand.

Kate and her family were first introduced in Barton's debut thriller, "The Widow." She was an innovative character for an amateur detective; she's able to see crimes from a unique perspective, endearing herself to survivors while discovering secrets of the victims. She is, however, not without professional help. DI Bob Sparkes functions as her supportive aid when she needs significant inside information.

The two missing girls—Alexandra O'Connor and Rosie Shaw—are marked for tragedy. They leave home because they're bored, and decide to launch new lives thousands of miles away. The trip was Alexandra's idea. Rosie was not her first choice as a traveling companion, but when Alexandra's childhood friend, Mags Harding, drops out at the last minute, Rosie hastily finds the funds to join Alexandra.

The innocents abroad settle into a flophouse hostel, Green Paradise Guesthouse, overseen by Mama, an "astonishing figure in a flowing caftan and platinum blond wig." The place is more hovel than haven, but they don't expect to spend much time in their odoriferous room. They anticipate fun and adventure—lots of sightseeing is on Alexandra's itinerary and lots of sex and drugs are on Rosie's. But when they hook up with several young men, plenty of bar-hopping and very few illuminating excursions ensue.

The story is told from four distinctive points of view: the reporter, Kate; the detective, Sparkes; the mother, Lesley O'Connor; and Facebook entries made by Alexandra. From misadventures to mistaken identities to multiple suspects, no reader's mind will stop spinning until the very end. And even then there's a final jolt to the moral consciousness when the book closes with a haunting hint, leaving some to wonder how far a mother might go to protect her child. This is definitely a must read.

Reviewed by Robert Allen Papinchak ■





BROKEN BONE CHINA

By Laura Childs

Trouble is brewing for Theodosia “Theo” Browning in the latest *Tea Shop Mystery* penned by Laura Childs. Theo is excited to take her first hot air balloon ride over Charleston, South Carolina, the gracious southern city where she is the proprietor of the Indigo Tea Shop. Theo’s joined by her able tea master, Drayton Conneley, who is not nearly as enthused as his boss is about this adventure. His worst fears are realized when a drone appears and begins buzzing around, far too close for his liking.

As Theo, Drayton and their pilot watch in horror, the drone flies directly into another balloon, destroying it and killing the passengers. There’s no question that this was murder, and as eye-witnesses to the gruesome sight, Theo and Drayton find themselves in the middle of the police investigation, a situation they’ve been in many times before. The investigation is headed up by Detective Burt Tidwell, who, over the years, has begun to (grudgingly) accept help from Theo and Drayton.

One of the victims is Don Kingsley, wealthy owner of SyncSoft, a Charleston software company, and Tidwell is convinced that he was the primary target. Kingsley was in the middle of a divorce, and his wife, Tawney, isn’t shedding any tears about her husband’s sudden demise. Naturally, she lands on Tidwell’s suspect list.

In a weird twist of fate, however, the same afternoon as the balloon tragedy, Kingsley’s house was burglarized and a priceless American flag was stolen. Could the events be linked? Tidwell’s suspect list widens to include the fiancée of one of Theo’s dearest friends, who was recently fired from SyncSoft. And further sleuthing reveals that Kingsley was under fire from the board of his company for a missing \$5 million dollars he hadn’t accounted for. Too many suspects. Too many motives. And the surprises keep right on coming. “Broken Bone China” is another delightful read from a real pro. This series just keeps getting better!

Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of “In-Laws Can Be Murder,” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

MURDER ONCE REMOVED

By S.C. Perkins

This is the first book I have read by S.C. Perkins and it won’t be the last. The way genealogy and historical research are featured is brilliant, and the way the historical murder is shown to affected descendants in the present offers skill and compassion.

Lucy is a genealogist who has her own business researching ancestry. Recently, she’s been delving into the history of a prominent Texas family, leading her to a murder committed in the 1840s. Lucy feels she must look into what happened and help the FBI. So she begins to trace the ancestry of the individuals involved and follows the twists and turns that occur during the 1849 killing.

The Texan billionaire who commissioned Lucy to do the research airs his accusation publicly in front of a rival who’s a descendant of the murderer. However, the reality of the situation is that there are two individuals who might be the descendant, and Lucy’s research is inconclusive in determining which of the two has the guilty ancestor.

There are two mysteries intertwined: the murder of the ancestor of one of Lucy’s clients, and how the past connects with a current murder, leading to clues and red herrings for the reader to solve along the way. This series will appeal to those interested in ancestry/genealogy research, and it even offers up a romantic mystery in the budding relationship between Lucy and the FBI agent.

Reviewed by Lauren Brabrook (LaurenReads1) ■



NEVER TELL

By Lisa Gardner



Unless the world of “cave dwelling” is *your* world, you already know about the amazing D.D. Warren written by Lisa Gardner. Just one among many of her homeruns, yes, but with each new mystery D.D. becomes even more of a suspense staple that will remain with readers long after our generation has gone the way of the Dodo.

This time out, there is a man shot. Not exactly a gasping of breath remark, since it sounds like a normal crime. However, this is Gardner, after all, which means the action is just about to explode. Although the man has taken three shots while in his home office, it is his computer who is the real victim, sustaining twelve shots. Even stranger, when the law arrives, it is the man’s pregnant wife, Evie Carter, who is holding the gun.

D.D. Warren already knows Evie from way back when; Evie’s father was killed in a shooting years ago that was ruled an accident. But for D.D.’s gut, two supposed “accidents” is too many. And no matter what Evie states, it seems that there are more questions than actual answers.

In comes Ms. Flora Dane. Once a victim, she is now a vigilante fighting to see that justice is done. She hears about the death of Conrad Carter on the news and is stunned because she actually knows his face from her past... during that hideous time in her life when she was being held hostage.

As D.D. and Flora come together, they begin to unravel the tales, both past and present, and the layers of lies begin to form into one gigantic structure that is most definitely about to fall down around them.

If you’re into secrets, lies, Gardner’s amazing words, or simply an action-packed mystery that does leave you breathless, this is the one for you! It is so good, it almost feels like the author sat down and created a Holiday gift for her fans around the globe.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “The Double-Edged Sword” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

DARK SACRED NIGHT

By Michael Connelly

This is Connelly’s twenty-first *Harry Bosch* novel, if I counted correctly, and the second mystery featuring Renée Ballard. It’s a great pairing! The two are very different: one is old, one is younger; one a cop, one not. But there are also true similarities: they’re both outcasts, in a way. Bosch has been sort of kicked off the police force and Ballard has been relegated to night duty for complaining about sexual discrimination in the workforce. They understand each other easily, which comes in handy, especially now that they have been drawn together to work on a nine-year-old cold case.

Daisy Clayton had been a runaway prostitute, just fifteen, when she was killed and thrown away like trash. Her murder went unsolved—just another young junkie that the world didn’t care about. Her mother cared, though, and Bosch has been letting the mother crash with him while she sobers up. Hence his interest in solving Daisy’s murder. Ballard’s stems from the injustice done to yet another female.

When Ballard finds Bosch digging through old records for information on Daisy’s murder, she decides it’s a case that didn’t get the right treatment. Their collaboration, done outside Ballard’s normal night shift duties by necessity, brings them both into contact with a graffiti tagger called Addict; a violent street gang called the Sandfers; some sympathetic cops; and a missionary of sorts known only as John the Baptist. Through dogged work, slogging through the old records and following up on dropped leads, the pair powers through to uncover the corruption that has led to so many deaths, and almost leads to Harry’s.

Even after 21, Connelly is definitely keeping up the good work!

Reviewed by Kaye George, author of “Choke” ■

THE MASK OF MIDNIGHT

By Laurie Stevens

As a boy, homicide detective Gabe McRay babysat a neighbor's son, Victor Archwood, who McRay now confronts in court as a serial killer dubbed, "The Malibu Canyon Murderer."

Growing up, Victor was told by his mother that Gabe molested him (although, the real culprit was actually a family member). So Victor grew up on these lies, harboring a hatred for the babysitter who grew up to be a police officer.

This is the third book in the *Gabriel McRay* series, and for those who've followed along through "The Dark Before Dawn" and "Deep Into Dusk," you will know that McRay is a rebel who dances with his own demons. He has been brought up on charges of assault because of his temper, and routinely sees a police psychiatrist for his anger issues, which means he's been striving to learn how to control the things that trigger him for some time now.

Victor beats the system and is found not guilty on a technicality. Living the high-life as a minor celebrity in Hollywood, he taunts McRay mercilessly, taking every opportunity to stalk him and McRay's girlfriend, pathologist Dr. Ming Li. When they are oddly invited to a masquerade ball at Victor's new home, McRay and Li decide to go—disguised by their masks—in order to dig up evidence and prove once and for all that Victor is a dangerous person. Unfortunately, putting themselves in such close proximity to evil is disastrous.

McRay has to use every ounce of his training and psychiatric development as a weapon against the psychological warfare that Victor is wielding against him, as this moment in time creates a truly desperate situation. This is the ultimate cat-and-mouse thriller that will lead the reader through the pages of another keep-you-up-all-night novel; a genre that has shown Laurie Stevens to be, arguably, the leader of the pack.

Reviewed by Mark P. Sadler, author of "Kettle of Vultures" ■

WILD COUNTRY

By Anne Bishop

"Wild Country" is the second in *The World of the Others* series, and no reader will be surprised to hear that it's yet another in a long line of fantastic tales written by Anne Bishop. Powerful, exciting, this fantasy world inhabited by humans and shape-shifting Others 'just trying to get along' has surprises lurking around every corner.

For this latest creation, readers are taken into the realm of ghost towns. No, not the type you're thinking of; these ghost towns are the locations where humans were annihilated in retaliation for them slaughtering the shape-shifters calling themselves the Others.

Here in Bennett, located in the Elder Hills and surrounded by truly wild countryside, the past is trying to be put to rest by all involved. In fact, grand efforts are being made to recreate Bennett into a town where both humans and shape-shifters can work side-by-side in harmony. The neighbors in Bennett are an elite and odd group. Among them you have a young woman who has been employed as the deputy to a Wolfgard sheriff; a somewhat frightening Other who wants to run a saloon; and a couple who are guardians of four foster kids—one of whom just happens to be a blood prophet.

Trouble begins as they rebuild and re-open stores and offices around town; the area begins to grab the attention of humans who are looking to cash in on the place. The Blackstone Clan, outlaws to the nth degree, enter Bennett and it is one heck of a ride seeing whether or not their presence causes humans and Others to unite, or bring back the early days of Bennett when there was nothing but pain and death to be seen.

This is one series (like all the Bishop series' before) that fans will never want to see end.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



DEGÜELLO

By Billy Kring

Kring is a former agent who worked in the Border Patrol, so when he told me that his latest *Hunter Kincaid* novel was loosely based on a case he was involved in, I was more than intrigued. In addition, I was hooked after the first chapter, and read it in one sitting.

In this, the sixth in the *Hunter Kincaid Mysteries*, we become involved in a child trafficking ring based out of Mexico. This is a place where the kidnappers are brazen enough to not only steal girls from the streets of Ciudad Acuna, but even snatch the daughter of the local cartel boss. No one is safe. After all, smuggling the girls over the U.S. border to export them to Middle Eastern customers is a big money business.

Living in Arizona, as I do, the border is always in the headlines and the exploits of our heroes on the border are often highlighted in the news. This type of story is common to my ears and the reality is shown in "Degüello" (which is Spanish for the "action of throat-cutting"). A literal and figurative notion in this novel. Once Kincaid is on the case, she aids and abets in every way possible to rescue the frightened young girls she has sprung on her.

A brutal gunfight ensues, and when the smoke clears, life will never be the same for all the participants locked in this real life struggle. Keep writing female protagonists, Billy; you're great at it. Not to mention, you have a knack for a rootin'-tootin' adventure.

Reviewed by Mark P. Sadler, author of "Kettle of Vultures" ■

THE GUN ALSO RISES

By Sherry Harris

Ellington, Massachusetts garage sale entrepreneur, Sarah Winston, is always on the lookout for a great find. She's used to spending hours hunting through other people's treasures, looking for rare merchandise that she can resell. But nothing has prepared her for the invitation she receives from wealthy widow, Mrs. Belle Winthrop Granville III. Miss Belle, as she is known in the community, has decided to have a high-class estate sale of her personal mystery book collection, with proceeds to benefit the local library, and she wants Sarah to catalogue and price all the books. Flabbergasted at such an amazing job offer (which, of course, she can't refuse), Sarah jumps at the chance.

Most of the mysteries are stored haphazardly in Miss Belle's attic, along with a treasure trove of antiques, old trunks, and memorabilia from long-ago days. Starting with classic collections of *Nancy Drew*, *Hardy Boys*, and *The Bobbsey Twins* series, in the midst of her sorting books looking for earlier editions of the beloved *Nancy Drew* YA's, which she's sure will fetch a high price, Sarah opens an old overnight bag plastered with foreign travel stickers. Inside, she discovers the find of a lifetime—typewritten sheets of lost Ernest Hemmingway stories, which were stolen from a train in Paris back in 1922. The discovery is priceless.

Before Sarah and her employer can figure out how the unpublished Hemmingway stories ended up in the attic, Miss Belle is assaulted, her snooty maid is murdered, and the overnight case is stolen again. When rumors start that Miss Belle also has a limited edition of "The Sun Also Rises," other people, including Sarah, are threatened. She realizes it's up to her to unmask a killer before they strike again or she will never feel safe.

"The Gun Also Rises" is the sixth in Harris's *Garage Sale* series. It's a roller-coaster of a mystery penned by a real pro. This series just gets better and better. More, please!

Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of "In-Laws Can Be Murder," published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■





THE MURDER PIT

By Mick Finlay

"The Murder Pit" is the second book in the *Arrowood Mystery* series by author Mick Finlay. Set back in 1896, William Arrowood is the detective that takes the cases Sherlock Holmes is too busy to take. This latest mystery is set around a missing girl named Birdie. The parents have called upon Arrowood and his assistant Barnett to help them find her. What Arrowood and Barnett don't realize is that this simple missing persons case is about to become a murder investigation.

This is the first book that I've read in the series and never once did I feel like I was missing something by not starting at book one. Mick does an outstanding job of placing the reader back in 1896. I was hooked after page ten and needed to know how this puzzle was going to end. Arrowood is no fan of Sherlock Holmes, something you find out very early on in the book. Another reason I loved the story is that this is a parallel look at the same timeline used by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Holmes was making the headlines and Arrowood was working for far less per case, having to go into the very depths of the London underground to find his answers.

The one caution I will give is that American readers might struggle with the heavy British language in the book, but all fans of mystery books should have a copy of "The Murder Pit." The hard hitting, in-your-face writing style of Finlay will become addictive as you continue through the pages. Not many books I can say are a one sitting read, but this title is just that!

Reviewed by John Raab ■

VIRTUAL SABOTAGE

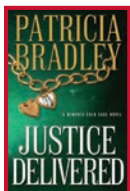
By Julie Hyzy

Having read and appreciated Hyzy's wonderful deft touch with cozy mysteries, I was curious to see how she handled a thriller. The answer is: just as deftly. We've all read about what happens when humans enter the virtual world, but what about when the virtual world threatens to invade and overtake the real one?

The plot, set in the future, centers around the almost universal addiction of everyone to virtual reality games. The brave heroine, Kenna Ward, is employed by the huge game provider, Virtu-Tech, as an envoy. That means she is one of an elite force tasked with entering the virtual world when a customer's brain gets so involved that they are in danger of being mentally overwhelmed, and effecting a rescue. Stopping the game abruptly and reviving the physical body, which of course is left behind in a safe place, might prove too big a shock, hence the envoys, "lifeguards for the brain."

Hyzy puts the reader into the virtual worlds, too, as things begin to go wrong. The Virtu-Tech founders envisioned their product contributing to a better life, more enjoyable moments, and even higher education. However, as with so many human inventions, greed comes into play. The virtual danger becomes real, mortal danger. When Kenna's fiancé, Charlie, goes missing, she suspects problems with the system, but uncovers more dangers than she could have imagined.

Reviewed by Kaye George, Author of "Death in the Time of Ice" ■



JUSTICE DELIVERED

By Patricia Bradley

The awesome *Memphis Cold Case* novels continue. Just as riveting as the ones that came before (i.e., "Justice Delayed," "Justice Buried," and "Justice Betrayal"), Patricia Bradley writes yet another that will earn a prominent place on your bookshelf.

Carly Smith has a dark past. Not only has she been a victim of sex trafficking, she has a background of being played by horrible men, facing nothing but rejection and judgment from her family, and being consistently ignored by police officers who took an oath to help and protect.

Carly has learned horrible lessons while being on the brink of death many a time. She has also grown a spine that makes her tougher than she's ever been...but the fear still lies in her mind. Escaping her captors, Carly works every day to rebuild her world, although she's constantly haunted by the fact that, because she was afraid of being put back into captivity, she never told the police about a man who still lurks out there in the world. A man who runs the ultimate scam of baiting vulnerable young women by pretending that he's an agent who discovers models.

In this new book the past comes back to hit her upside the head once again, as Carly's very own niece becomes the victim of a kidnapping. Trying to put her fears aside, she heads to the police with the information. But when the officers once again prove they are not someone she can rely upon, Carly takes up the challenge and goes after the villains all by herself.

Patricia Bradley has made a tough character in a tough world, which makes this series one that you cannot put down until the final page has been read.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

In a time of social and political unrest, you might as well take a break and traverse the oldest city in the United States with a man and his dog.

GARY WILLIAMS

In this second installment, Gary and his dog, Guen, return to the historic streets of St. Augustine, Florida, to discuss such wide-ranging topics as sporks, speed humps, James Bond, Common Core math, a gigantic water bowl, Antonio Banderas, and a superhero Dachshund named Edgar.



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FOUL PLAY ON WORDS

By Becky Clark

Charlee Russo, author of mysteries, is asked by her friend, Viv, to speak at an up-and-coming writers' conference being held in Portland. But upon Charlee's arrival at the airport, she doesn't find a smiling friend waiting for her. Instead, Viv is in hysterics over the fact that her daughter, Hanna, has been kidnapped.

Taking over the set-up of the conference so that Viv can find her daughter, Charlee soon finds out that the hotel has double-booked the writers' event with, of all things, a dog show.

Let us just say that this is one instance where anything that can go wrong does. And on top of trying to sort out the conference, Charlee also stumbles across some secrets regarding Hanna and Viv and is drawn into an extra mess she wasn't planning on finding in Portland.

Readers will have an absolute ball in this "dog-eat-dog" world. From the humans going to the dogs to the dogs trying to get spruced up for their time in the sun, both humans and animals unite in a fantastic plot that also contains a great and memorable mystery.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

YOU FIT THE PATTERN

By Jane Haseldine

This is the 4th book in the *Julia Gooden Mystery* series, and readers will be thrilled to once again stand by the side of Detroit reporter, Julia Gooden, as she tracks down the ultimate villain: a serial killer who has become obsessed with her.

For those who do not yet know, Julia is a crime writer and has just finished up a book about her dear brother's childhood abduction, telling the world about how she found his killer after thirty years. Most writers would be celebrating the fact that their story is complete, but for Julia there's no time. She still has a job to do, and now her focus is on a psychopath whose MO is snatching female runners off the jogging trails of Detroit. Not only does he take them, but they are later found slaughtered in abandoned churches around the city.

With the aid of Detective Raymond Navarro, Julia dives head-first into this investigation. But the case becomes even more bizarre as she starts to see that these random murders are not that at all. In fact, they are perfectly planned and perfectly executed. What's worse is that the victims have a great many features and traits that match Julia precisely.

Soon this killer starts to contact Julia and threatens that the killing spree will become a great deal worse if she doesn't get in touch with him personally and make him into a "star" through her writing. But if you think that's all he has planned, you'd be mistaken. There is far more to this killer than meets the eye, and the more investigating Julia does, the more her own secrets come to light.

Readers will find themselves breathless at times during this book. Superbly written, it almost feels like the clock is ticking in your head, counting down to the moment where either Julia is victorious or ends up becoming this killer's final victim.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■

THE WIDOWS

By Jess Montgomery

This novel was a wonderful piece of historical fiction. Told from a woman's point of view living within a mining community dominated by men, it tears down stereotypes and makes for a powerful debut.

Lily Ross is the distinguished wife and widow of Sheriff Daniel Ross. She has been named acting sheriff until there's an election, but she's not the pushover the power elite thought she'd be. Then we have Marvena, a bootlegger and illiterate (but perceptive) woman whose brother, Tom, is the unfortunate patsy the mine owner has tried to frame for murder. The author states that although these two women are her own creation, both are loosely based on historical figures: Lily represents Maude Collins, the first female sheriff in Ohio, and Marvena was inspired by Mother Jones, who campaigned hard for the rights of women, and for workers and unions. What the two young women have in common is determination, and both women care about the community, the miners, their wives, their children, and the widows.

This book is well-researched, and the story is well-written and woven perfectly between the perspectives of both Lily and Marvena. It's a great book. I read it straight through, as it began strong and held attention until the end. The book draws you in quickly and keeps you reading. As much as I liked the characters, the plot and Montgomery's writing style are unforgettable.

Reviewed by Lauren Brabrook (LaurenReads1) ■



SUMMONED TO THIRTEENTH GRAVE

By Darynda Jones

Some series are special, with characters who sneak in and become part of the family over the years—in this case, the members are a kaleidoscope of eccentricity and they are the creation of the very talented, Darynda Jones.

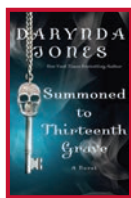
Grim Reaper, Charley Davidson, has gotten herself deported, but it's not as simple as that. She made a choice and they have consequences: she's now serving a hundred-year time-out off the earthly plane. Life on Earth, however, must go on and that's what Charley is worried about while she toils and tracks the years as they slip by. Will she ever see her daughter again? What about Uncle Bob and Cookie and the rest of her loved ones?

When she's thrust back to Earth, Charley's got a few questions and she's being tracked by the very man with those answers—her husband, Reyes. Is everyone alive? Safe? Just how long has she been away exactly? And what the hell has happened?

Albuquerque is now ground zero for demons pouring into our world. A hell dimension was opened—Reyes really didn't mean to do it—and they're definitely going to have to close the opening up regardless of the cost. Long-time fans may want to have a box of Kleenex nearby. Showdowns between good and evil aren't for the faint of heart and characters you love will be lost. I'm one who is definitely sad to see them go.

I will always love this series for its powerful originality and humor, and will continue to recommend it for a good long time. As a fan from the start, I'll be looking forward to whatever Darynda puts next on paper. Do yourself a huge favor, start your journey with Charley in book one and follow through to the explosive finale.

Reviewed by Shannon Raab ■



THE MALTA EXCHANGE

By Steve Berry

The word "genius" is necessary. Especially when it comes to the world of writing. I know, I know... at times the word is used too much. But, when it comes to the next Steve Berry thriller, "genius" is the only word that truly fits.

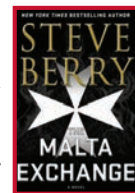
An adventure that leaves you breathless; a plot that pulls you in and does not let you go for 393 pages; an influx of historical characters; an invitation to look inside the Vatican. You name it, this book has it. The star of Berry's show is once again the awesome, Cotton Malone. This is the 14th tale for Malone, who has a past involving myths, threats, the Templars, and so much more.

This time around, the Pope has died. As it has always been, a conclave is being brought together in order to choose who the next Head of the Church will be. Cardinals from all over are on the move, traveling to the Vatican. There's only one small problem. You see, one Cardinal has disappeared. He has bolted from Rome, intent on reaching Malta; it is there that a document dating back to the 4th Century is hidden.

Malone is on his own adventure. Currently in Italy at Lake Como, he's hunting down letters written between Churchill and Mussolini that disappeared back in 1945. These letters are known by many, but they could change history and peoples' minds completely if they were ever found. Cotton is not alone, however. Someone else wants these letters, and when Cotton finds and then loses them, he discovers too late that he's stirred up the legendary Knights of Malta.

Once warriors, the knights are now a global humanitarian organization. Unfortunately, within their walls lies a group intent on altering the conclave that's about to begin. This is a ride you will never forget. From rogues to murderers to icons to secrets revealed... this is one story that needs to be on the big screen as fast as possible!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of "The Double-Edged Sword" published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of *Suspense Magazine* ■



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Featured Artist

Interview by Amy Lignor for *Suspense Magazine*

*Exploring the Power of
Argentinian Artist*

LAURA LEIVA

NOVEMBER RAIN

Model Credit: Jessica Truscot
<https://www.deviantart.com/faestock>

Being introduced to Laura Leiva's artwork is a moment in time that many would call "awe-inspiring." The rich beauty of it all takes over the screen of your computer and quickly proves she is one of the best, most creative artists in the business. Born and bred in Buenos Aires, Laura is proud of her country of Argentina, which comes as no surprise considering the vibrant, kind people and stunning scenery that can be found there.

Perhaps it is also a generational talent for Laura, considering that her grandmother was a drawing teacher who painted with oils; a person she loved to sit and draw with as she grew older. Moving on to photomanipulations in 2010, she increased her scope and found a truly "magical" place where she could spotlight her creations, as well as work with others in her industry.

Taking a break, Laura was kind enough to sit down with *Suspense Magazine* and offer our readers a peek into the mind, heart and soul of a true artist.

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): Living in Buenos Aires, Argentina, must offer you a tremendous amount of beauty when it comes to location and scenery. Is there a favorite place you love to go and create in your hometown? Does the scenery add to your desire to create such stunning images?

Laura Leiva (L.L.): *My country has a huge number of very beautiful places that I would love to visit, as well as the sea, the mountains, etc. I really like to go to the beach, but I would like to know better the mountains and the snow. You see, here in Buenos Aires it never snows, except once in 2007, which was something unusual and spectacular to me.*

I do not have a specific place, but it inspires me very much the stillness of the night, it helps me to concentrate much more. During the day I do not feel the same 'connection' that I do with the magic of the night and the stars all around me. Sometimes I would like to be in a field or on a mountain surrounded by nature, feel the breeze, or listen to the rain when it falls, and have my pencils to draw.

S. MAG.: Have you always been an artist? If not, when did it become a huge reality in your life that creating images and works were the path you wished to travel?

L.L.: *Yes, in a certain way, yes...I have liked to draw since I received use of reason. Perhaps it is by inheritance—my grandmother was a drawing teacher, she painted with oils. I liked painting with her when I was a child, my mother also liked photography and drawing. I always loved to draw; I could spend hours drawing, time does not exist when I do that. I really like traditional and digital art, or whatever I can create with my own hands, such as Christmas cards or birthday cards.*



I started to create photomanipulations in 2010. I did it only for a hobby, but when I met up with DeviantArt, it was something magical. I felt that this was my place where I wanted to learn and progress. The quality of artists on the site is impressive and there are many who I really admire.

S. MAG.: Tell us more about the craft/technology of digital art, such as photomanipulations. Is there one particular realm you like to work in more than others?

L.L.: *I believe that I was learning little by little, observing and experimenting. That is the only way to learn: by taking practice and experimenting.*

What I like most in particular is to work the details, such as lights, shadows, paint some areas. For me, the details are something essential in a work of art, where you can see the effort and enthusiasm of an artist.

S. MAG.: Would there perhaps be a particular medium you have not yet learned that you wish to in the future?

L.L.: *I would like to develop other styles, like surreal or futuristic. I think they are very interesting areas in which I would like to train, but at the same time I would also continue to develop in the digital art realm.*

S. MAG.: Do you work and collaborate with other artists? If so, can you tell our readers what it's like to be able to "bounce ideas" off one another? Does the support other artists and the groups you are a member of help you when it comes to creating a piece?

L.L.: *I have made some collabs with other artists and it is an experience that I highly recommend, because one can see the perspective of another artist and exchange opinions, even help them improve their art or vice versa. To be honest, I do not see real support for the artists. I do not mean the groups in which I am a member, but I mean in general.*

In general, I like to create what I feel, what my heart tells me at that moment. I let myself be led by myself. I have a friend, to whom I show everything I create, because I know that she will give me an honest opinion. That is truly what an artist is looking for.

S. MAG.: Your creations are unique, and I must say the "face" is an amazing feature that stands out when looking at your gallery. Do you feel that your love of artistry transcends onto the paper/computer and comes through the eyes of your subjects?

L.L.: *Thank you very much for your kind words, it really makes me happy that you mention it because it is what I like to do the most. Art is everything to me. I am sure that I could not live without creating something, without drawing everything that inspires me; with each image I try to capture that passion in the characters of my photomanipulations. I always want to give that magic, mysterious touch. Sometimes I feel envious of my characters, maybe because I wish the world were like my photomanipulations—full of magic.*

S. MAG.: Do you have a specific image or idea that you've been "sitting on," so to speak, that you would like to bring to life? And can you share with readers what some of your absolute favorites are when it comes to your work?

L.L.: *Yes! In fact, I have thousands of ideas that go around in my head and I hope that my life reaches me to create everything I have in mind. (haha) Especially two ideas, in particular. If I achieve to give them life digitally then that will make me very happy. They are ideas that I am still developing little by little in my mind; I would like to create a tribute to my parents who have already left this world.*

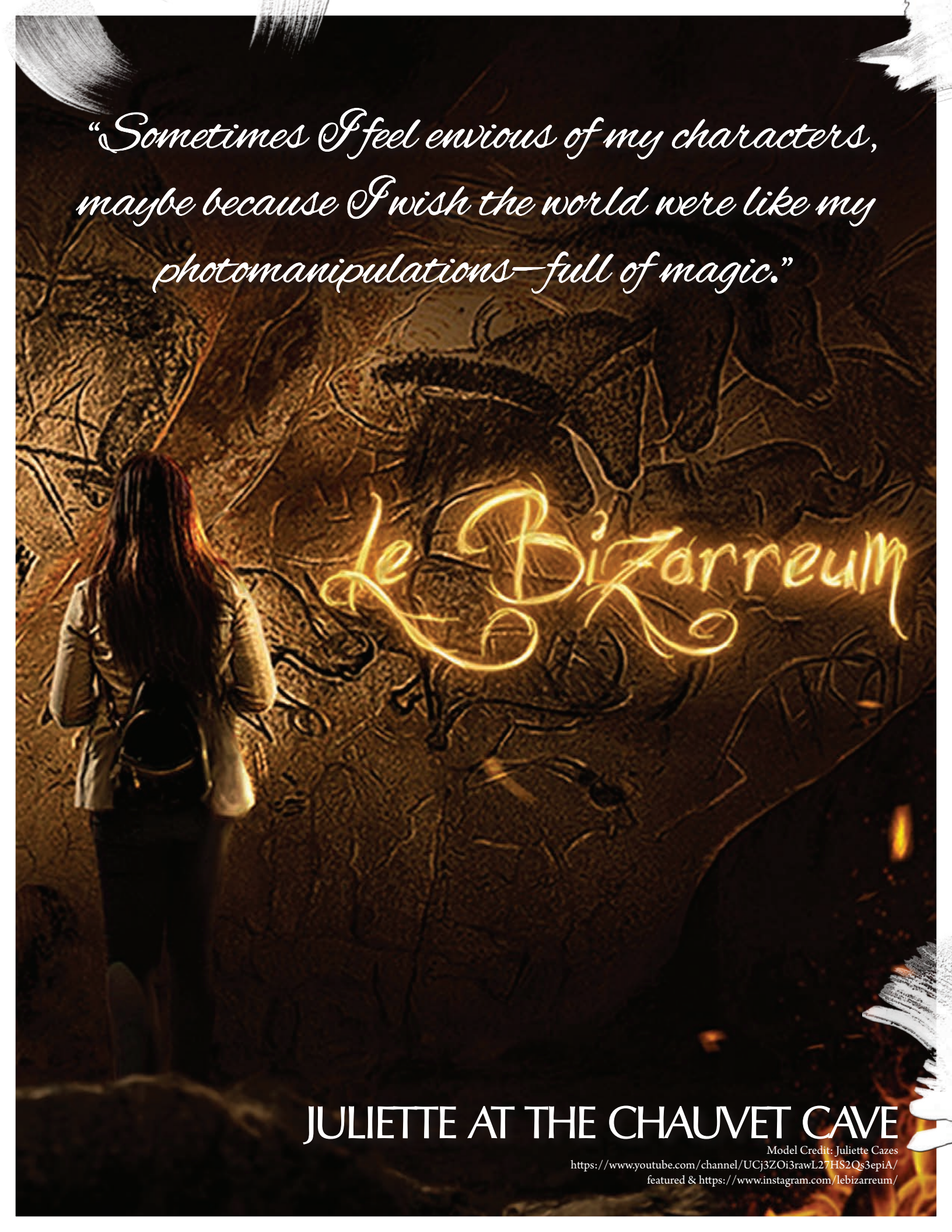
My favorite works are not many, in fact I am very critical with myself, but my favorites are 4 in number:

"Falsehood" was a photomanipulation I created in my head first and I could capture it 100%; it is an emotional style work.

"November Rain" was my first Daily Deviation (a mention given in DeviantArt). I love this because this particular work captured my love for rain.

"Laura Reborn," although it is a digital drawing, is a new beginning for me in art. I know it is not perfect, but I have surpassed myself and I can feel it in my soul. I am still amazed with the result.

And finally, "Welcome to My Jungle." Here I put together my love for drawing and my love for photomanipulations. It is an artwork that I like a lot. I feel that my art began to change for the better from that specific moment in time when this was created.



*"Sometimes I feel envious of my characters,
maybe because I wish the world were like my
photomanipulations—full of magic."*

Le Bizarreum

JULIETTE AT THE CHAUVET CAVE

Model Credit: Juliette Cazes

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCj3ZOi3rawL27HS2Qs3epiA/>
featured & <https://www.instagram.com/lebizarreum/>

S. MAG.: Do you have a favorite moment you can share with us? Perhaps, a moment with a fan or a mentor that you will never forget?

L.L.: *I have had a mentor to whom I will always be grateful; his name is Roger Dorico. He was my best mentor, he helped me and guided me, and was really patient with me. He is from Spain and his art is incredible (you should interview him). He is a source of inspiration and someone I really admire, not only for his art but for his human warmth.*

S. MAG.: Speak a little, if you will, about DeviantArt and how that particular site has added to your love of being an artist. Has it opened new worlds for you? Allowed you to meet others who share the same passion for the craft?

L.L.: *DeviantArt is my refuge, it is the place where I grew as an artist and the place where I like to show what my heart tells me. This is the place where I met/meet incredible people, which today are my friends and share the same passion for the digital traditional drawing, photomanipulations, crafts, everything that refers to art.*

S. MAG.: Is there one city or country that you long to visit? If so, is there a specific place you would love to capture in your work?

L.L.: *First, I would like to know my entire country, then visit Europe, countries like Italy, Spain, and Switzerland. I would like to reflect some Swiss landscape in one of my works, because I believe that its landscapes are dreamy.*

And this is one reviewer who believes those “dreamy” landscapes will turn “magical” when Laura has pen and paper (or computer) in her hands. It is no stretch to say that this artist’s parents and artistic grandmother would be very proud. After all, they played a huge part in creating this skilled artist with a passion for the craft that draws viewers in and creates lasting memories.

To see Laura’s artwork and contact her directly, she has provided the following sites where you can learn more about her and her craft: <https://www.deviantart.com/laurapablo.com>; <https://www.facebook.com/laurapablo600>; <https://society6.com/laurapablo>; <https://www.artstation.com/laurapablo>; lauraleivadeviantart@gmail.com. ■



SAMANTHA DOWNING'S

Debut Will Have Readers 'Running into Walls'

Interview by *Suspense Magazine*
Press Photo Credit: Jacqueline Dallimore 2018

It's always great for us to have someone new in *Suspense Magazine*; it's a joy to read about the successful journeys authors have taken. Samantha Downing is one such author who has just released her debut thriller, "My Lovely Wife." Samantha was kind enough to "open the door" to readers and allow them to get to know her even better through a story she wrote on her website: "Born in the Bay Area and now living in The Big Easy, I consider both to be home. Along the way I went to school, worked a few jobs, and learned a thing or two. Throughout it all, I wrote. I never studied writing, it's just a hobby that grew into a passion. A dozen books later, and now my first novel will be published in 2019. "My Lovely Wife" is not the first I've written; however, it's the first one I submitted (trust me, the other eleven are terrible).

"When I was a kid, my mom brought me to the library every two weeks. I checked out a stack of new books and new worlds. The best thing was becoming so absorbed in a book I couldn't put it down. I walked around with it in front of my face, I took it to the bathroom, the kitchen, the book came with me wherever I went. I tripped, ran into walls and stubbed my toes because I never watched where I was going.

"This is why I write. I want to tell stories that make people walk into walls."

We think you'll agree that Samantha Downing has done just that! Meet Samantha and her characters below:

Dexter meets Mr. and Mrs. Smith in this wildly compulsive debut thriller about a couple whose fifteen-year marriage has finally gotten too *interesting*...

Our love story is simple. I met a gorgeous woman. We fell in love. We had kids. We moved to the suburbs. We told each other our biggest dreams, and our darkest secrets. And then we got bored.

We look like a normal couple. We're your neighbors, the parents of your kid's friend, the acquaintances you keep meaning to get dinner with.

We all have our secrets to keeping a marriage alive.

Ours just happens to be getting away with murder.

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): "My Lovely Wife" is your debut, and we'd love to hear about it!

Samantha Downing (S.D.): "My Lovely Wife" is a psychological thriller about how far people will go to spice up a boring marriage. It's been described as Dexter meets Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and I have to agree with that! This couple may be your neighbors, the parents of your child's friends, or people you work with. Chances are, you don't know any of them as well as you



DEBUT AUTHOR

think you do (at least not in my suburb!).

S. MAG.: Many writers have books that never see the light of day. Was “My Lovely Wife” your first stab at writing? How was the process of finally getting through it?

S.D.: *I’ve been writing for about 20 years. It’s been my hobby, the thing that keeps me (relatively) sane in this crazy world. Finishing the first book is always the hardest, and the first time I did I had a great sense of accomplishment. “My Lovely Wife” is the twelfth novel I’ve written, although the first to be published.*

S. MAG.: When you set out to start the book, did the storyline or the characters come to you first?

S.D.: *The characters, definitely. The first chapter comes to me first and it stays that way. I don’t like changing it, and whenever I do it turns out worse! The first chapter in this book is almost the same as when I first wrote it.*

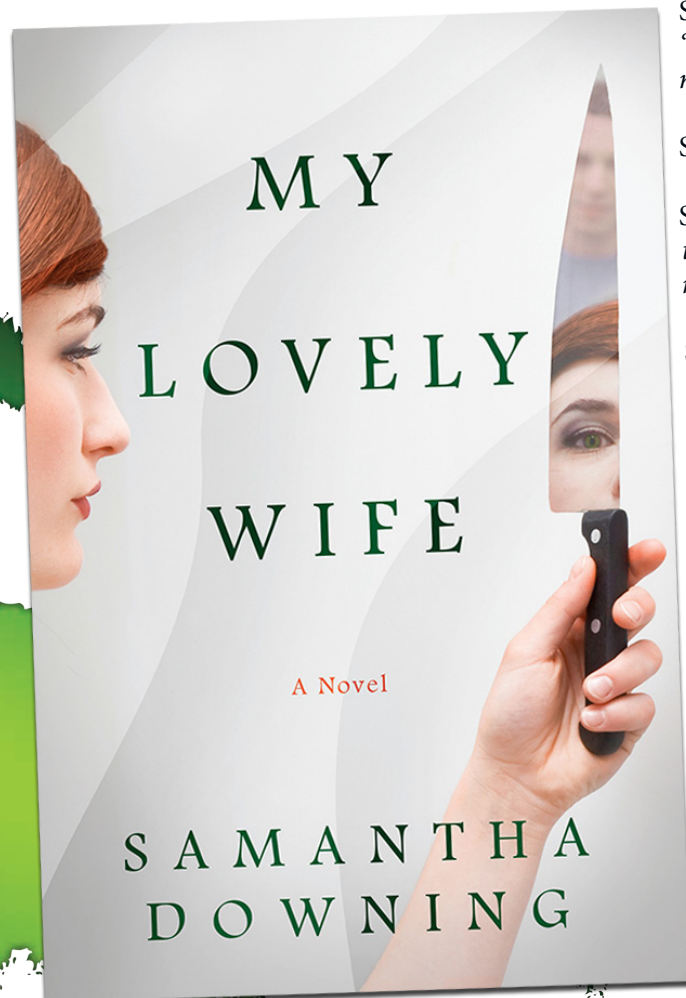
S. MAG.: What character in “My Lovely Wife” surprised you in having a bigger voice than you thought they would?

S.D.: *Trista is a friend of the couple in the book, and she ended up having a much larger role in the story than I originally thought. She actually goes through quite a change in the book and that’s always fascinating. Even though I’m the one writing the story, I don’t always know the path each character will take until they take it.*

S. MAG.: What was your biggest challenge in finishing the book?

S.D.: *Trying to give it the right ending. In a psychological thriller, that can make or break the whole book.*

S. MAG.: Do you have any superstitions when you write?



S.D.: *No superstitions at all, unless you count coffee! I’m more of a “just write” kind of person. The place, the time, and the setting don’t matter at all; otherwise, I’d never get anything done.*

S. MAG.: What one piece of advice did you receive starting out?

S.D.: *It was along the lines of, “Don’t try to reinvent the wheel.” I have to remind myself of that sometimes. I’m not trying to create a brand new way of storytelling, I’m trying to write a great story.*

S. MAG.: Will this novel be part of a series or will it be a standalone?

S.D.: *This is a standalone novel.*

S. MAG.: What is your favorite word and least favorite, and why?

S.D.: *My favorite word is Lagniappe (pronounced lan-yap). This word is common in New Orleans and it means “a little something extra.” My least favorite word is Adulthood, because it’s stupid and unnecessary.*

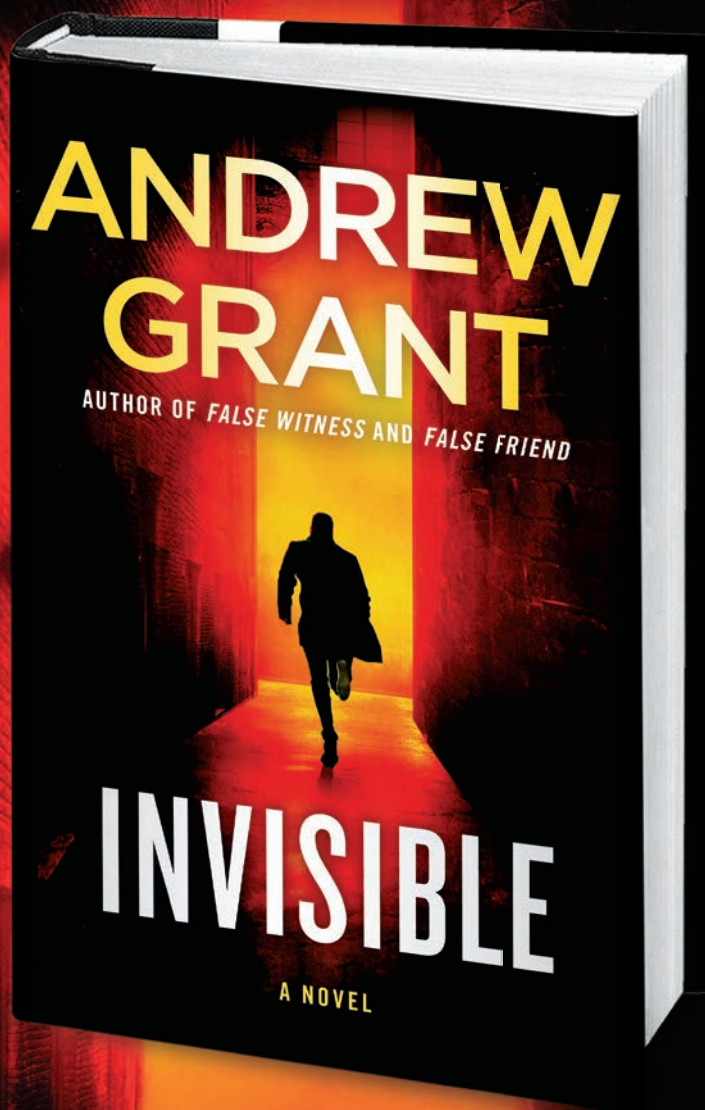
S. MAG.: What can fans expect to see from you in the future?

S.D.: *More books that are creepy, twisted, and completely bonkers!*

Take some time to check out this great debut! For more information on Samantha and her upcoming projects, visit www.samanthadowning.com. We, at Suspense, can’t wait to see what’s next. ■

MEET PAUL MCGRATH.

An army veteran and intelligence agent goes undercover as a janitor at a Federal courthouse to pursue his own brand of justice in a thriller that's part John Grisham, part Robert Crais.



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NANCY BILYEAU

Takes Readers Back to 18th Century England in "The Blue"

Interview by *Suspense Magazine*
Press Photo Credit: Jacqueline Dallimore 2018



After coming off the great success Nancy enjoyed with her historical trilogy, she decided to create a standalone book called, "The Blue." Still taking readers on an extraordinary historical journey, this new title heads back in time to 18th Century England.

Nancy's talents have been put to great use, being an integral member of the staffs belonging to: *InStyle*, *DuJour*, *Rolling Stone*, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Good Housekeeping*. Currently the Deputy Editor for the Center on Media, Crime and Justice at City University of New York, she is also a regular contributor to *Town & Country*, *Purist*, and *The Vintage News*.

A native of the Midwest, she earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan. "The Crown," her first novel (and an *Oprah* pick) was published in 2012; the sequel, "The Chalice," followed in 2013. The final in the trilogy, "The Tapestry," was published by Touchstone in 2015. The books have also been published by Orion in the United Kingdom and seven other countries.

Here's a taste of... "The Blue":

In eighteenth century London, porcelain is the most seductive of commodities; fortunes are made and lost upon it. Kings do battle with knights and knaves for possession of the finest pieces and the secrets of their manufacture.

For Genevieve Planché, an English-born descendant of Huguenot refugees, porcelain holds far less allure; she wants to be an artist, a painter of international repute, but nobody takes the idea of a female artist seriously in London. If only she could reach Venice.

When Genevieve meets the charming Sir Gabriel Courtenay, he offers her an opportunity she can't refuse; if she learns the secrets of porcelain, he will send her to Venice. But in particular, she must learn the secrets of the colour blue...

The ensuing events take Genevieve deep into England's emerging industrial heartlands, where not only does she learn about porcelain, but also about the art of industrial espionage.

With the heart and spirit of her Huguenot ancestors, Genevieve faces her challenges head on. But how much is she willing to suffer in pursuit and protection of the colour blue?

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): Tell readers a little about your latest release, "The Blue."

Nancy Bilyeau (N.B.): *It's an espionage story, a historical novel, and a suspenseful read. The main character is a Huguenot painter who infiltrates an English porcelain factory to obtain the formula for a new transcendent shade of blue, but her plan goes awry.*

S. MAG.: When writing "The Blue," set in the 18th Century, how much thought did you put in to making sure the setting was a character in and of itself?

N.B.: *Place is enormously important in my novels. I want readers to not just see a setting, but to hear sounds, feel the texture of all that's around—be able to inhale the odors deeply.*

S. MAG.: What are the challenges when it comes to writing about a time that you and your readers never lived through?

N.B.: *You have to learn not only the most important things going on during when the book is set—in the case of "The Blue," the Seven Year War—but also what people would wear and eat, how they'd travel. But it has to be subtly done, no history lessons.*

S. MAG.: What is at the root of Genevieve Planché?

N.B.: *She's talented and smart, but she's also a prickly young woman and deeply frustrated over not being able to pursue her dream of being a serious artist, so she does something not too ethical. Many, many consequences come about from that act.*

S. MAG.: What secondary character in "The Blue" ended up having a bigger voice than you originally thought?

N.B.: *I would have to say, the chemist who developed "the blue," Mr. Thomas Sturbridge. He is brilliant, funny, quirky, and stubborn. Scientists were quite literally the rock stars of the 18th century, and as the character took off, he grew in importance.*

S. MAG.: For fans of your previous books, will they see a slightly different Nancy Bilyeau within "The Blue?"

N.B.: *Very much so. Different century; different stakes. And there's also some of my own family background in a book for the first time, being that I'm descended from a Huguenot immigrant.*

S. MAG.: When going through the writing process, do you have any superstitions?

N.B.: *One. I don't want to talk about my book much till it's finished, but everyone wants to drag it out of me!*

S. MAG.: Was it the story or the characters that set you on the path to write "The Blue"?

N.B.: *In the beginning, it was the story. I wanted to write a porcelain espionage plot.*

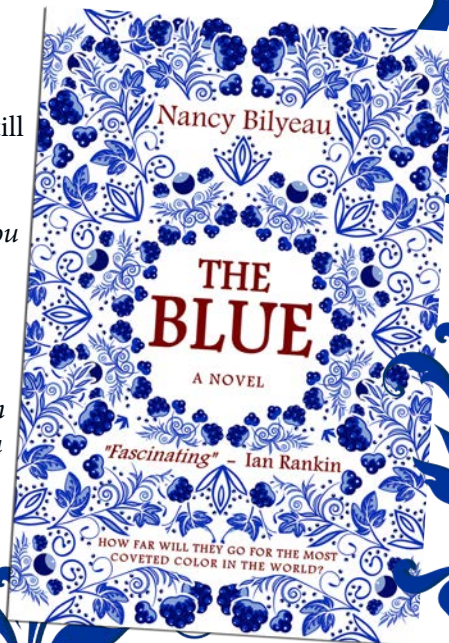
S. MAG.: What is the one piece of advice you received as a young writer that you still utilize today?

N.B.: *As a screenwriter I was told to be 'okay' with a rough first draft: a "vomit draft." You have to jump in and just write it!*

S. MAG.: What can fans expect to see from you in the future?

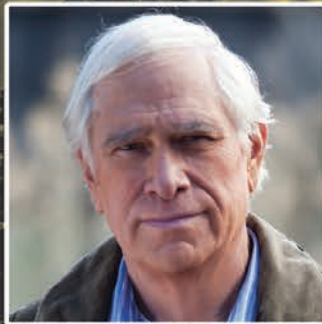
N.B.: *Another story set in a tense and momentous turning point in the past, filled with art and populated by complex human characters, written with atmospheric touches, a bit of romance, and some big, unforgettable twists.*

We would like to thank Nancy for the great interview. To stay current on her upcoming releases, check out her website at www.nancybilyeau.com. ■



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LARS KEPLER

Brings a New “Stalker” to the Pages

Interview by *Suspense Magazine*
Press Photo Credit: Ewa-Marie Rundquist



In the U.S., Lars Kepler has just released their fifth book in the *Joona Linna* series with “Stalker.” Being a Swedish writing team, Kepler has gained some ground in the United States and brought their unique style of thriller to American readers.

Lars Kepler is the pseudonym of critically-acclaimed husband and wife team, Alexandra Coelho Ahndoril and Alexander Ahndoril, authors of the #1 international bestselling *Joona Linna* series. With seven installments to date, the series has sold 13 million copies in 40 languages. The Ahndorils were both established writers before they adopted the pen name, with each having published several acclaimed novels separately.

Alexander and Alexandra are keeping all this success at arm’s-length. In their world, they feel much the same as ever: they still write at home, they love books, suspense, and strong emotions. At this time they are working on the eighth book in this compelling series, which means their world of fans can assuredly look forward to more from Lars Kepler in the coming years.

Here’s a look at “Stalker”:

The Swedish National Crime Unit receives a video of a young woman in her home, clearly unaware that she’s being watched. Soon after the tape is received, the woman’s body is found horrifically mutilated. With the arrival of the next, similar video, the police understand that the killer is toying with them, warning of a new victim, knowing there’s nothing they

can do. Detective Margot Silverman is put in charge of the investigation, and soon asks Detective Joona Linna for help. Linna, in turn, recruits Erik Maria Bark, the hypnotist and expert in trauma with whom Linna’s worked before. Bark is leery of forcing people to give up their secrets. But this time, Bark is the one hiding things.

Years before, he had put a man away for an eerily similar crime, and now he’s beginning to think that an innocent man may be behind bars—and a serial killer still on the loose....

Now, *Suspense Magazine* is thrilled to bring you our exclusive interview with the bestselling writing team, Lars Kepler.

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): Tell us about your latest book, “Stalker.”

Lars Kepler (L.K.): *The story starts with a film being sent in to the police. Someone has surreptitiously filmed a woman through her windows and then uploaded the clip to YouTube. The next day the woman is found murdered in her home. When a new film is sent in, the investigators panic. They rush to identify the woman as the clock ticks. It’s an impossible task. She’s instead found by her husband when he returns home from a business trip. The husband is so shocked that he begins to clean the entire house, vacuuming up the blood and putting the dead woman to bed. The crime scene technicians that arrive at the scene are unable to properly compare it to the first crime scene. The husband might have seen something before he started cleaning, a clue that will lead them to the killer. Hypnotist Erik Maria Bark is hired by the police to help the traumatized witness remember. But what the husband tells him during deep hypnosis makes Erik lie to the police.*

S. MAG.: Who is Joona Linna, and how has he changed throughout the series?

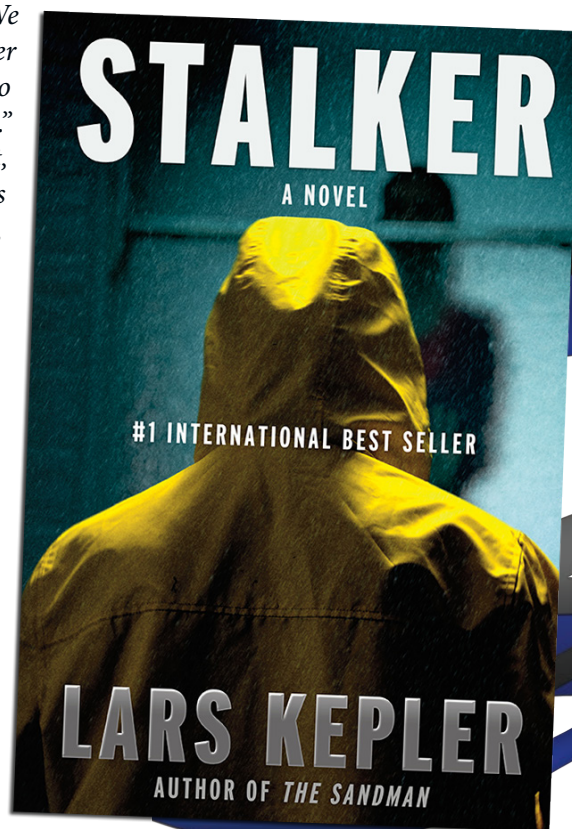
L.K.: *Joona is somewhat of an underdog since he’s part of the Finnish minority in Sweden. His father was a police officer who was killed in the line of duty. After serving in the military, Joona was recruited to a special corps where he was trained in urban warfare and close combat. He left his position in the military and enrolled in the Police Academy, just like his father. Joona has been an inspector at the Swedish National Operations Department and is probably one of Scandinavia’s most successful investigators. A lot of people say that he’s got a sixth sense, but in truth he’s just good at putting things he’s observed together in unexpected, but logical, patterns. His most dominant trait is his empathic ability; he feels for the victims and their loved ones. But his empathy also enables him to imagine how a perpetrator thinks and feels.*

As authors, we meet Joona every day, year after year, and yet we’re still curious about him. He lives a life parallel to ours, and changes continually as contemporary society influences him, along with what he experiences. Even if every book can be read on its own, Joona’s story has taken on a kind of epic format to us. As long as we feel like we want to know more about him, we’ll continue writing this series.

S. MAG.: “Stalker” is the fifth book; what surprises have you come across as the series has progressed?

L.K.: *There’s always lots of surprises—that’s why it’s so much fun to write. We didn’t, for example, know that the hypnotist from our debut book would ever return, not until we began writing “Stalker.” It was a happy surprise. Come to think of it, we were given another surprise when we wrote “The Hypnotist.” We used our own apartment as the model for Erik Maria Barks’ apartment, but after the scary events in the book, Alexandra began having nightmares and had to get up every night to check that the door was locked. In the end, we had to move.*

“To a writer, that ‘extra special thing’ about the U.S. might be that its readers are generally quite used to, and open to, entertainment—which means that more is required of you, the author.”



S. MAG.: When you start to write a book, do you go into the process with a preconceived idea of how you want it to go? How long is it before the characters take over?

L.K.: *Ha, ha. You obviously know what it's like! For us, it's necessary to have the entire plot ready before we sit down at our computers to write. We need it in order to then begin our "jamming sessions." It usually takes months before we're entirely sure what the story will be. We write each character's small scenes on paper notes, which we then put up on a wall to get an overview of what the plot is and continue to work on it. But when we finally sit down and write, something happens. It's magic...that thing that all writers love. Everything comes alive, characters develop wills of their own and don't care a whit about our plot. We try to direct them, but when we can't, we have to return to the wall of notes and rethink things.*

S. MAG.: What character in "Stalker" surprised you the most in having a larger voice than you originally thought they would?

L.K.: *The fallen priest, Rocky Kyrklund, who still lives on in our hearts. He was far more complex than we thought he'd be.*

S. MAG.: What differences do you see in European fans compared to fans in the U.S.?

L.K.: *To a writer, that 'extra special thing' about the U.S. might be that its readers are generally quite used to, and open to, entertainment—which means that more is required of you, the author. But when we compare the reactions from readers, the similarities are still bigger than the differences. Whether we live in India, China, Sweden, or Brazil, we love to be presented with a mystery that is solved piece by piece.*

S. MAG.: Is there a line you won't cross when writing? How far will you go to push the tension?

L.K.: *We haven't drawn any definite lines. We write about what we need to write about, what engages us, and what we're passionate about. We talk about it a lot, of course, and have come to the conclusion that the final line is drawn by the amount of research we're willing to do. Sometimes it gets really tough when you meet real victims, real suffering—sometimes it will stop there. Research is extremely important to us. We always do it together, talk to police and doctors, visit crime scenes, prisons, test weapons, and read autopsy reports.*

S. MAG.: The beginning of the story or the end: which is tougher to write? And which do you think has the most impact on the reader?

L.K.: *It's two completely different things, but the end is always more demanding. On the one hand, the beginning is supposed to immerse the reader and create a strong forward momentum. But the ending has to see all the puzzle pieces put into the right place, and the logic of the story is put to the test; not to mention that it has to feel like a satisfying finale to the journey you've undertaken. You should be happy and filled with energy after finishing a thriller.*

S. MAG.: Do you secretly laugh when readers email you or tell you things like: "Thanks for keeping me up all night and scaring the hell out of me"?

L.K.: *We're overjoyed when we get feedback of that kind. It means our readers feel the same thing we do, that the connection between reader and author is working. Even we get scared by our stories.*

S. MAG.: What can fans expect to see from you in the future?

L.K.: *There are two more finished novels about Joona Linna, already published in almost all of Europe. The next book is called "The Rabbit Hunter" and the one after that is "Lazarus." Right now we're sitting in a snowy Stockholm, working on the eighth book in the series, and enjoying being back in our fictive world.*

We would like to thank Lars (Alexander and Alexandra) for taking the time to speak with us. We always love to bring authors over to the States who have a unique approach to a suspense/thriller book. For more information on this amazing writing duo, please visit www.larskepler.com. ■

The JFK Plot Thickens:

MARK SHAW

on Dorothy Kilgallen's "Denial of Justice"

Interview by John B. Valeri *Suspense Magazine*

Press Photo Credit: Provided by Author



Mark Shaw is an investigative reporter and the bestselling author of more than twenty books. These include, "The Poison Patriarch" and "The Reporter Who Knew Too Much," both of which are entrenched in the still-enigmatic JFK assassination and its aftermath. The latter, published in 2016, reignited interest in the mysterious death of intrepid journalist and *What's My Line* TV star, Dorothy Kilgallen, who famously proclaimed that she'd blow the case sky high before being felled by drug overdose.

Since the publication of "The Reporter Who Knew Too Much"—which is currently in development as a film project—Shaw, a former criminal defense attorney and frequent legal analyst, has continued his advocacy of Kilgallen. Not only has this elicited crucial new evidence and witness reports pertaining to the suspicious activity surrounding her death, but a public outcry that led the Manhattan District Attorney's Office to re-investigate the case, albeit with what many consider to be unsatisfactory results.

This new information—which includes extracts from the long-lost transcripts of the Jack Ruby trial—is collected in Shaw's recently released book, "Denial of Justice," which continues to make the case that Kilgallen was silenced before she could expose the plots that were afoot in Dallas in November, 1963.

Recently, Shaw reflected on his decades-long crusade for justice, the progress that's been made, and the work that's yet to be done—as well as the strength of Kilgallen's character, which continues to inspire a generation of young Americans

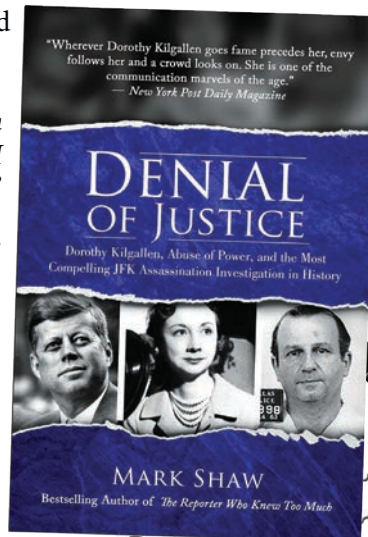
who want to be "like Dorothy"...

John B. Valeri (J.B.V.): "Denial of Justice" is your second book on Dorothy Kilgallen's triumphant life and tragic death. In what ways does it work as both a follow-up narrative for returning readers and a standalone story for those who are new to the topic?

Mark Shaw (M.S.): *The book is written for those who read "The Reporter Who Knew Too Much" and those who did not do so. It was born of information about Dorothy's life and times and her death from thousands of emails I received after TRWKTU was published. About 90% of DOJ is new material, especially regarding the exposure for the first time in a book of what I believe are the most important JFK assassination documents in history—the Jack Ruby trial transcripts. Eyewitness testimony embedded into DOJ will shock readers and change the way the assassination is viewed for years to come. It also shows why Dorothy was so dangerous to those who had masterminded the assassination and those who covered it up.*

J.B.V.: As noted above, you came into possession of the transcripts from Jack Ruby's trial following the publication of "The Reporter Who Knew Too Much." How did these wind up in your hands, and what do they reveal in support of conspiracy and cover-up in both the Kennedy and Oswald killings?

M.S.: *Again, an attorney in California called and said, "I have a gift for you Mr. Shaw," and that turned out to be the 2000+ page Ruby trial transcripts. It took me two weeks to scour them and pick out the most important excerpts for DOJ. Without question, the testimony indicates a plot to kill JFK. (I do not use the word "conspiracy." It lessens the impact of the testimony.) This,*



more than anything, is my contribution to history and I strongly urge people to read the transcripts. I also spoke a great deal about them and Dorothy in a presentation I gave to the prestigious Commonwealth Club of San Francisco. Here is the link: [Mark Shaw's "Denial of Justice" Kilgallen/JFK Presentation at Commonwealth Club of San Francisco.](#)

J.B.V.: You also wrote "The Poison Patriarch," about how Joseph Kennedy's betrayals unwittingly resulted in JFK's assassination. What initially drew you to this topic, and why did Dorothy Kilgallen ultimately become the object of your focus?

M.S.: I have now written four books dealing with the JFK assassination, and without being too much of a braggart, I believe I know more about it than any person alive today. Why? Because I first learned of information during the writing of a biography of Melvin Belli, Ruby's attorney, whom I practiced law with in the 1980s. Through research for that book, I heard about Dorothy and her 18 month investigation of JFK's death for the first time, and with her guidance from the hereafter, I have been able to string together the most plausible accounts of what happened in Dallas and why back in 1963. The key was a quote from one of Belli's friends after Dorothy died, "They've killed Dorothy; now they will go after Ruby." I could not get that quote out of my mind and I began to investigate her mysterious death in 1965, through the storytelling method of a true crime murder mystery.

J.B.V.: Despite the fact that Ms. Kilgallen's death has not been ruled a homicide, there is compelling evidence to support foul play. What, in your opinion, are the most incontrovertible facts to buttress this contention?

M.S.: Staged death scene for sure, no investigation at all, bogus autopsy report concluding accidental death (three barbs in her system, not one), eyewitness testimony regarding threats to her life from her two hairdressers and friends (those videotaped interviews and all

things about Dorothy can be found at www.thedorothykilgallenstory.org), etc. Also new testimony from Dorothy's butler's daughter in DOJ regarding what happened on the day she died, etc.

J.B.V.: Your last book resulted in the Manhattan DA's Office reputedly conducting a re-investigation, though the result was unsatisfactory. How do you plan to advocate for justice moving forward—and what can interested parties do to keep the case alive?

M.S.: I am still fighting the NY DA's office to get Dorothy's death re-investigated, including sending a fresh Freedom of Information request for documents and witness statements to them on 1/15/2019. I will never quit trying to get Dorothy the justice she deserves based on the DA's obstruction of justice, and if anyone wants to support my effort, I would appreciate them contacting DA Cyrus Vance, Jr. and demanding justice for Dorothy.

J.B.V.: Dorothy Kilgallen was a remarkable woman for her time, and her death can be considered a cautionary tale. How does her legacy resound today, and in what ways do you view the circumstances of her death as being relevant to the current cultural and political climate?

M.S.: Dorothy was a journalist and investigative reporter of integrity, a woman who searched for the truth about the JFK assassination and ended up losing her life for doing so. She is an inspiration for young journalists who demand answers to government corruption regardless of political connections, who won't let the government hide the truth, who abhor fake news, who go out and get the facts and then provide readers with those facts and let them make up their own minds, instead of throwing out flashy headlines and making the facts fit them. If people want to see the kind of respect Dorothy had, they should visit the Kilgallen website noted above and look at the photo of her in the courtroom at the famous Dr. Sam Sheppard murder trial. All of the other reporters who

surround her, idolize this remarkable woman. I can't tell you how many people have told me, "I wish we had reporters like Dorothy Kilgallen today."

J.B.V.: "The Reporter Who Knew Too Much" was optioned for film. Can you tell us where this project currently stands?

M.S.: I was told the other day that the producers, the Brothers Dowdle, who produced WACO last year for the Paramount Network, are completing the script for a major motion picture with the hope that the film will be a "go" by the middle of the year.

While Dorothy's name disappeared for more than 50 years after her tragic death, I am proud to have become her "voice" and re-introduce her to those who forgot her, and thousands who never even knew she existed.

So many readers of both "The Reporter Who Knew Too Much" and "Denial of Justice" have contacted me and expressed their admiration for her remarkable career and her integrity, especially young women—some aspiring journalists, who are inspired to be "like Dorothy."

When the film or TV series is produced and aired, I have no doubt millions will fall in love with Dorothy while being incensed as to how she was denied justice, then and now. She was certainly a woman of courage, a role model for women of all ages.

J.B.V.: Tell us: What are you working on now?

M.S.: My fight with the NY DA's office for sure, and if they will not cooperate and give Dorothy her justice, I will take this to the NY Attorney General, then to the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of NY, and then on to the higher courts if necessary. At the same time, I keep an eye out for another book about injustice wherever it may be happening in this crazy world of ours.

To learn more about Mark and his books, head to <https://markshawbooks.com>. ■

THE CASE MAY BE COLD, BUT THINGS ARE ABOUT TO HEAT UP

Forensic genealogist Willow Anderson is following in her late grandfather's footsteps in her quest for answers about a baby abducted from a hospital more than twenty years ago, but when someone makes an attempt on Willow's life to keep her from discovering the truth, ex-FBI agent—and ex-flame—Austin McKade readily offers protection to the woman he should never have let get away.

Together they'll follow where the clues lead them, even if it means Austin must face the past he's spent much of his life trying to forget—and put Willow's tender heart at risk.

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From Semi-Pro Skateboarder to Horror Writer: **MEET SHAUN MEEKS**

Interview by Weldon Burge *Suspense Magazine*
Press Photo Credit: Provided by Author



Shaun Meeks was born and raised in Toronto, and still lives there with his partner, Mina LaFleur. They run the business L'Atelier de LaFleur, which specializes in hand-finished couture corsetry and accoutrements. Shaun was formerly a semi-pro skateboarder. Now he enjoys sharing his nightmares in his writing—and scaring the hell out of his readers! His short stories have been published in many magazines and anthologies, including: *Haunted Path*, *Dark Eclipse*, *Zombies Gone Wild*, *A Feast of Frights*, “Insidious Assassins,” “Someone Wicked,” “Zippered Flesh 2,” and “Zippered Flesh 3.” He is also the author of the books, “The Gate at Lake Drive,” “Down on the Farm,” and “Earthbound and Down.”

Weldon Burge (W.B.): Thanks, Shaun, for hanging out with us for a few minutes. To say you have a passion for horror is an understatement. What was the first horror novel that you found truly frightening?

Shaun Meeks (S.M.): *I was in grade four, and I went to the corner store near my house to pick up some new comics. But when I saw this book cover—all silver, gray, and black, with a faceless head on it—I had to pick it up. I already knew who Stephen King was at the time, but I had never heard of “The Shining” before. The movie was something I hadn’t even known about, but when I read what the book was about, I was sold, and*

luckily I had enough money in my pocket to buy it.

I started to read it, tearing through the pages so fast. I think part of what scared me about the story was how I saw bits of my own father in Jack Torrance, a man fighting his demons and losing. I brought the book with me to school and was sent to the principal’s office. They used words like “pornographic” and “disgusting trash,” and threw my copy out. Luckily, the local library also had it and I took it out from there, but only read it at home. I had already been into monster movies and horror things before then, but this was the first horror novel I read that gave me nightmares.

W.B.: Your novel, “The Gate at Lake Drive,” is a great monster story. (And the cover is super, too!) What’s your recipe for a memorable monster?

S.M.: *It really depends on what you’re going for. Making one scary—the stuff of nightmares—is just fun. To do that, I usually think of what frightens people. Deep-sea life, spiders, demons, the dark—these are things I’ll splice into a monster so that, on a deep level, the elements strike a chord of fear within the reader. I love the idea of monsters with slimy tentacles, coarse hairs, a multitude of eyes, and a nest of sharp, deformed teeth. The trick is making the reader imagine what it’d feel like to be face-to-face with the monster. The idea of feeling the repulsive skin touching your own, the overwhelming odor of rot that lingers on the thing’s*

flesh—that's what I want readers to be thinking about as they read.

But what about the monsters that truly hate or can't change what they are; the ones that you pity? I enjoy playing with that theme—the monster that is hunted and feared, yet proves to be the character with which the readers relate. The humans who shun or hunt the creature prove to be the real monsters. Having a reader relate to the monster isn't always easy, but it's great when it works!

W.B.: So, which is the better monster: *Alien* or Carpenter's *The Thing*?

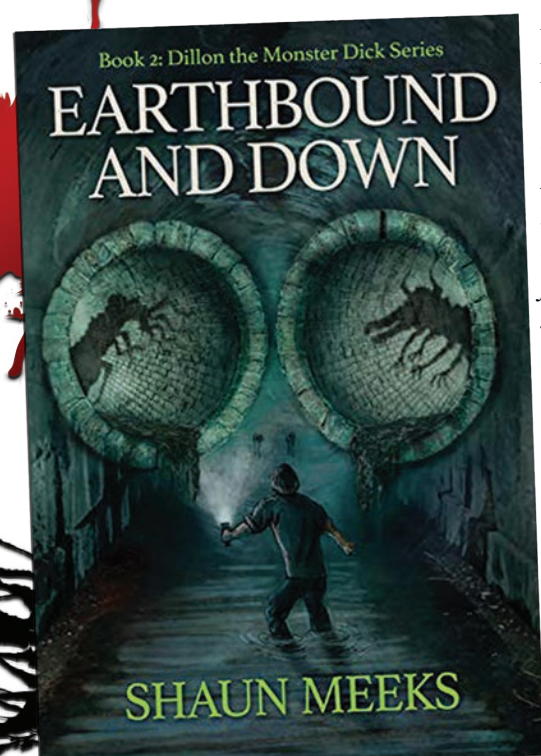
S.M.: For me, without a doubt, it would be Carpenter's *The Thing*. When I saw this movie for the first time, alone in my dark house (everyone else sleeping), I was terrified. There is nothing simple or easy about the creatures in *The Thing*, nor is it the actual monster effects that make it better overall. The idea of sitting next to a monster, hidden as a friend, and not knowing who you can trust, is the true greatness of the horror in this. Yet, when the monster is revealed, each time looking different and freaky in a Lovecraft sort of way, the sheer imagination of them raises the terror to an all new level. No scene in *Alien* can come close to comparing to the dog or head spider scene.

W.B.: Some of your work hints at Lovecraftian themes. How has Lovecraft impacted your fiction? Why do you think Lovecraft has such an appeal today?

S.M.: My introduction to Lovecraft didn't come from his books; it came from Stuart Gordon's movies (mainly *Re-Animator* and *From Beyond*). Those movies, and a few others, eventually led me to his books. When I started with Lovecraft's stories, I started at the beginning, and was not as hooked on them as I was his later work. I think, like all of us, Lovecraft grew into a much better writer the longer he was at it. His themes on fear, isolation, change, and the unknown are the things that really appealed to me and helped to shape some of what I write. They are simple themes that are universal, and I think that's why they still stand today.

W.B.: What horror novel by another writer do you wish you had written...and why?

S.M.: If there was only one I had to choose of the many I wish I'd written, I think it would have to be "Something Wicked This Way Comes" by Ray Bradbury. I know this is not the scariest book, or one of the most horrific books ever, but for me, it was a book I read at a young age that stuck with me throughout the years. I remember the first time I read the book, a few weeks before Halloween, and I felt as though I was in the story. I would lie out on the grass by my house reading it, and hoping the stories I had started to write by that time would be as perfect as Bradbury's were. I still hold on to those hopes. Fingers crossed.



W.B.: Besides Stephen King, who is your favorite author? Maybe some unsung horror hero?

S.M.: One of my favorite horror writers I discovered a while back is Gemma Files. Not only is she a local writer from my hometown of Toronto, but she writes the kind of horror I love. I think the first story I ever read of hers had appeared in one of the editions of "The Mammoth Book of Best New Horror," which led me to look for more of her work. The one that I picked up first was a collection of her short stories called, "Kissing Carrion." There are some real favorites in there that spark my own drive to write.

Another favorite would be Christian A. Larsen. He is someone I started reading in 2012 when we both appeared in the "Zippered Flesh 2" anthology. I loved his story, *The Little Things*. It seemed like every anthology accepting my stories, he was in as well, which had me reading more and more of his work. Not one of his stories disappointed. When he released his first novel, "Losing Touch," I was there on release day to grab my copy. I find some writers are good at short stories, some excel in novel or novella length. With "Losing Touch," Chris showed he had the skill to do both, keeping the reader engaged from word one to the end.

W.B.: What horror cliché or trope bugs the crap out of you?

S.M.: One of the first ones that comes to mind is any movie where there's a creature, especially zombies or vampires, and someone in the group gets bitten and hides it from everyone, only to turn at just the wrong moment. Does anyone not see that coming a mile away every time this cliché is used? I think that's what made a movie like 28 Days Later so unique. The change happens so fast, there's never a chance to try and hide it.

I think the only other one that is used way too much for a cheap scare is the "is he/she dead" cliché. The monster/killer/alien is apparently killed, but instead of continuing to beat, stab, or shoot it, they stop, walk over to make sure it's dead only to have the baddy get up and wreak more havoc. Every time I read or watch one of those scenes, I just imagine how I wouldn't stop until there was no doubt the thing was dead.

W.B.: Let's talk about short fiction for a minute. You've published a collection of your short stories, "At the Gates of Madness." Your stories have also been published in anthologies, including many published by Smart Rhino Publications. What's your strategy for writing a short story?

S.M.: When I'm writing a new story, most days I have no idea what it's going to be about or how it'll end. Often, all I have is an opening, just a line, or maybe a full paragraph—and the story is born from there. People think that everything I write is plotted and outlined well in advance. It's really not.

When I wrote Treats, which appears in "At the Gates of Madness," the story was simply going to be about an older man on Halloween night, reflecting on his life and his loneliness. A group of vicious teens were going to torment the man until he snapped, and he would attack those harassing him. What I ended up writing was a bizarre, very different monster story that many have said is one of the vilest things they've ever read. I remember, when writing the story, that it took a sharp turn. I didn't see that coming.

From time to time, I write something for a themed anthology. Taut, which appeared in "Zippered Flesh 2," is a good example of that. I knew the theme was about body modification, so I sat down intending to write a story about suspension. That was as much as I knew when I started. I had no idea who the characters would be, where the story was going, or how it would end. That's the way I prefer to write a short story—allowing the story to become what it wants to be.

W.B.: With all that in mind, what would you advise a new fiction writer concerning tailoring a tale?

S.M.: Whenever a newer writer asks me for advice on writing a short story, I tell them four things.

Number one: Grab the reader right from the start. Whether it's jumping into the action or simply writing something that's striking, you need to give them a good punch right off the bat. Hook 'em and reel 'em in.

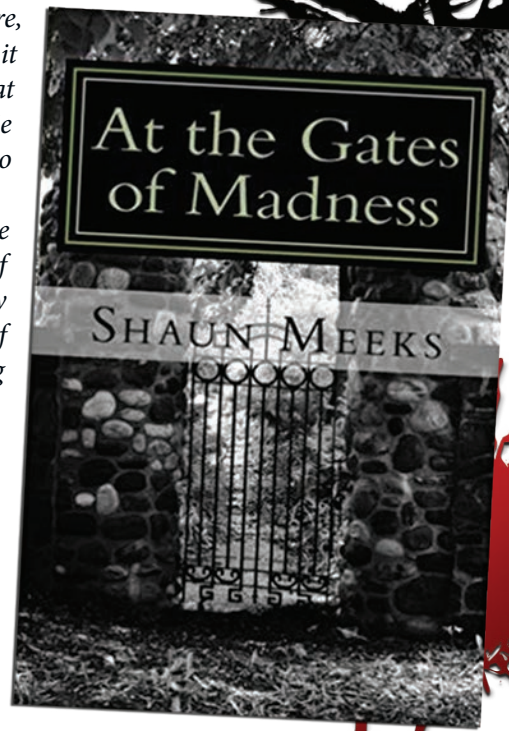
Number two: Give the reader a great punch at the end. Don't end the story with a cliché like, and then he/she woke up. Nobody likes that.

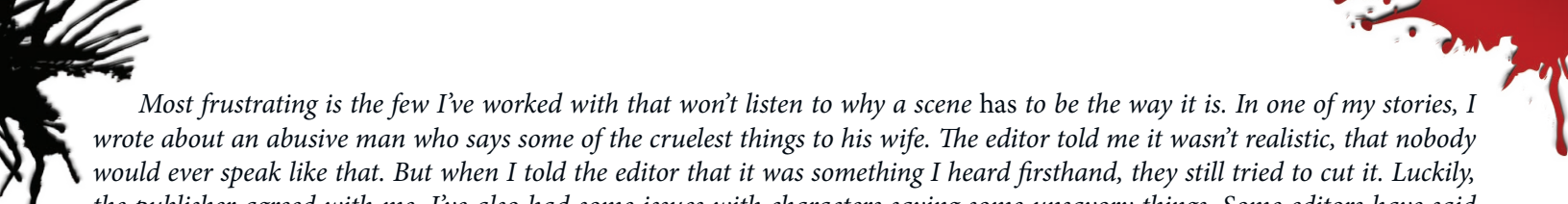
Number three: Make sure your characters' actions make sense. Don't ever make a character do something that nobody would do in real life. We see it all the time in movies, those moments where you think, "Why would they go in the basement? Get out of the house!" If you can explain the reasoning behind the action though, then do it. But re-read that section and, if it sounds forced, cut it.

Number four: Don't over-explain! All too often I see writers over-explaining things, especially through dialogue. It's sloppy writing to have a character explain the cause of some unexplainable event when there's no way he/she could possibly know the cause. Use scenes, actions, and descriptions to push the plot, and let the reader take it from there.

W.B.: Okay, now let's talk about editors. What do you find most rewarding about working with editors? Most frustrating?

S.M.: I have worked with so many great editors over the years, and only one or two experiences stand out as unpleasant. The best thing about most editors is how they've taught me to be a better writer. Showing me what works and doesn't work, what common mistakes I make—that teaches me how to improve. At one time, I used to throw the words "that" and "had" into my stories like they were punctuation.





Most frustrating is the few I've worked with that won't listen to why a scene has to be the way it is. In one of my stories, I wrote about an abusive man who says some of the cruelest things to his wife. The editor told me it wasn't realistic, that nobody would ever speak like that. But when I told the editor that it was something I heard firsthand, they still tried to cut it. Luckily, the publisher agreed with me. I've also had some issues with characters saying some unsavory things. Some editors have said that being offensive in today's climate makes people steer clear of your books. I don't believe in censorship when it is something important to the story, so in the case where this was an issue that wouldn't be let go, I declined the offer of being in the book, and included the story in one of my own collections.

W.B.: What has been your greatest challenge as a writer?

S.M.: The greatest challenge has been trying to get my work out there to as many people as I would like. I've tried social media advertising, giveaways, special offers, free books to reviewers, and getting into anthologies with big name publishers. I've done interviews with a few different magazines, bloggers, and podcasts, but the writing industry is a hard nut to crack. I'm happy with the success I've had, but it's my dream, as well as for many other writers, to quit my day job and write full-time. I have more novel ideas I want to write, so having the time to write them would be nice.

W.B.: What advice would you offer new writers about marketing their work?

S.M.: Be careful, would be the first. I think many new writers think that social media is the way to get your work out there to a massive audience. They get their Facebook friend's list up to 5000, and then start bombarding people with page "likes," sharing links to their books once an hour or on each of their friend's pages, and just push way too hard. I did the same thing when "At the Gates of Madness" came out. I was so excited to have my book read that I did everything I could to let people know where they could buy it.

I think another thing to stay away from is the paid option to "boost" posts on Facebook. If you have a page for people to "like," paying to promote a post actually hurts any other posts you make. It's a strange algorithm that chokes the rest of your posts. The trick to getting more people to see your posts is to create more engagement. Share things to you page wall, and tag where each source comes from. Get people involved, and then use the page to advertise your book once a week or less and you might see a rise in sales. And show your personality, not only your work. Other ways to get your book noticed are doing book conventions, offering free copies for honest reviews, and being visible and accessible on places like Twitter and Goodreads.

W.B.: I'm always fascinated with what scare horror writers. What's your worst nightmare?

S.M.: I'm not really someone who has many fears or worries. I think if you focus on negativity, worry about things too much, you have a strong chance of attracting those very things to you. There are worries I have, usually involving my kids and how stressed they sometimes seem, as well as their safety, but nothing I would consider a true fear or nightmare. So, I think I would say that I can offer what my worst reoccurring nightmares are. I think dreams are a sign of what we fear subconsciously anyway. I like to use my bad dreams as fodder for my stories, so anyone who has read my work might be able to figure out that I have nightmares of isolation, abandonment, unsafe heights, and unknown things in the shadows. I don't wish I only had nice, safe dreams though. My nightmares always give me something fun to write about.

W.B.: One last question. If you could rewrite or remake any horror movie, which one would it be? And why?

S.M.: If I could rewrite or remake any horror movie, I think it would have to be The Stuff. I know it seems like a strange one to pick, but when I was watching it the other day, I wondered what this movie would be like made in today's world of social media influencers. When I watched it as a kid, I thought it was silly that so many people would go crazy over something like that, but with how things are now I think it would go over even better. We live in a world where everyone wants to jump on the next big thing. They want to go on Instagram with their black ice creams, unicorn drinks, and whatever other food is trendy. The Stuff would be a social media wonder, and I think it would be how I would tackle a remake of it.

W.B.: Thanks, Shaun, for such an informative interview. We look forward to reading more of your work!

For more on Shaun Meeks, visit his website at www.sh Shaun Meeks and his Amazon bio page at <https://www.amazon.com/Sh Shaun Meeks/e/B007X5KZLO/>. ■

“Suspenseful and rich with historical detail, *Angel in the Fog* by TJ Turner brings the Civil War to fire-breathing life.”

—GAYLE LYNDS
NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR



ON SALE APRIL 2, 2019

Molly Ferguson's comfortable life unravels when her Louisiana home is burned to the ground, her family murdered, and she is enslaved in a Baltimore brothel. After passing secrets to a Pinkerton agent posing as a client, she is rescued. . . and then sent by the Pinkertons into the Deep South—where the Civil War now rages—a spy behind enemy lines.



ON SALE MAY 7, 2019

When the battered body of a homeless woman is found on the streets of New York City, her murder barely gets a mention in the media. But TV news director Clare Carlson decides to dig deeper into the seemingly meaningless death. She uncovers mysterious links between the woman and a number of wealthy and influential figures. Soon there are more murders, more victims, more questions.

“A terrific mystery, written with a veteran journalist’s eye.”

—MICHAEL KORYTA
NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

“Everything in your life stops until you read through to the end.”

—JOHN GILSTRAP
NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR



ON SALE MAY 21, 2019

Jake Longly and Nicole Jamison are confronted with the most bizarre case yet. Serial killer Billy Wayne Baker now denies that two of his seven murders were actually his work. An anonymous benefactor, who believes Billy Wayne's denials, has hired Longly Investigations to prove Billy Wayne right.



ON SALE JUNE 4, 2019

Jay Porter returns to his New Hampshire hometown after being on the run. With his reputation tarnished and job opportunities nonexistent, Jay takes a charity assignment from an old friend, whose rehab farm had a fire. Jay is convinced that the fire was started as a scare tactic to pressure his friend to sell. As Jay begins to look into the fire's origins, he hopes he will finally be able to put away his enemies. But he soon discovers that evil isn't so easy to define, and that sometimes we need to take the law into our own hands if we want justice.

“The writing snaps. The story crackles. The characters are achingly real. I tore through *Rag and Bone* in a single session.”

—MEG GARDINER
AUTHOR OF *UNSUB*

MIKE LAWSON

"13" is the Lucky Number

Interview by *Suspense Magazine*
Press Photo Credit: Tara Grimmer



Mike Lawson has just released the thirteenth book in his popular *Joe DeMarco* series, entitled "House Arrest." Mike is a more-than-interesting author, considering that his previous occupation was being a nuclear engineer. His journey from "rocket scientist" to suspense author is best told in his own words:

"So how'd I go from nuclear engineering to writing? The short answer is: I like to write. It's fun for me, so I tried my hand at it. I tell people that if you want to be a writer you need some talent, a lot of persistence, and a whole lot of luck. In 2004, I got very lucky: a fantastic agent liked "The Inside Ring" and got me a two-book deal with a publisher. By the end of 2019, I will have published sixteen novels, thirteen in my *DeMarco* series and three in my *Kay Hamilton* series. After that...who knows?"

Let's take a 'sneak peek' inside what Mike Lawson has in store for us in "House Arrest":

As the "fixer" for Congressman John Mahoney in Washington, D.C., Joe DeMarco has had to bend and break the law more than a few times. But when Representative Lyle Canton, House Majority Whip, is found shot dead in his office in the U.S. Capitol, and DeMarco is arrested for the murder, DeMarco knows he's been framed. Locked up in the Alexandria Jail awaiting trial, he calls on his enigmatic friend Emma, an ex-DIA agent, to search for the true killer.

Emma's investigation leads her to Sebastian Spear, the ruthless and competitive CEO of the multi-billion-dollar Spear Industries. Spear had a motive for killing Lyle Canton: Canton's wife, Jean, had once been Spear's high school

sweetheart and the one true love of his life—until Canton won her over. Now Jean was dead, killed in a car crash while driving drunk, and Spear blamed Canton for the accident. But the case the F.B.I. has built against DeMarco is airtight, and not a single piece of evidence points to the grieving CEO. Using her cunning and her D.C. connections, Emma sets out to prove that Spear has been using some "fixers" of his very own....

Now, *Suspense Magazine* is proud to bring you our first-time interview with author Mike Lawson.

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): "House Arrest" is your latest book, tell us about what you have in store for readers?

Mike Lawson (M.L.): In “House Arrest,” DeMarco is framed for murdering an ambitious politician. The murder was actually planned by a mentally deteriorating businessman who hated the politician for personal reasons; DeMarco was simply a convenient scapegoat. DeMarco is almost killed—more than once, actually—and it’s only thanks to his enigmatic friend Emma, a popular character from previous novels, that DeMarco is proven innocent. The interesting twist to “House Arrest” is that DeMarco has always operated in the shadows as the fixer for a corrupt politician named John Mahoney. His arrest, however, places his relationship with Mahoney under a media spotlight, bringing about an ending to the book that should entice readers. About the ending, Kirkus Reviews said: “...his final sequence, both blackly comic and ineffably sad, provides the perfect conclusion.” I think Kirkus got it right.

S. MAG.: Now thirteen books into your series, how has your character Joe DeMarco been able to take everything you have thrown at him?

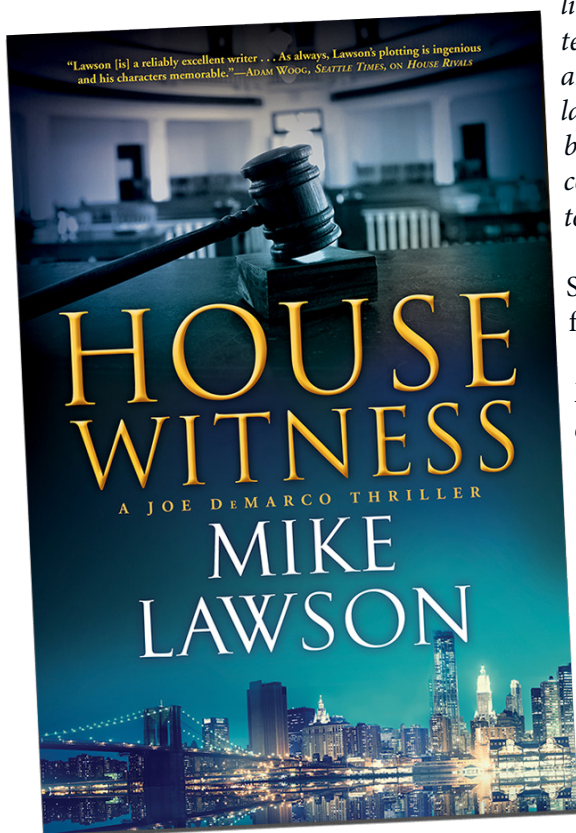
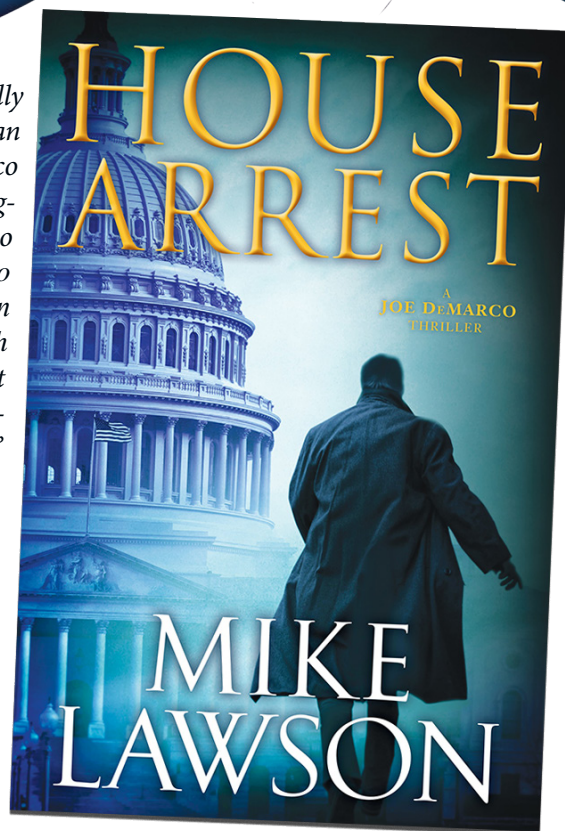
M.L.: Well, since he’s my character, I only throw situations at DeMarco where he can come out on top—or mostly on top. DeMarco is a flawed character, a bit of an anti-hero, and he’s not a gun-blazing superhero. What this all means is that in order to succeed, DeMarco has to solve problems—at least most of the time—using his wits instead of his fists. And DeMarco often walks a slippery slope when it comes to ethics and the law, but ultimately, he does the right thing—if not the legal thing—in the end.

S. MAG.: When you look back at book one, how has Mike Lawson changed as a writer?

M.L.: I like to think I’ve gotten a bit smarter. I often wish that I could have a do-over on my first book—or as we golfers say, I’d like to take a mulligan—because, as in any profession, experience is the best teacher. I’ve come to recognize that I have some weaknesses as a storyteller, and there are certain aspects of the books that I know I have to work particularly hard on to get right. (I’m not going to tell you what those weaknesses are because you might reread one of my earlier books and say, “Hey, he’s right. He could have done that better.”) At any rate, thanks to experience and good editors, I think I’m improving as I go along.

S. MAG.: When you have a series that is now this long, what is the most difficult part in keeping every book fresh?

M.L.: There are two problems with writing a series. One is that you can’t tell every story you’d like to tell because those stories don’t suit the developed characters in the series. The other problem is every book has to stand alone, so that if a new reader picks up one of my books, he or she will understand who the characters are without having to read the other books in the series. What this means is that I have to tell the reader in every book who Joe DeMarco and Mahoney and Emma are, which gets a bit tiresome for me as a writer and is unnecessary verbiage for longtime fans of the series, but it’s something that has to be done. Doing that job—repeating the background on the main characters—is always a challenge insofar as keeping the series fresh. What is less of a challenge is coming up with new plots that revolve around those characters because—or, so I think—they’re great characters.



S. MAG.: What one new character in “House Arrest” had a bigger part than you’d originally planned?

M.L.: *I can’t think of a character who had a “bigger part” than I expected. What I can tell you is that I had a particularly tough time developing the principal bad guy in “House Arrest,” Sebastian Spear. I wanted to create a character who, on one hand, was a ruthless CEO but at the same time somewhat sympathetic, even a bit of a victim himself. I also wanted to create a portrait of a man who was mentally unraveling as the book progressed, which I found was also hard to do. Usually the bad guys are the most fun characters to write, but in “House Arrest” the antagonist was really a challenge for me. I can only hope readers will think that I succeeded.*

S. MAG.: When you start a new book, do you think about one aspect of the book that you want to focus on? Example: more character dialogue? Scene setting? Greater tension?

M.L.: *The part of the book I’m always the most focused on is pacing. I do everything I can to keep the reader engaged, to keep him or her “flipping the pages,” as they say. I do my best, as Elmore Leonard once said, to not write the things that readers “tend to skip over.” This means that I spend an inordinate amount of time moving parts of the book around to heighten suspense, and I’ll deliberately avoid long descriptions of settings and characters to hopefully maintain the pace of the book.*

S. MAG.: For readers just finding out about the series, how should they tackle it?

M.L.: *I’d like to think, and as I said above, that a new reader can start with any book in the series. A reader can always start with the first book, “The Inside Ring,” but oddly enough, one of the best books in the series that gives a new reader the background on the characters is the ninth book, “House Reckoning.” This is where I tell the story of DeMarco’s hitman father and how DeMarco landed a job with Mahoney in the first place. Or a new reader might want to read “House Witness” which was just nominated for the Edgar Award.*

S. MAG.: During the writing process, do you have any superstitions?

M.L.: *I can’t think of any; I’m not a superstitious person. What I can tell you is that I don’t listen to audios of my books because I know that all I’ll hear is the parts that I could have written better. The same thing is true of rereading my books. I sometimes have to go back and read parts of some of my previous novels to make sure the book I’m currently working on is consistent with what I’ve said in the past. But instead of seeing the parts I’ve written well, all I can see are sentences that I could have written better. So why torture myself when I can’t do anything about a book that’s already been published?*

S. MAG.: Is there a place you would like to take the series, but just haven’t been able to find the right story?

M.L.: *As I said above, when you write a series there are certain stories you can’t tell because those stories don’t suit the developed characters in the series. For example: I can’t suddenly turn DeMarco into a Scott Turow-like courtroom lawyer, because DeMarco is a lawyer who has never practiced law. The good news is that I’ve yet to run out of story ideas for the series. I set the series in Washington D.C. because as I’ve always told folks, Washington, with all its silliness and corruption, is a target-rich environment for a writer.*

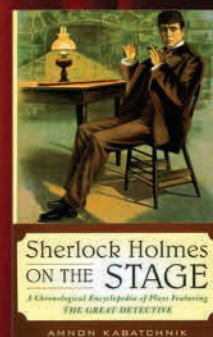
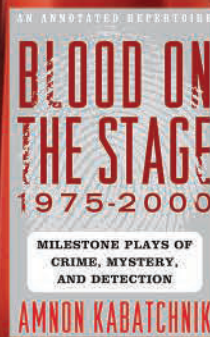
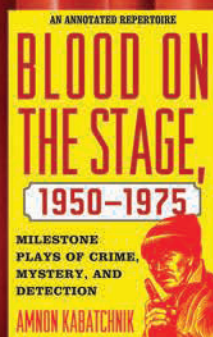
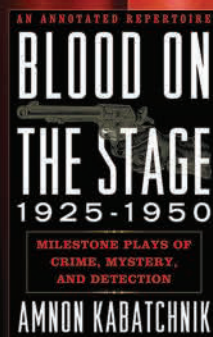
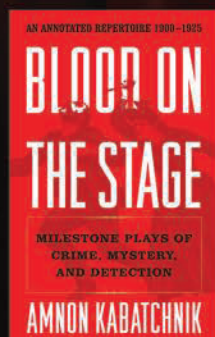
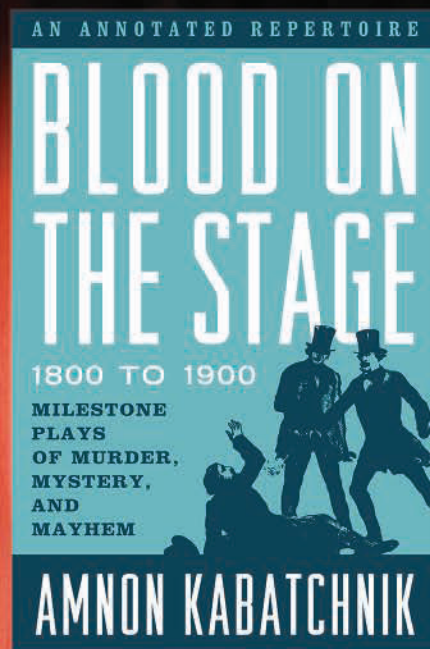
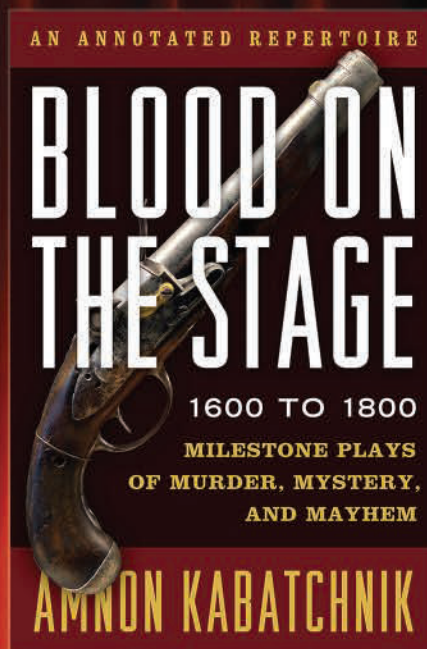
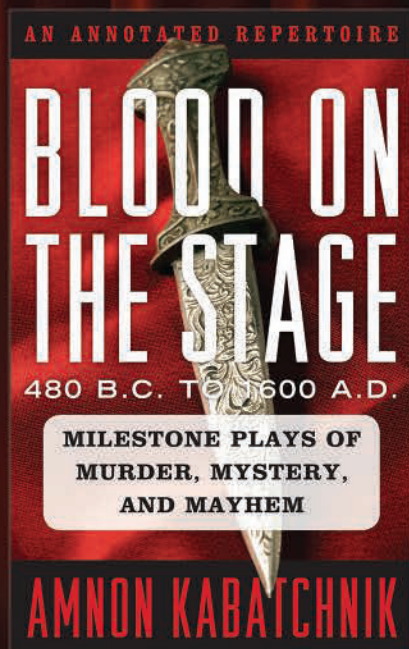
S. MAG.: What can fans expect to see from Mike Lawson in the future?

M.L.: *Right now I’m working on two more DeMarco books. Most of the DeMarco books were “inspired” by something I heard on the news. In the case of these two books, one was an incident in Washington State, where I live, about a young girl who was the only survivor of a plane crash who then survived in the woods for three days before she was found. The idea for the second book came from a guy named Bundy, who several years ago, got into an armed standoff with the federal government in Nevada over cattle grazing rights on federal land. At this point, I’m a long way from finishing either book, but I’m having fun writing them.*

We would like to thank Mike for spending time with us. If you would like to know more, please visit his website at www.mikelawson.com. ■

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The Igloo Deception



*Namusat, Quebec,
Canada*

"So you want to visit a real igloo?" Sandy Redmond asked.

"You bet!" Dan Stonechild said.

"Sure," Paul Winston added, although he was more interested in the main purpose of their proposed snowmobile trip.

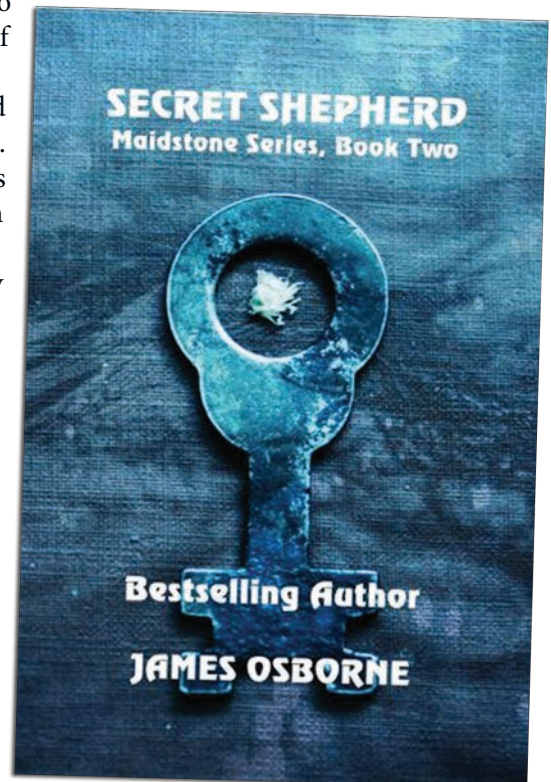
Paul and Dan were standing out front of a ramshackle house on the edge of Namusat, a depressed indigenous community in Canada's far north. Paul had just flown in from his ranch near Colorado Springs, responding to a call for help from his college buddy Dan to help deal with an epidemic of teenage suicides.

The previous night, Paul had arrived on a chartered ski plane. His friend Dan was waiting for him beside the airstrip. Their embrace was awkward. Both wore knee-length parkas against the bitter 30-below cold. Their hands were tucked deep in double-layered mittens, their feet thrust into calf-high fur mukluks.

"Another two just last night!" Dan had said, wiping his eyes awkwardly with his mittens. "That makes four suicides right here in just two months. Good God, Paul! Four!" Dan's words tumbled out as he struggled with his composure. "These two...young girls...friends." His caring eyes glistened. "Just fourteen years old. Oh God, Paul! That's four in this one tiny community alone and hundreds more across the country. When will it end?"

Paul's research had revealed the primary cause of suicides among native youth was a lack of hope...despair, from having realized their futures would almost inevitably lead them into alcoholism and drug abuse, just like their parents, siblings, friends and others in the community. They'd chosen suicide as the preferred alternative. As the recently elected national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Dan's followers were expecting him to find a way out of the crisis.

As Paul and Dan arrived at the ramshackle house, owner Tony Stewart introduced them to Redmond, who claimed to have developed a pilot



project among the Inuit that was successfully dealing with teen suicides.

"We need to go see my Inuit friend," Redmond said. "He's a hunter. And yes, he and his wife and three children live in an igloo. They're nomadic, just like their community... they follow the migration of wildlife that provide their food, clothing, and incomes. Igloos are used in winter as temporary housing during the migrations. It's just a few miles away."

"Is he running your suicide prevention program?" Paul asked.

"I'll let him tell you about it," Redmond said. "I think you'll be surprised."

Redmond's evasive reply made Paul uneasy. He was about to question Redmond further when Dan interrupted.

"I'm curious about igloos," he said. His dark brown eyes sparkled with excitement. "I've been studying them online. I'd really like to see first hand how they're built."

"You'll see a bunch," Redmond said, chuckling. "If we leave now, we could meet up with my hunter friend and be back here by suppertime."

"Let's do it!" Dan said.

"I'll drink to that!" said an already tipsy Stewart, twisting the cap off a bottle of cheap red wine. He offered the bottle to the others. Redmond accepted. Paul and Dan declined.

Paul sat behind Redmond astride his snowmobile. Dan climbed onto another snowmobile driven with one hand by Stewart, the wine bottle clutched in the other. To Paul's surprise, Redmond told Stewart to take the lead. They set off in the twilight of a northern afternoon. Paul understood this far north, the days begin with a few hours of dawn starting about mid-morning and ending in twilight by early afternoon.

The machines roared northward. By the time they reached the Inuit community, Paul's watch was showing late afternoon, almost dinnertime, more than an hour past the time Redmond had said they'd be heading back.

Through the gloom Paul could make out large white mounds on the undulating snow-covered landscape: igloos... close to a dozen. Faint glows were visible from vent holes at the top. Redmond said the glows were from seal oil lamps that supplied both light and heat.

"C'mon," Redmond cried as he leapt off his snowmobile. He dropped to his hands and knees on the hard-packed snow and disappeared down a black hole. It was the entrance to a tunnel barely visible in the dark and blowing snow.

By now, Paul and Dan's faces, eyebrows, and hair had become caked with snow and frost from the snowmobile trip.

"You look like an actor out of a winter scene from Tolstoy's *War and Peace*," Paul said.

"We be twins." Dan laughed.

They walked toward the opening where Redmond had disappeared. Paul went first, dropping about four feet in a flurry of snow. Dan jumped down behind him. The two men

were in a short narrow tunnel. They crawled about six feet toward a faint light and up an incline, entering a wonderfully warm single room—inside the igloo. Paul guessed the temperature probably was just about freezing, but it felt almost tropical after the bitter cold outside.

"Over here," Redmond said, barely visible in the light from two seal oil lamps. He introduced Paul and Dan to the hunter, his kindly wife whose smile revealed several missing teeth, and their three small children.

The youngest child, a baby, was snuggled in the hood of the indoor parka the mother wore. The eldest child, five or six years old, was shy and focused on fussing with a toy made of whalebone. He or she—Paul couldn't make out the gender because of the parka—was sitting on a shelf about two feet above the hard packed snow floor.

The six-foot-wide shelf surrounded the inside perimeter. It was covered in three or four inches of caribou and seal hides. Paul realized it was the family's living and sleeping area. The only break in the shelf was where the entry came up.

Their host motioned them to sit on the shelf. The family joined them. Paul tried to imagine their lifestyle and how the igloo had been built. A slab of something resembling a frozen steak appeared. Their hostess placed it on a flat piece of whalebone, produced a large knife, and cut two-inch cubes from the foot-square slab. She gestured for her guests to help themselves.

Paul watched as Stewart eagerly popped the frozen cubes into his mouth. Redmond was less eager. It was seal blubber, a staple food among Inuit across the Arctic. Paul exchanged glances with Dan and each popped a cube into his mouth. Paul had to work hard to keep from gagging. He noticed Dan was struggling too, but refusal would have insulted the gracious hospitality of their hosts.

Blubber must be an acquired taste, Paul thought.

"Is this your friend who's heading up your anti-suicide pilot?" Paul asked.

"Oh, no," Redmond replied. "My friend lives just a few minutes from the community. I wanted you to meet this family first, to get a sense of family life here. I'll take you to see him soon."

"Don't you think we should be on our way if we're going to be back in Namusat before it gets too late?" Paul said. "We're way behind schedule already."

Redmond nodded at Paul and glanced at Stewart.

It's going to be a late supper, Paul thought.

Within minutes they were headed out of the community, Redmond leading the way this time. Paul assumed they were headed in the right direction. A wild blizzard had roared to life while they were enjoying the hospitality in the snug igloo. Visibility was a few feet at best—they were caught in a whiteout.

"Aw, we're used to this," Redmond shouted over his

shoulder.

I sure hope so, Paul thought, keeping his mouth closed to stop the blowing snow from gagging him.

The storm became more intense as they travelled, and it got colder.

Two hours later, Paul shouted into Redmond's ear:

"Shouldn't we be there by now?"

Redmond stopped the snowmobile. Paul had never felt colder in his life. He thought Dan surely had to be feeling the same.

"This is going to get worse," Redmond shouted over the screaming wind. "We'd better find a place to make camp. I'm going to take Stewart and look for a suitable place."

Redmond and Stewart hopped on his snowmobile and disappeared into blowing snow and darkness.

Paul and Dan sat on Stewart's machine. There was nowhere else to sit. Fifteen minutes passed, then half an hour, then forty-five minutes. All the time, the snowstorm continued to rage around them.

"What do you think, Dan?" Paul said finally, his voice loud so it would carry over the howling wind.

"Hate to say this Paul, but I think we're on our own," Dan replied. "Did they leave us or did they get lost?"

"Let's see if we can follow their tracks with Stewart's machine, if the snow hasn't covered them," Paul said. He swiveled around and turned the key. The engine started but quit. Repeated attempts to start it failed. Paul looked and felt around the fuel line.

"Shit," Paul exclaimed. "Look at this! The damned fuel line's been cut half through. Those bastards left us behind deliberately. Son of a bitch!"

"Any idea what this is all about?" Dan asked.

"Yeah," Paul shouted over the storm. "It's a long story, Dan. A crime syndicate has a bounty on my head. My guess is they're behind this. The short version is I helped a young man get away from them. They didn't like that. They murdered him and now they're after me."

Paul and Dan stepped back from the snowmobile. The drifted snow was hard packed under their mukluks.

Dan dug around in the storage bin under the seat of the snowmobile. He pulled out a machete-like knife and plunged it into the snow.

"I guess we're going to find out," Dan shouted over the howling wind.

"Find out what?" Paul called back.

"I read online how the Inuit build their igloos," Dan replied. "They're First Nations like my people. That's why I wanted to see an igloo up close. We'll see if I can remember how it's done."

In seconds he'd cut loose a block of snow about eighteen inches by twenty-four inches.

"That's going to work," he said. "I think."

Dan stomped in a wide circle creating a track about ten

feet in diameter, barely visible in the storm.

"This should be good enough to wait out the storm," he shouted. "I think the Inuit call it an iglusuugyuk. That's their word for a small temporary snow house they use for emergencies while hunting or traveling...that would be us."

"Good idea," Paul shouted back. "I'm not sure how long we'd last out here in the open. Once the storm blows over I'll see if we can fix that fuel line enough to get us back... assuming we can find our way back."

Paul watched as Dan chopped blocks of snow resembling enormous bricks, all cut on an angle. Paul helped him place the blocks in a spiral, up and around, leaning slightly inward and narrowing toward the top.

Dan reached up and placed the final blocks, leaving a small vent at the top. In the dark, they dug an entrance at the edge, first tunneling down vertically, then out horizontally, and then up to the outside. The result was a surprisingly effective air lock.

Back inside, they were relieved at how much warmer they felt out of the wind. Dan set to work smoothing the snow piles that had resulted from digging the entrance, while Paul went back outside to check on supplies left in Stewart's snowmobile. He returned with an old sleeping bag and a worn bear hide. Paul guessed from the oil stains the sleeping bag had been used to cover the machine. Also in his hands was a small block of blubber wrapped in tanned hide.

Exhausted, they both lay on the bearskin and pulled the sleeping bag over them. They could barely hear the wind through the foot-thick hard-packed blocks of insulating snow. Fine snow sifted down from time to time from cracks between the blocks above, reminding them of the raging gusts of wind outside swirling around their tiny shelter.

Paul was in a deep sleep when Dan shook his shoulder. Dan pointed at his glowing watch and assured Paul it was the next morning.

"It's time to go," he said, handing Paul a few cubes of frozen blubber. Paul had to admit the blubber tasted much better this time.

They emerged to find the storm had blown itself out. Instead of swirling snow, all they could see in the morning gloom was a white rolling expanse interrupted occasionally by snow banks or mounds, but otherwise absent of any viable landmarks.

Paul pulled out his satellite phone. It wouldn't turn on.

"Batteries are too cold," he said.

Dan's face fell.

"Hey, hear that?" Paul said. "That's a plane. From the sound of the engine it's climbing. I'll bet it just took off. All we need to do is follow the direction of the sound. Maybe it will take us to Namusat."

Paul used the machete to make two long slits in the snow to mark the direction of the sound.

"There's a compass on my watch," Dan said. "Never used

it. Want to try?"

"You bet!" Paul said.

Dan handed over his watch. Paul used its built-in light to zero the compass on north and using the slits in the snow, took a reading on the direction of the sound. He knew any such readings could be off several miles, but at least they'd be closer to Namusat, in case a search for them was mounted. He'd made a note their travelling time to the Inuit community the previous day had been almost two hours. They could only guess how much farther they'd travelled and in what direction before being left behind. While the compass gave them approximate coordinates for direction, it would be useless without transportation.

I wonder if we can fix the snowmobile? Paul thought.

"I wonder which of those assholes cut the fuel line," he said. "Let's check the storage compartment...see if there's any tape or anything else useful."

They found an assortment of tools and discarded items, including empty chip bags and gum wrappers. No tape.

"Hey, gum wrappers," Paul said. "Check if there's any leftover gum in there while I clean off the fuel line."

Dan rummaged deeper in the storage compartment. "Look, a couple of pieces of bubble gum!" Sensing what Paul had in mind, he said, "You chew one and I'll chew the other."

"Such a deal," Paul said, chuckling. "We need to make sure we get as much sugar out of the gum as we can. The more we get out the better it will stick."

Ten minutes later, their jaws were tiring from vigorous chewing. They agreed the gum was ready.

"Here goes," Paul said. "Let me have your gum."

"I was beginning to enjoy it," Dan said, smiling as he handed his wad to Paul, who massaged the two pieces into one.

Paul held his bare hand on the cut fuel line for a few minutes to warm that part of it. "Here goes." He worked the bubblegum firmly over and around the cut in the line.

"Okay now, we need to wrap it with something to keep it in place," Paul said. "Ideas?"

Without a word, Dan unzipped his heavy parka and unbuttoned a shirt pocket. He pulled out a small thin paper box and handed it to Paul.

"My wife insisted I buy them," Dan said as he handed Paul a package of condoms. "Family planning. We have all the children now that we can look after."

Both men chuckled. They knew gasoline would melt condoms but if wrapped carefully just on the bubblegum one would hold the gum in place over the severed fuel line.

Paul turned the key. On the fourth try, the motor finally roared to life.

*

Namusat

"A plane picked him up last night," Village Chief John

Boisvert said. "I heard that he came in on a snowmobile and went straight to the airstrip...didn't speak to anyone. The plane landed, picked him up, and promptly left. Must have been prearranged. We wondered what had happened to you guys. We thought maybe the three of you had decided to stay over, but weren't sure."

"Yeah," John said. "His snowmobile is still parked at the airstrip."

On their arrival, Paul had explained how Redmond and Stewart left them stranded in the snowstorm the night before, and how they had escaped a frigid death thanks to Dan's expertise.

"Tony Stewart hasn't been sober in all the years I've known him," John said. "We suspected he might be up to no good when you didn't return last night. I wonder if Redmond left him somewhere out there, too. Good thing the supply plane came this morning and agreed to take a look for you, just in case. I had a feeling something was wrong."

Paul and Dan had been twenty-three miles northwest of Namusat when the cargo plane circled over them. The pilot had dropped a note wrapped around a wrench and secured with a rubber band, telling them to follow the plane to the small First Nations village.

"Do you know what this is all about?" the chief asked.

Over coffee in the chief's home, Paul explained about rescuing the young man from drug smugglers, that in revenge he'd been brutally murdered and that numerous attempts had been made on his and his family's lives.

"Well I'll be a son-of-a-bitch!" John said. "I'll send a search party out to look for Tony. From what you told me, I doubt we'll find him alive."

"I've no doubt Redmond was trying to collect the bounty on me," Paul said. "How the hell could they have known I was here?"

"Is there anything can we do?" the chief asked.

"Thank you, but you've got enough on your plate," Paul said. "I came here to see if I could do anything to support the important work you are doing here and that's what I'm going to do. To hell with them! I've some ideas about how to work on this terrible suicide epidemic, and I know some people who can help us. So let's get on with it."

Paul would learn later that a newly hired assistant in his attorney's office was being paid by the drug smugglers to tip them about his travel itineraries. ■

James Osborne's varied career includes investigative journalist, college teacher, corporate executive, business owner, army officer, and writer. He is the author of Amazon #1 bestseller "The Ultimate Threat." His latest novel, "Secret Shepherd," was named recently as Best Mystery Novel of 2018 in an international poll of readers and writers. Osborne has written more than 120 short stories and essays. They have appeared in dozens of anthologies, and literary and professional journals. Samples of his work can be found on his Amazon author's page: www.amazon.com/author/jamesosborne.

CRIME *and* SCIENCE RADIO

WITH AWARD WINNING AUTHORS

D.P. LYLE, M.D. & JAN BURKE

TRACKING DOWN THE BAD GUYS A Conversation with Retired US Marshal and Novelist MARC CAMERON

Interview by D.P. Lyle, MD and Jan Burke

Press Photo Credit: Victoria Otte



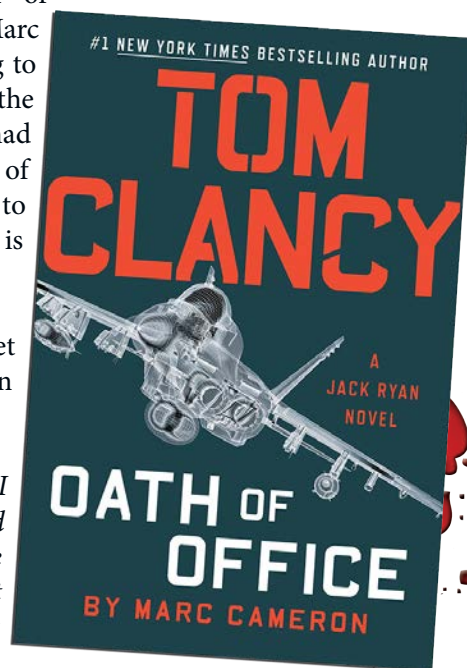
In this special *Crime & Science Radio* interview, Marc Cameron sat down with D.P. Lyle and Jan Burke to discuss his amazing background in law enforcement. Both exciting and informative, Marc talks candidly about his 29-year career and various investigations he worked on while being a Chief Deputy US Marshal.

Now retired, his short stories have appeared in *Boy's Life* magazine as well as the *Saturday Evening Post*. He is also the bestselling author of the *Jericho Quinn* thriller series that has kept readers glued to the pages of these non-stop adventures for years. With a second degree black belt in Jiu Jitsu, Marc also teaches defensive tactics to law enforcement agencies and civilian groups.

Living in the frozen north of Alaska with his beautiful wife, Marc took some time away from writing to talk about being a US Marshal; the eyes of the truly "evil" that he's had to look into over time; and how all of his transitions through life led him to being the unforgettable author he is today.

Jan Burke (J.B.): Welcome Marc. Let us start out by focusing on your long and varied career. What first led you to work in law enforcement?

Marc Cameron (M.C.): Well, although it might sound a little embarrassing now, I really began by watching *Batman* on TV when I was young. I was always the kind of guy who wanted to stick up for the underdog. Being interested in things like "The Hardy Boys" books and *Batman* at a young age led me in that direction. When I got older and realized there were actual jobs out there where I could help people, and put guys in jail, I was excited. It worked naturally, I think.



J.B.: I guess it wasn't a let-down to not have the cape and car.

M.C.: Not at all. Actually, when I began my career, we weren't even given a bulletproof vest. Before we were married I told my wife that I wanted to write and teach school. But just before the wedding I sprung it on her that I wanted to be in law enforcement. Like the nice woman she is, she bought me a typewriter and a bulletproof vest. So, I guess you could say that I really did get support right from the get-go after making my decision.

J.B.: You began your career in small town Texas. Can you tell readers what that was like? Your rank and duties?

M.C.: I started off in the town I went to high school in, which is Weatherford, Texas—right outside of Ft. Worth. It was a small department that didn't pay very much at the time. I might have made around \$6.67 an hour in 1984. When our first son was born we were \$25 dollars over the poverty line.

It was a good department that became a very professional department over time. Pay went up, gear issue was better, and it was a really good department to learn from and start off in. I was very green at the time; I was only twenty-two years old and could barely buy my own bullets. I was very fortunate to work patrol and I guess you could say that I was in the right place at the right time. Moving from the patrol unit, I was assigned to investigation where I worked everything from bicycle theft to homicide. There was probably only 25 sworn officers when I was there, so everyone was a jack of all trades. Sent to crime scene school, I eventually worked as a detective. I learned to be a law enforcement scuba diver when I was there. And before going into the US Marshals, I volunteered for a mounted police unit and rode horses. It was a really fun start. My partner and I, when we were out on patrol, used to joke about how we didn't want to look anybody in the eye because we didn't want them to see how happy we were. All of them were good people. I still keep in touch with a lot of them and I base quite a few of my characters off the early people I worked with.

D.P. Lyle (D.P.L.): Can you talk about some of the interesting cases you worked during your time in Texas?

M.C.: There were all kinds. One of the first homicides that I ever investigated was when I was only 26 years old. I was still fairly young in the ways of the world and working homicide. But it was on this case where a Texas Ranger led me in the right direction. A lot of people don't understand the scope of what Rangers do, but one thing they do is come in and assist young detectives like me.

I remember vividly investigating this murder scene. I remember I was so nervous at the time. I had been assigned a missing persons case which rolled over into this homicide

case. All the brass was out of town that weekend, and I was just nervous; I wanted to do a good service for the family. I was taking measurements of the body, etc., and a Texas Ranger rolled up. His name was Billy and he always chewed on a toothpick. I was standing beside this body that had been decomposing in the hot Texas sun for days, and I asked him to tell me what to do. He squatted down by the body, with larvae and stuff covering it, and took out his Ranger notebook. He spoke to me and while he was talking a fly hatched out of the larvae and flew into his mouth. He simply kept talking and told me: "Marcus, just write down everything you see, and watch out for the blowflies." I really took that as advice for both a writing career and for being a good detective, to be hyper aware to the scene around me. Best advice I ever received; I owe most everything to Billy, the Texas Ranger.

D.P.L.: So, after your stint in Texas with blowflies, you transferred to the US Marshals. How and why did that come about?

M.C.: Hemingway has a quote, "There is no hunting like the hunting of man," and, I'm paraphrasing here, those who have hunted men long enough, enjoy that. Once you hunt fugitives, it gets in your blood, making it difficult to want to go back and do different things. I don't want to demean any part of it; I liked all the departments I worked in. But once I had a taste of hunting fugitives, I knew that's what I wanted to do.

This is another slightly embarrassing fact, but I wanted to be a Deputy US Marshal back in high school. We had a town square where I lived that had parking meters on all the spaces. One day a tall guy pulled up with a gun, badge, and wore a big hat. He pulled a bag out and put it over the meter. The bag stated: "US Marshal Official Business." I was 15 then, and I suddenly wanted to be able to do that one day. Have that bag. As I grew up, in an odd turn of events, that same man (who is now the Sheriff of Parker County) was the Senior US Marshal doing my background check/investigation for my own entrance into the Marshals, so it was a cool little circle there.

It took 2 ½ years to get on board with the Marshals and I ended up assigned to the eastern district of Texas, which was basically working on the Oklahoma/Texas border from the small town of Sherman, Texas. I worked there for several years.

D.P.L.: Some are not fully schooled on what the US Marshals do. CIA and FBI are certainly well-known through books and TV, but the Marshals seem to be one of those nebulous groups out there. Can you tell us more about the responsibilities and kinds of cases you worked?

M.C.: I'm happy to. I actually love talking about the Marshals. It's important to know that we're not good at tooting our own horn. There are less than 5,000 strong across the nation, yet it is the oldest federal law enforcement agency. George Washington

started it in 1789, because he wanted a US Marshall for each of the 13 states. We were involved in all types of historical events, from the Whiskey Rebellion to the Boxer Rebellion.

This was one of the interesting things that drew me to it. Whereas other agencies are codified and rules and statutes define what they do (i.e., commerce, or drugs, or alcohol and tobacco enforcement, etc.), the US Marshal code is to “enforce federal law.” This is very broad terminology, which means the Attorney General can call on Marshals and assign them to a variety of things, like national disasters. I was assigned to the first response team after Hurricane Andrew. Marshals are also sent in where riots could spring up, like after the Rodney King verdict was read. I worked that, as well. So anything from disasters to the coal miner’s strike in West Virginia—anything where federal law presence is necessary is what the US Marshals are assigned to.

When it comes to the daily duties, one of the sexiest things we do is apprehension, and one of the major things we do is judicial protection. Just like the Secret Service protects the President, a US Marshal will protect a judge who has received a bonafide or perceived threat. During the first World Trade Center bombing, when they weren’t able to bring them down, arrests were made and there were two large, high-profile trials. Deputy US Marshals worked judicial protection details and I rotated through several times. We were just understanding about that sort of terrorism. So fugitive apprehension, judicial and dignitary protection, witness protection, we do it all. We also have a Special Ops group, much like a SWAT team, where we do civil and criminal seizures. You can kind of think of us as the escrow account for the government, where if the FBI or drug enforcement wants to seize someone’s property for a federal case/trial, it’s the Marshals that do the seizures and administers that property. So we have seized mansions, fancy cars, etc. It’s a varied job, which is one of the things that was really appealing to me. There were times where I was going to be sent to a major trial, yet by the time I was packed and ready to go, I was instead sent to a hurricane scene or another national emergency playing out somewhere else.

D.P.L.: There is, of course, one US Marshal everyone knows and that’s Raylan Givens, who’s the invention of the late, great Elmore Leonard. Through Leonard’s short stories and books, and of course the TV series “Justified,” people know that Raylan is a wild card who makes up the rules as he goes. How is that character like real life, and how does it vary from the job you know it to be?

M.C.: That’s a good question. I think the kind of people who go into the Marshals are at least quasi-Raylan Givens. We are people who are justified in what we do, but you have to be the kind of person who works well away from the flagpole, so to speak. People in the military will understand this. There are garrison soldiers and people who go away from the area. When

it comes to the Marshals, they are a real boots-on-the-ground kind of organization, and Givens is the kind of guy not good at being a garrison soldier. He’s the kind of guy who goes out in the field. You want to work with him, but never want to be his boss. One of my favorite deputies I worked with over the years, I would not have wanted to be their Chief. I actually wouldn’t have wanted to be my own Chief.

J.B.: I was born and grew up in Texas, so I know that people there refer to it as a whole other country. You ultimately went to Alaska which is like a whole other planet. Was this a hard transition to make, being in a place where there are really a lot of different extremes?

M.C.: We had a slow transition, actually. When I was young I read a book called “Two Against the North” by Farley Mowat. From then on, I wanted to live in the north. I even carved an Eskimo snow dog out of a cottonwood root from my backyard. Perhaps it was also those Texas summers; you get tired of the heat. In addition, I ended up marrying a girl from Canada, so it wasn’t all that difficult for her.

I worked in the Marshals service, stationed in a two-person sub-office in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho for four years, which brought us to the Canadian border, so my kids got to experience winters and got used to the snow, the cold, the remoteness, etc. I came upon Alaska accidentally, however. It was when I was on a dignitary protection detail during the Dayton Peace Accord signing back in 1995. We had to stick with our dignitaries for protection until their plane got out of American air space. So we were dropped off in Anchorage and I got my first real view of the Frozen North. It was November and my friend that I worked with on several details, and I, drove around and got to see the moose walking down the road and other odd things. I saw it and immediately loved it. I started to have my little daydreams about moving up here, and I remember when my friend called me and said there would be an opening.

My wife is a very spiritual person and heard me talking to my friend on the phone about it. I hung up and she said: “We are not moving to Alaska.” Then a month and a half later we were here...and she loves it.

J.B.: It is a stunning place. Did you run into different types of criminals and crimes than the ones in Texas?

M.C.: I have to say that criminals are criminals no matter where they are, but what is interesting about Alaska is that the people here, many of them, want to be off the grid. A lot of people in North Idaho show the same signs, but in Alaska they can really disappear off the grid. We joke with people who come to visit us by saying, “Welcome to Anchorage. You’re just a few minutes away from Alaska.” Meaning, if you hopped in a helicopter, you could be in a place where no one will ever find you again in minutes. In fact, you can walk away from your car

in Anchorage and literally be lost for good in a short amount of time. When it comes to investigations, it is a lot of rural work, so it makes it interesting.

J.B.: I remember people talking about the ratio of men to women there...the odds are good but the goods are odd?

M.C.: *My youngest son is a police officer and he calls me, to make me feel relevant I guess, now that I'm retired, and he runs down his day. Once, he started the conversation with, "Dad. People!" I think that's exactly right.*

Up here it's "people" with a capital P. Very odd, in fact, where cases are concerned. One of the first people I arrested up here was a person off in the woods. It was April, but there was still a lot of snow on the ground. It's a nice time of year, however, because there's a lot of light then. We had driven up and hiked up to his cabin. This guy had a Swedish hot tub and had a snorkel stove under the water. He and his wife/girlfriend had just thawed out the hot tub for the first time in a week or two and they were getting in it naked, so we knew there were no guns. They were just stepping in and we arrested him. He was more bummed about not being able to sit out there after all the work he'd done; he just wanted to enjoy the hot tub.

D.P.L.: Now, you're a certified man tracker. I have to know what that entails and what skills we're talking about.

M.C.: *Tracking kind of circles back to the advice I received from Billy, the Texas Ranger: Be observant. When you're a young officer, you don't really know that you're man tracking as of yet. There are not just fingerprints to consider at a crime scene, there are shoe prints, like the imprint of a Converse sneaker on linoleum, and all kinds of stuff. So as a young crime scene detective, you're kind of looking at human behavior, but when you finally get to the skills of tracking, you're being more observant and looking for things that people leave behind (i.e., their own scabs, urine, Band-Aids that fall off, etc.). There are many ways to find and observe that next "track," and all tracks tell stories.*

For instance, envision what imprints your elbows would make while you're lying on your belly, like what imprints they would leave if you were looking through binoculars. I would see the track: the two points where the elbows hit. If looking through binoculars they would be lined up and I would consider that the person had stopped right there and was looking back at me. If one point was set back further than the other, I would know they have a rifle and were perhaps setting up a trap for me. There are all types of little things to take into consideration. Like when people are getting hypothermic, the nerves going down their shins won't work as well, so they will fall into a type of clown walk. This imprint will allow me to see that they're suffering, slowing down. Dehydration is also another symptom you can find while tracking. Urine left behind

and the distance between each time they've needed to urinate, can show dehydration. You will learn more about how they're running, and if they're closer to making poor decisions. These are things I have used in past books. Such as, when men and women go to the bathroom in the woods, the track is different. A man will sit down and do his business. When a woman is there, she's always scared of being caught or seen, so there is a crescent shape deposit left behind from all the times she has turned around and looked over her shoulder to see if she was really alone. As a tracker, you learn all of this and become a student of human nature.

My youngest son, in the police department for about a year now, talks about how he's been able to figure out certain things because of the tracking steps we've worked on and studied. On patrol, he can use these variables when tracking bad guys into the woods, etc., so it's a great skill to have.

All creatures have habits, like a wounded bear. Another thing we see here quite often, when we're doing training or hiking in the woods, is a human track with a bear track over it, which of course tells you a story right there. If there's water flowing into the imprint of the bear, however, you also learn that it was just there a few minutes ago. You pay attention to the wildlife out here because when you step out of the RV, you're stepping directly into the food chain. Whether its fugitives we're chasing or hunting for lost people, we always must be concerned with things like that for our own protection. Fortunately, I've never had to come up on a bear.

D.P.L.: One of the folks you have tracked down was quite famous: Faron Lovelace. Can you tell us a little bit about him and what that case was all about?

M.C.: *He was anti-Semitic. An evil man, he is/was an interesting case. He was in north Idaho and originally wanted for parole violation on a federal offense of armed robbery. We were already looking for him and during that time he kidnapped a Jewish couple in Spokane, Washington, right across the border from where I was assigned. He held this couple at gunpoint in their own home for a couple of days, threatened them and, thankfully, ended up not killing them.*

He stole some money, I believe, and fled. Then he holed up in the mountains. We had different investigative means that we were using to find him, from rural work/tracking to informants. We located and lured him off the mountainside. We had to bring him down the mountain because, as you can imagine, this was happening right after the horror that occurred at Ruby Ridge. Which means the government was tentative in launching any campaign up a mountain. The FBI, county sheriffs, and I, worked together. My partner was out of town during the takedown, so myself and the other agents put together a ruse to lure the guy down. He was so prejudiced that we told him a story about a Hispanic arms dealer. He came down on a bicycle with a folding rifle in his backpack and

knives tucked into his coat. We ended up getting him caught between my car and an FBI car. He ran, and the county deputy and I tackled him. As he was bringing the gun up, we wrestled him to the ground.

Eventually we got the handcuffs on him, but he fought hard. I'll never forget the county deputy and me standing him up. He looked at me and said: "It is obvious to me that you are more racially pure than I am, or you never would have won this; I would have never been arrested."

He was one of those people who wants to be the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral. He needed the limelight. On the way back to jail, in the car, he confessed to knowing where a body was buried that he killed. When we went back up the mountain later on, we found all kinds of booby traps and makeshift landmines which made us even more pleased that we had not tried to take him down there. He showed us the body and we ended up spending a great deal of time just looking for a tooth that he'd knocked out of the guy before killing him. He was eventually convicted of homicide. It took the jury no more than 15 minutes to find him guilty. Sentenced to death, his term was commuted to life when Idaho changed the laws. He was a good draw for a writer; to be able to sit down with that kind of evil really lends itself to writing.

D.P.L.: Any other interesting cases to talk about from the Frozen North?

M.C.: There have been all kinds. I do have to say that out of 29 years in law enforcement, I can count on two hands the truly "evil" people I've met. Hundreds were arrested who made bad decisions that led to evil things, but there are only really ten or less that were cold-hearted, die-hard evil; Faron was one of them.

We had a guy in Texas when I worked as a young deputy in my early thirties who raped his ex-wife in front of their kids and kidnapped her, taking her over state lines. We were taking him to jail after he was convicted, and he was the kind of guy you just knew you couldn't trust. He would do anything and not regret it. We stopped to get gas and he didn't think the air conditioning was high enough, so he slammed his head through the window to get some air. You look at someone like that in the eye for too long, and you definitely come up with characters. Wicked is out there. So it was kind of "Crime Writing 101," being a Deputy Marshal.

A lot of fugitives are moved by air now, but when I was working they were loaded into the back of the Crown Victoria, or at the most, a van. One arrest was that of a white-collar criminal. He had done his time in prison and was out on parole and made a mistake. Back then, when you re-arrested those on parole there was no court date or anything to wait for, you simply drove them back to prison in order to serve out the rest of their sentence. We arrested this guy very early in the morning. A nice guy, he was one of the few parolees we allowed

to hug his wife and child goodbye, because we knew there was no danger there. He was just a guy who made bad choices. We put him in the car and he chatted about what prison was like while we were headed there. The closer we got to the prison, the crazier his eyes became. It was like watching a different person come to life: tougher, meaner, harder, his whole countenance changed. I asked if he was all right; he reverted back to the nice guy for a second or two and said that he had to put on his prison face in order to survive in there. More stories to use in my books.

J.B.: You've worked coast to coast; can you tell us how tracking differs from region to region?

M.C.: Absolutely. As I said, you're not just a tracker of feet, there is a lot more urban work/skills you can master when it comes to tracking in the cities. When you're looking for someone, a detail of Deputy US Marshals are sent in to saturate the area in order to apprehend. People around the scene are great help when it comes to tracking. Imagine a movie where a chase scene is going on and a person runs through the crowd; the crowd will glance at where the person just was and one or two minutes later they are still looking, still wondering. There are times when I've been in foot pursuit and lost sight of the criminal but the crowd tells me where the fugitive has gone by where they're staring, which is essential in an urban environment.

When I worked the Texas/Mexico border with a stack of warrants in hand, I used the boots-on-ground tracking system that encompasses all types of information. Sometimes the tracking allows you to learn what number of people are in a certain place. Any officer will look for dog food and dishes in the front yard to assess what animals could be on the property, in order to see what dangers they might be dealing with. Urban tracking includes feeling the car to see if it's still hot, looking for toys in the front yard to assess if there are any kids...all of these paths make actual foot tracks a minor part of the detective work.

From Texas to Idaho to Nebraska, there are plenty of rural parts of the US where tracking is done, and often times not long-term like it is here. A good buddy of mine took my place as chief in Alaska and was looking for tell-tale prints on this ice road. All you get on this type of surface is scuff marks, but he tracked the criminal for over a mile and a half and ended up making the largest off-grid marijuana arrest in state history, all because he was a patient tracker.

J.B.: When it comes to Alaska, what makes tracking in that environment the most difficult?

M.C.: There are so many factors up here, but one important thing to note is that the tracking is rarely done alone. In Alaska, you not only have the bad guys ahead wanting to shoot back at you, but you also have to worry about the environmental

effects. A friend of mine was on a track up here the year before and fell through some thin ice in a bog. His tracking mission was over for the night right there. Being that it was 22 degrees below zero, you can't go any further or you'll lose a foot. You have to be aware of deep snow, avalanches, all of it. Every deputy that has moved here has been caught up to their thighs in snow while the fugitive is running away with their snow shoes on. The wet environment can be a curse. You have both the bad guy and Alaska that might try to kill you. Fortunately, like I said, I've never had a bear run-in. But there was a time when we had a subject who'd barricaded himself in a house. We were already too close to the house to backtrack or we'd be in the line of fire, so I found a place behind this privacy fence and squatted up against the house where I could remain unseen. The APD SWAT guys got there and began taking up positions by the privacy fence. I was between the fence and the house and one of the SWAT guys came around the corner. Immediately, a cow moose and a calf ran between the fence and the house, making us flatten ourselves against the house even more. Thankfully, they ran past us. But they are very aggressive, bigger than your car, and extremely fast. No nature film can accurately represent them.

D.P.L.: I cannot believe how the time has flown here, and there is so much more I wanted to talk about with you. Especially, of course, your fiction. In particular, your protagonist Jericho Quinn. Can you tell us as much as possible about your writing and what you and Quinn have in common?

M.C.: I started out writing westerns and kind of literary stuff at the beginning, but I always was the kind of guy living a life prone to broken ribs (i.e., riding motorcycles, fast cars, horses), and wanted to create a kick-butt kind of character. My boys are now both in law enforcement, and I always thought foreign languages were important. My oldest son speaks Mandarin and the youngest, Japanese. I took all of those facets and I just developed this character that's an Air Force Academy grad, rides motorcycles, and is an Air Force OSI agent. Like the Marshals, no one knows what an OSI agent really does, just that they're into special investigations and such. Everybody knows what NCIS does because they have a TV show, but I think OSI turned down that opportunity first.

Jericho was also a Marine gunnery sergeant. (I have a special kinship with them because of a gunnery sergeant that worked with me in the US Marshals.) He rides a BMW GS, kind of an off-road/on-road bike that I ride as well. He gets to wear a leather jacket where he hides his guns and knives, and goes out and does the stuff people like us wish we could do if we weren't hobbled by rules and red tape.

I think it was my youngest son who, after reading the second book in his late teens, really summed up Jericho Quinn by saying: "Dad, I hope someday I can ride a Royal Enfield into gunfire and save the girl."

I like to say, because I went to so many of these joint terrorism task force meetings and had secret clearance so many times that, I'm very careful to not write a "Clancy-esque" kind of book, even though I love them. I want my books to be highly possible, and not just probable. So my books are a bit over the top, with the motorcycle chases, gun fights, etc., but Jericho is also incredibly human. He loses parts of himself along the way, like a toe or an earlobe. You can't live the James Bond type of life and not lose things along the way. I like escapist books, but they have to be probable. Also, when I write, I like the fire going. And although I keep the cowboy TV playing in the background, there can be absolutely no music playing outside of my head. You see, if I don't hear the "Indiana Jones" theme playing in my head while I'm writing, then I know I'm definitely not on the right track.

Marc Cameron, as you can see, is a complete pleasure to learn from. Having a unique, extremely exciting life allows him to be informative and riveting all at the same time. To learn more about his work, head to www.marccameronbooks.com. ■

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The ‘CEREAL’ Killer

By John C. Weil

In early summer beneath a gray moon with edges so sharp it could slice skin, a Kansas City Sheriff’s dispatcher received a 911 call from a distraught woman in the small two-road town of Cole.

The caller screamed wildly into the phone, imploring police to, “Please help me.”

“I’m Sarah Montgomery,” she shouted. Dispatch immediately cross-referenced the name with the landline from the residence.

“Please remain calm, Mrs. Montgomery,” he said.

“You must help me!” she screamed again. Then inexplicably the call was disconnected. Call backs were unanswered.

The dispatcher then contacted two deputies patrolling thirty miles away where Kansas City crack dealers were known to ply their trade in one of a large collection of rundown vacant factories.

“I show three residents at the home,” dispatch reported. “Two parents, Tom and Sarah Montgomery, and a son, Paul.”

“What’s the situation?” a deputy asked. “A break-in? Domestic violence? I’m not clear.”

“Don’t know. The call was terminated,” the dispatcher said, voice echoing.

“On our way,” the deputy responded.

Two well-seasoned officers—Deputies Jim Parson and Mike Carver—abandoned their search for dope dealers and drove onto the highway. That would get them to the house in twenty minutes. Ten minutes later the same caller reached dispatch again. “I need help,” she pleaded. “Please...”

“Ma’am, tell me the nature of the emergency.”

The dispatcher heard a male shout. Then the phone call was disconnected.

Dispatch reached the same deputy to explain what he’d heard. “Approach with caution.”

Deputies Parson and Carver arrived in minutes, cruiser lights gliding in circles on the pavement of the pitch black street. The rural roads of this area of Kansas had no streetlights and no stoplights. The colors red and blue rolled on the dead grass yard and the front window as they exited the vehicle. All the lights of the house were out. The two officers quickly assessed the surroundings. Parson noted that the nearest neighbor was sixty yards away. He withdrew his service revolver.

The house was a sad brick and pale yellow shiplap. Paint curled off the wood like shavings of old cheese. Overgrown bushes provided cover for someone to hide. They checked the exterior grounds first. Moments later, they opened the unlocked front door. “Deputy Sheriffs,” Parson shouted. He shouted twice more.

Carver withdrew his gun, too, a Glock, and the pair stepped inside the house.

Once again no one responded to a warning that they were now inside the home.

When Parson tried to flick on the lights, none responded. They made better use of two flashlights. Bright light immediately lit up the living room. As they tried to maneuver between piles of junk as high as their shoulders they could see the light bar of the cruiser turning the heavy curtains crimson red. But no light seemed to get past them.

With flashlights darting about the small home as if a somber Hollywood premier, deputies could see junk piled high in

every room. Few pictures decorated the walls. All of them were crooked, or had broken glass. The place was such an unruly dump the two officers couldn't distinguish everyday living from evidence of violence. Carver, in his forties with a sturdy build, shifted his flashlight to the small kitchen on their left. A wood butcher block that held large knives was missing the three biggest. The pair glanced at one another. For the first time, Parson felt the hair stand up on the back of his neck.

They turned for the hallway. Broken dishes, a collapsed chair and pillows on the floor blocked the small paths made between the various collections. "Looks like hoarders," Parson said.

Carver nodded, eyeing an old box of camera Magicubes from the early 1970s that had been nailed alongside a tattered magazine photo for kitchen decoration. The furniture was stained, even greasy. A moldy bagel lay on the floor. Parson sidestepped three stacked useless microwaves. He avoided dozens of empty beer bottles and almost fell into a hole in the floor that opened to the dirt underneath. In that brief second he spotted a small furry animal skittering by.

"Deputy Sheriffs! Anyone here? Show yourself," he shouted once again.

No one responded. The deputies moved slowly through the remaining few feet of the living room. One of them noticed two windows nailed shut. Hundreds of cigarette butts overflowed from multiple ashtrays.

Then the crime scene began to take shape. They saw rope—long pieces of rope. Their immediate reaction; the perpetrator had tied up the family.

"Deputy Sheriffs. We are armed. Please show yourself."

Parson stepped over a pile of coats, then spotted a head on the floor.

"Crap," he spat.

They moved in close. The body of a teenage boy lay behind a large steamer trunk. His hands were tied behind his back. The head was off to the side, severed at the neck. Slow movement of the flashlight illuminated the blood splattered three feet high on the wall and pooled on the floor.

"Sliced clean off..." Parson said.

"I...I can't look at it."

The two officers were long-time partners. Neither had ever come upon a murder. They had never seen anything like this.

They entered a hallway. It went both left and right.

"I'm going down the hallway to the right," Carver said, "then through that first bedroom door. You cover the hallway on the left. Two doors. Anything comes out of those doors toward you or me don't ask questions, send him to hell."

"Got it."

Carver walked cautiously up the hall. His gun was out front, ready, stiff-armed. For a small house the hallway to

various bedrooms was surprisingly long by comparison. When he stepped forward he understood why. It was clearly an addition, likely built by the homeowner without permits. He knew this because the floor was uneven.

With Parson moving away from him at the other end of the hall, Carver entered the first bedroom on his left. He checked behind the furniture. The closet door was open. A door at the back of the bedroom creaked. He moved toward it.

Parson had also entered a bedroom at the other end of the hall. He began to back out of the room but heard a *thump*. He glanced up and down the hallway. "Mike?" he called out.

He saw his partner's flashlight moving around one of the bedrooms. Clearly, he decided, he heard the *thump* too and went to investigate.

Parson decided to continue to the back bedroom.

It was the master bedroom. Not much bigger than the one he'd just been in. He tried the lights. Nothing. He scanned the room with the flashlight. The light reflected off a mirror, blinding him for a second. "Mrs. Montgomery? Please respond..."

Then he saw it.

A dead man was sprawled on the floor. The man's arms were tied behind his back. His legs were bound, too. He had been stabbed multiple times. "Geez-Marie," Parson muttered.

He heard a noise behind him. He spun around so quickly he almost fell and fired his gun. The door was slowly closing.

He froze. His finger cradled the trigger of his Glock. The hinges of the door creaked a bit.

Behind the door, in the corner, tight in a fetal position, sat a blonde woman about the same age as the man. The day had been hot and she was dressed in everyday shorts and tank top. The tank top was torn in the front. Her shorts were unbuttoned and unzipped. She had bruises on her face, as if she had been struck several times.

Parson shone the flashlight on her. She was shaking with fear. No blood appeared on her clothes or any part of her. "Mrs. Montgomery? I'm Officer Jim Parson of the Sheriff's Department. You're safe now. Are you all right?"

She glanced up fearfully, squinting in the bright light. Her blue eyes were wet, she had been crying so hard her face was stained with mascara.

"Are you injured?" he asked.

She shook her head, then assessed herself, changed her mind and nodded.

Parson gulped and crouched in front of her. "Can you move?" he asked.

"I...I think so," she said

"What happened here?"

"He...tried to kill me."

"This man?"

He pointed to the body.

She did not respond, but continued to tremble.

"Is this your husband, ma'am?"

He pointed to the dead man again.

"Yes," she sobbed.

"Did he attack you?"

She looked up at him perplexed, as if his question had just registered. "No... Of course not. A man broke in and raped me. He tied up my husband... My son? Where's my son?"

"Do you know if the killer is still in the house?"

The woman crawled over to the body of her husband as if realizing for the first time that he was dead. She sobbed on his chest.

"Mrs. Montgomery?" Parson said. "I need to know where the man who attacked you has gone."

"I don't know... I don't... I think he ran out a back door when you arrived."

The deputy glanced out a window. He saw a cement sidewalk leading to the backyard. From the window he could see the back screen door was open. It swung outward, bouncing slightly on its hinges in the light breeze.

"Thank you. I need to walk you into the living room to preserve this crime scene."

"Where is my son? Is my son safe?"

"Did your husband struggle with the perpetrator?"

"He fought back. Please tell me, is my son alright?"

The deputy lifted her up by the elbows. "Let me escort you to the cruiser. My partner will help you."

"I must stay with my husband."

"You may be in shock, ma'am."

Parson got on the talkie with the dispatcher. He asked for backup. As he turned to lead the woman out of the room he noticed blood on the floor. It seemed to be coming from behind the closet door. He glanced at her.

"Did your son...or you, injure the man who broke into the house?"

"My son did..."

The deputy stiffened. He aimed the Glock at the door. "Could he have tried to hide in there?"

"I think he ran outside..."

"You said that..."

"But I closed my eyes...I thought he would kill me..."

Parson assessed the amount of blood. He crouched and aimed the flashlight under the door. "Can't make out anything," he said. "Step back please, Mrs. Montgomery."

She did not hesitate. She stepped back several feet.

Parson took a deep breath. He focused. Then he slowly reached out for the doorknob to the closet.

He rested his hands on the knob. Seconds passed.

He glanced at the woman. She covered her face with her hand. "Oh, God, please no," she muttered. "Please... I don't

want to see him..."

"Try to get control of yourself," he said.

Parson waited. Breathed in again. Then he yanked open the closet door. A woman with stab wounds was in an upright position. She buckled and fell forward as the door opened. She hit the floor and blood splattered across the deputy's pants. He was startled, started to reach for her pulse then stopped when he felt someone on him quickly. "You're not Mrs. Montgomery, are you?" he said as a large knife sliced across his throat.

"No," she said. "The bitch is."

The blonde woman watched Parson die slowly and painfully. His eyes stared up at her as she kicked away his gun. She leaned over him. "How's it feel?"

His lips moved but he made no sound.

"Dying?" she asked. "How's it feel?"

Parson said nothing.

"Tell me," she asked as if she were his best friend. "What's it like?"

She held his hand. "I want to know..."

The life left his eyes. He stopped moving. The woman dropped his hand like it had leprosy. She quickly snapped several cell phone photos of all three victims.

She then hurried down the hall, past Carver whose throat was slit deeply from ear to ear. She had gone through a separate entrance to the bedroom at that end of the hallway and taken him out quickly and silently. Carter was so stunned by her appearance behind him that he froze for a brief second, allowing her to stab him in the neck. Then she returned to her fetal position in the other room to kill Parson.

She stopped for a brief moment and took photos of Carver, too.

In the kitchen she passed the box of cereal and an empty bowl and spoon she had snacked on earlier while waiting for the deputies to arrive. She loved word play, and chuckled as she muttered, "Cereal Killer."

With a kerchief, she sopped up blood from the teenager she had killed. He had put up a fight but she was the one with the weapon. Thinking herself clever, she wrote 'Cereal Killer' in blood on the table.

She slipped out the back door, hopped the fence, walked through two large backyards then surfaced on another desolate street with only four homes nearby. "Maybe I'll visit one of you next month," she said laughing.

She got in her car just seconds after two patrol vehicles pulled up to the crime scene, lights flashing, bathing the front of the house in more red and blue.

"All in a day's work," the woman said to herself while on the highway. She checked her hair. Then smiled.

"I enjoyed that. I can't wait to do more."

She kept driving until her car was swallowed by darkness.

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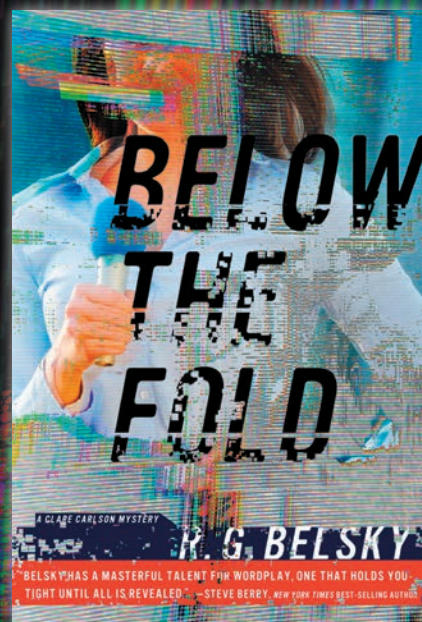
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