



THE NOOSELETTER

CROAK & DAGGER

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER – SISTERS in CRIME

Volume XVI, Number 4 —July / August 2020

†The President's Corner†

Hello, all you cloaked in masks and gloves,

Here's to not leaving fingerprints on anything, including your face. We certainly live in curious times. Sadly, as president, I'm cancelling meetings month by month as necessary, and your board members now conduct business by email.

Our membership chair, Pat Wood, emailed all of you about Kari Bovee stepping into the vice-president position because Gloria Casale is moving back to Kentucky. Pat also announced that your dues for this year will be rolled over to pay for next year's dues. You each will still need to pay your 2021 Sisters in Crime dues as required for membership in our Croak & Dagger Chapter.

Speaking of members, Pat mentioned to me yesterday that our membership keeps increasing. We are now up to 46 members. Also a reminder, the Rhys Bowen conference will be held sometime in August or September of 2021. Robert Kidera, treasurer, said he has refunded all registration fees for this year's canceled 2020 conference.

Other behind-the-scenes happenings:

- LCC (Left Coast Crime) 2021 convention planning meetings are on hold. I keep in touch with Lucinda Surber and Stan Ulrich, the co-chairs of LCC.
- GLA (Great Library Adventure) has plans to involve the total membership with the GLLA (Great Little Libraries Adventure). More to follow. We want each of you to participate. Trust me, you'll find this simple and gratifying as well as a great promotional event.

- GLA is about to get back on the road, starting with the Moriarty Library's locked room display (see page 2).
- Croak & Dagger's board welcomes any suggestions members have for engaging activities that don't violate social distancing.
- Board members have suggested creating unique writing challenges. Ideas include multiple-authored stories, individual short stories, or maybe an anthology.
- Art Eisenson emailed us about Netflix opportunities. Here's the submissions link: https://www.projectcasting.com/tips-and-advice/netflix-imagine-impact/?fbclid=IwAR2LP0aVSBxrJ9heUORdzo7Fqeiwa5mVLcXownLHzJJJRAI4CE_DqqQUy0 Want to know more? FAQ: <https://www.imagine-impact.com/netflix-faq>. They are open for submission now, and you will have three more chances to submit in the months to come. Thank you, Art! You're right. This may open doors for us.
- Susan Zates, our web maven, is creating a Croak & Dagger Facebook page. Post on it.
- Speaking of which, when was the last time you checked out our website? If you're an author, consider having Susan post your photo and website on the authors' page. While you're there, click on our authors' photos and check out their latest news.

2020, a most interest time, could be terrific inspiration for unique stories. Do the moods connected to this social strangeness affect your reading choices or change the tone of your writing? Let us know what you think on our new Facebook page.

Charlene Dietz, President

Attention, Library Adventurers!

The NM library world is reopening, kinda sorta. We'll be hauling books, furniture, and "stuff" to Moriarty mid- to late-next week, for our annual summer visit. It's been a while, so take a tally of what's in your evidence bags. Many thanks to those of you who have provided multiple copies of some titles, since we are now starring at two libraries in some months.

If you have a new title out or on pre-order in July, let me (Ann Zeigler at annz1@centurylink.net) know ASAP so we can make some arrangements. For those who are reissuing, get in touch to be sure I have the newbie not the old edition.



Sisters in Crime **Guppies**

SinC Guppies is an online writer's support group. Guppies come from across the United States and Canada but share a passion for writing mysteries and a common goal of getting published.

Subgroups represent cozies, noir, psychological and romantic suspense, and thrillers.

The Mystery Analysis Group is a book discussion group aimed at discussing the craft, and the AgentQuest group can help with writing queries and synopses. For more information, check them out at www.sinc-guppies.org.



Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986.

The mission of Sisters in Crime shall be "to promote the ongoing advancement, recognition, and professional development of women crime writers."

And our motto is: "SinC up with great crime writing!"

Check out the Croak & Dagger Website (www.croak-and-dagger.com) for:

- Upcoming Programs & Events
- Meeting Schedule
- Our Authors & links to member authors' websites
- How to Join C&D / SinC
- Link to the C&D blog

REMEMBER: Our Croak& Dagger blog provides opportunities for free publicity for members. Contact our website maven, Susan Zates (address below) for more information or with an idea for a blog article. Get your name out there wherever you can!



The Line Up

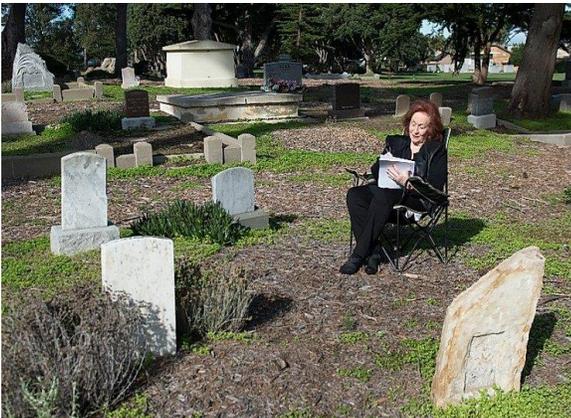
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Noose News

The More Press, the Better

Pat Wood was interviewed for an article that appeared in the Roswell Daily Record on June 22. In the interview, Pat talks about how her father was an inspiration to write her first book, *The Easter Egg Murder*. “I heard my dad speak of the case through the years,” she told The Record, “and I thought it so sad her murderer was never found and punished. It occurred to me in the late ‘70s, that I should work on a fictional mystery based on that case, but I’d have the advantage of naming a killer, and solving the murder.”

Pat is, of course, also the author of the Harrie McKinsey mysteries, most recently *Murder at the Petroglyphs*, which won first place in the New Mexico Press Women’s 2020 Writers Communications Contest.



More summer reading

New C&D member Marcia Rosen has a new book coming out this summer! *Dead in THAT Beach House* will be out in August. This is the third in her Senior Sleuths mystery series, written as M. Glenda Rosen.

After a career as an entrepreneur and writer of nonfiction books, Marcia took on the pen name M. Glenda Rosen to begin a career as a mystery author. Growing up with a father involved in organized crime inspired her fascination with crime and love for all things mysterious. Her Senior Sleuths features a criminal character modeled on her own father.

Marcia also writes the “Dying to be Beautiful” series, currently up to four books.

Rudolfo Anaya 1937-2020

We don’t think of Rudolfo Anaya, author of the classic Chicano novel, *Bless Me, Última*, as a mystery writer, but he was that too.

Anaya’s four Sonny Baca novels, with a Chicano PI hero, take place all over New Mexico: *Zia Summer* in Albuquerque’s South Valley, *Rio Grande Fall* at Balloon Fiesta, *Shaman Winter* in Santa Fe, and *Jemez Spring* in Los Alamos. Sonny solves a variety of crimes, some close to home personally for him.



Anaya lived in New Mexico all his life. After Albuquerque High School, he forged his writing career between teaching at Harrison Middle School and Valley High School. He received his bachelor’s degree and two master’s from UNM, where he subsequently taught creative writing until his retirement in 1993.

In 2009, an elementary school was named for him, and in 2018, the North Valley Library on Second Street was renamed for Anaya. “I’ve always been connected to libraries,” he said at the time. “It’s a center for democracy and of a community.” In May 2019, Governor Michelle Lujan Griffin named October 30, the writer’s birthday, as Rudolfo Anaya I Love to Read Day.

Bless Me, Última was made into a movie in 2010, after receiving numerous literary awards, including the Premio Quinto Sol prize in 1972 for “bringing Chicano culture to the forefront of American cultures.” Anaya received the National Humanities Medal from President Barack Obama in 2015.

COVID-19 Update

Wednesday, June 10, 2020

This is a further update on the Sisters in Crime response to the threat of COVID-19.

As a community based in gathering to share stories, Sisters in Crime takes very seriously the threat of the COVID-19 virus to our members and readers. To continue our effort to help flatten the curve of coronavirus outbreak in the United States and Canada, we are continuing and expanding the following measures:

A full suspension of all in-person events originating from Sisters in Crime, Inc., until 2021. We thank other organizations who have made the difficult decision to cancel events or move them online. Our Speakers Bureau program has been paused until at least 2021, though we have made efforts to make our speakers available for virtual events. We strongly encourage chapters with 2020 Speakers Bureau matches to pivot in-person events to virtual events. New Speakers Bureau matches are on pause indefinitely.

The suggestion that chapters and members cancel all in-person events through the end of the calendar year. If chapters or members begin in-person meetings or sponsor or attend events still on the fall calendar, they should follow the strictest local, state, and federal guidelines. Chapters holding their own in-person events should consider event insurance. Chapters relying on Event Grants from SinC, Inc., for sponsorship of large-scale in-person events should seek national board approval before expecting, promising, or spending sponsorship funding. We highly recommend that chapters develop content for members who hope to stay in quarantine through the fall and, if possible, into the future.

The extension of our Chapter Event Grants allowances for virtual technology. The allowance for SinC Chapters to apply for an Event Grant to fund audio-visual equipment and/or virtual meeting subscriptions remains open until October 1. We highly recommend chapters develop virtual content for members who are staying in quarantine, and consider further virtual content to better serve distant membership. Chapter leadership may rely on their io group or the national board to give guidance on best practices, topic and speaker suggestions, and more. Our commissioned article from Dana Kaye on best practices for online events [remains available on our website](#).

The deadline for use of 2020 Education Grants has been extended through 2021. If you are a recipient eligible to extend your grant timeline, you should have received further details by email. New Education Grants are on pause indefinitely.

Please, for the sake of all our communities, practice social distancing and safety precautions. Thank you for your patience with our organization and other volunteers in the mystery community as we all figure out how to best serve you in light of this ongoing situation.

Lori Rader-Day

National President, Sisters in Crime

Getting Away from It All ***(When You're Social Distancing)***

We all know there's nothing like losing yourself in another world by reading. Nowadays that seems more difficult, but at the same time easier, given the multitude of good books to delve into, whether via paper or pixel. But where to start?

As mystery readers, we've probably already dispensed with the obvious trips (Nevada Barr at the national parks, anything set in Scandinavia, *Murder on the Orient Express*, on film or in book form). There are more recent possibilities.



Here are some far-flung mysteries and thrillers (click for more) from <https://crimereads.com/6-international-crime-novels-you-should-read-this-june/>:

You-Jeong Jeong, *Seven Years of Darkness* (Penguin Books)

The unloved son of serial killer finds the shame of his family's past following him wherever he goes. When a package arrives promising to reveal the truth behind his father's crimes, he has no choice other than to return to his South Korea hometown and finally attempt to discover the full story of the long-ago crimes.

Katja Ivar, *Deep As Death* (Bitter Lemon)

Ivar is truly international—she grew up in the United States and Russia, then traveled across the world before settling in Paris, her home base for writing chilling psychological thrillers that hold their own against any Scandi noir. In *Deep as Death*, a former cop who's turned to private investigation after being fired from the force investigates the murder of a high-end call girl whose last client dropped her off at the bottom of Helsinki harbor. Set in 1953, *Deep as Death* takes us into the high point of conservatism and the behind-the-scenes libertinage that repression engenders.

Ameera Patel, *Outside the Lines* (Catalyst)

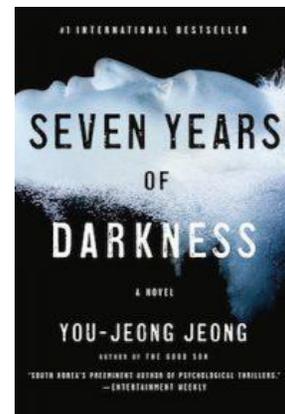
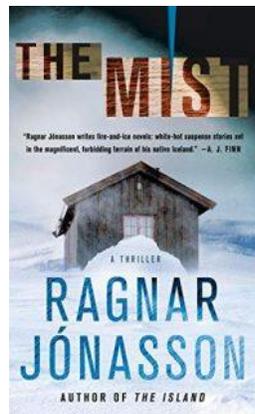
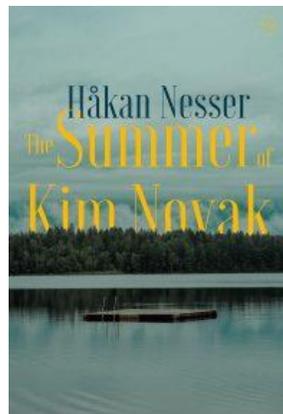
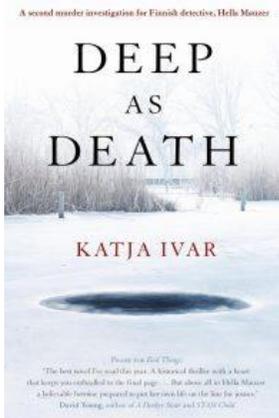
In this coke-fueled thrill-ride through the underworld of Jo'burg, characters face difficult decisions and try to find some humanity, even as the quest for money and the need to meet family expectations tear them apart. South Africa is one of the great hot spots for crime fiction these days, and we can't wait to see more from Ameera Patel.

Hakan Nesser, *The Summer of Kim Novak* (World Editions)

Set in the 1960s on the cusp of great changes, *The Summer of Kim Novak* tells the story of a torrid affair and terrible murder, seen through the eyes of a young boy over a single long summer. He's been sent out of town to the family lake house with his brother as their mother lies dying of cancer. Just before the end of the school year, a young woman arrives who sends the town into a flurry with her resemblance to actress Kim Novak. She's there to join her brutish, wealthy husband, but soon begins an illicit liaison with the narrator's handsome older brother that can only lead to dire consequences.

Ragnar Jonasson, *The Mist* (Minotaur)

While Ragnar Jonasson may look more like a model than an author, his books belie the suspicions derived from his good looks with their quality and craft. In *The Mist*, Jonasson's third and final novel to feature Icelandic Detective Hulda, who begins the novel struggling to get back to full form after experiencing an unspeakable trauma. She's called out to investigate the discovery of two bodies on an isolated farm, dead since Christmas but only discovered in the February snowmelt, whose deaths we trace back to the arrival of an unexpected and menacing visitor.



Nina Laurin writes in <https://crimereads.com/five-great-thrillers-set-in-isolated-places/>:

With everything on lockdown, crowded cities have become a whole lot less appealing. Confined in an apartment with a stockpile of pasta and a towering TBR pile, it's easy to find yourself wondering: how cool would it be right now to live on a private island somewhere, or on a yacht, or at least in a camper in the middle of the wilderness? Maybe not so cool. Here are my favorite thrillers set in isolated places.

***Fake Like Me* by Barbara Bourland**

A meticulously researched journey into the world of contemporary art, *Fake Like Me* takes us to a remote abandoned resort where a group of artists once created their scandalous masterpieces, led by sculptor Carey Logan who later killed herself by drowning in the lake at that very compound. The nameless protagonist of *Fake Like Me* is here to recreate the paintings that got destroyed when her building burned down—and she must do it in complete secrecy because the paintings have already been sold. Oops.

***Kill Creek* by Scott Thomas**

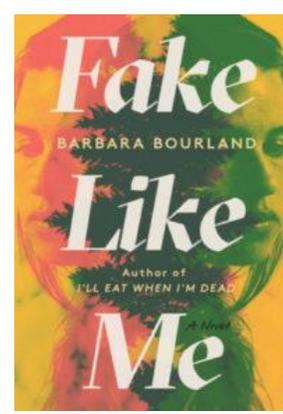
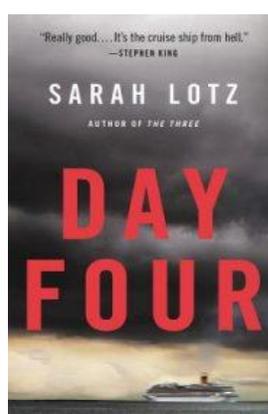
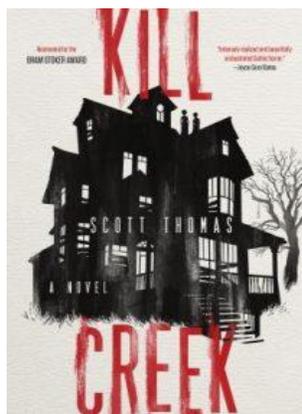
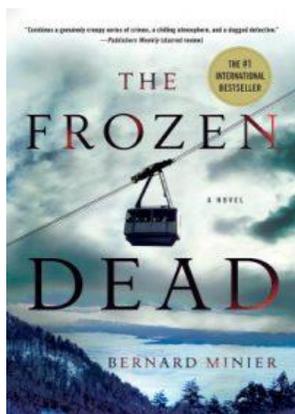
I love books about writers, especially those that show the less cutesy or less glamorous side of it. So I was initially drawn to this book by the, ahem, colorful cast of horror writers who all end up at the same allegedly haunted house in search of inspiration, to say nothing of a career boost. Inspiration is what they find in this creepy abandoned house, site of many strange happenings. Before long, each of the writers is penning their own novel based on their time at the house, but when they suddenly hit a (metaphorical and literal) wall, they must go back to Kill Creek to find out how the story ends. The writer archetypes are spot-on perfect and over-the-top, which goes hand in hand with the recurring theme of the book: to what extent are the horrors that haunt us the product of our own minds?

***Day Four* by Sarah Lotz**

You don't have to read *The Three* to enjoy the follow-up by Sarah Lotz. Seemingly unrelated to the first book, *Day Four* takes place on a cruise ship. On the fourth day of the cruise, in the middle of a storm, something goes terribly wrong, and the ship is mired in the middle of the ocean with a dead engine, a dwindling food supply, and, the horror, no wi-fi. And someone on board just committed murder—although you'll soon realize it's about the least creepy and disturbing thing happening on board this cursed ship. Lotz writes these claustrophobic settings so vividly you'll get goosebumps, and she's not the kind of writer to deliver neat endings with a bow on top.

***The Frozen Dead* by Bernard Minier**

There's something about French thrillers that sets them apart. How dark are they willing to go? Very dark, if this book is any indication. I first became familiar with *The Frozen Dead* by the French author Bernard Minier when I stumbled upon the Netflix series. The moment I heard those opening credits with Nine Inch Nails' *Hurt* sung by a children's choir, I was in! This novel is set in a small town in the French Pyrenees, an icy, isolated, barely accessible place. And the high security mental institution nearby doesn't help its reputation, especially once the mutilated body of a horse is discovered nearby and Commandant Martin Servaz is called in to investigate. The novel is the start of a series, and the latest installment, *La Vallée*, comes out this year.



Finally, Ye Editor recommends some out-of-my-usual-sphere mysteries she's read lately. [C&D members: What's on *your* bookshelf?]

Getting There Is Half the Fun:

***Night Ferry to Death* and *A Six-Letter Word for Death* by Patricia Moyes.**

In *Night Ferry*, Scotland Yard Inspector Henry Tibbett and his wife Emmy are coming back from a continental holiday via the Harwich-Hook ferry between England and the Netherlands. The ferry is more crowded than usual, much to the dismay of a passenger named Smith (he says), who insists he must have a cabin. He doesn't get one, and the next morning is found dead in the public "sleep chair" lounge. Tibbett later learns that he was a courier for an Amsterdam diamond merchant and was carrying jewels, which have gone missing.

Exotic destinations:

***A Nest of Vipers* by Andrea Camilleri.**

This is a later entry in the author's popular Inspector Montalbano series, set in Sicily. A wealthy philanderer has been murdered, and Inspector Montalbano's investigation includes digging into Cosimo Barletta's unsavory history of greed, corruption, and preying on young girls. If anyone deserved killing, Montalbano must be thinking, Barletta did. But twice?

The Blood Strand by Chris Ould.

This intriguing new police procedural is set in the Faroe Islands, of all the remote places. Jan Reyná is a British police detective, who comes to the islands when he learns that his father, whom he's never met as an adult, is dying. Jan really wants to find out more about his mother, Lydia, and why she fled home and husband to live in England. Being a cop, though, Jan gets drawn into a murder case that doesn't seem related to his family history, and meets a local cop, Hjalti Hentze, who seems to be on his wavelength and lets Jan tag along on part of his investigation.

Closer to home:

Mercy Falls by William Kent Krueger.

Set in northern Minnesota, the story starts off with a bang. When Sheriff Corcoran (Cork) O'Connor answers a routine call, his deputy is shot by a sniper. Pretty soon it begins to look like the real target was Cork himself. But then he's called to another, seemingly unrelated investigation of a mutilated body left above the roaring waters of Mercy Falls.

Night Vision by Randy Wayne White, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2011, 351 pages (HC).

Travis McGee morphs into Rambo in this thriller in White's Doc Ford series. South Florida is, apparently, the destination of bad choice of many Central American economic refugees, who are taken advantage of by the Really Bad Guys in this story. One of the migrants, Tula, disguises herself as a boy but doesn't fool Doc's friend Tomlinson, who befriends her, then asks for Doc's help finding her when she disappears, along with the creepy owner of her trailer park, after a body is found in the murky water surrounding the park. Actually, a body part was found in the belly of a giant alligator, a tussle with which provides an exciting opening to the story.

The Bone Orchard by Paul Doiron. Minotaur, 2014, 305 pp (HC)

Maine Game Warden Mike Bowditch has left the Warden Service (he has a way of ticking off the powers that be) and is working as a fishing guide in the North Woods, when his former mentor in the Service, Kathy Frost, is shot outside her farmhouse, Mike is fortuitously there to keep her alive until help comes. Of course, he's determined to track down the shooter, but that involves digging into not only Kathy's past but his own, not a comfortable journey.

A Trick of the Light by Louise Penny. Minotaur Books, 2011, 339 pp (HC).

Three Pines in Quebec isn't exactly a cozy village, although the leading characters are friends who remain loyal to one another; even Chief Inspector Armand Gamache of the Sûreté du Québec, who turns up to investigate the latest murder, is falling for the place. I imagine, though, that when Peter and Clara, bookstore owner Myrna, and crusty old Ruth see Gamache and his team coming, they head right over to Olivier and Gabri's bistro and order strong drink.

The Gray and Guilty Sea by Scott William Carter. Flying Raven Press, 2011, 268 pp (PB).

Garrison Gage is an ex-private investigator who escaped to the other side of the country after his wife was brutally murdered in New York and Gage himself beaten badly enough that he still limps painfully. Trying to forget the past, he escapes into his ocean-side bungalow in Oregon, crossword puzzles, and misanthropy. But when he finds a young woman's body washed up on the beach, his conscience won't let him forget her either, and he's drawn back into his old job to solve the girl's murder.

There was an Old Woman by Hallie Ephron. William Morrow, 2013, 309 pp (PB).

When Evie Ferrante's mother is hospitalized, her sister Ginger guilt-trips Evie (who'd been avoiding their difficult mom) into moving to Brooklyn to look after her house there. She finds the place in chaos, and attempting to sort out the mess, finds objects that don't belong there and starts asking questions. Mom's elderly neighbor, Mina Yetner, who might know what brought her friend to such a pass, has her own problems. Her nephew Brian is trying to persuade her to move to a senior care community, but Mina resists. Until Brian, and the behind-the-scenes manipulators he works for, get desperate.

The Macbeth Murder Mystery

by James Thurber

"It was a stupid mistake to make," said the American woman I had met at my hotel in the English lake country, "but it was on the counter with the other Penguin books—the little sixpenny ones, you know, with the paper covers—and I supposed of course it was a detective story. All the others were detective stories. I'd read all the others, so I bought this one without really looking at it carefully. You can imagine how mad I was when I found it was Shakespeare."

I murmured something sympathetically.

"I don't see why the Penguin-books people had to get out Shakespeare's plays in the same size and everything as the detective stories," went on my companion.

"I think they have different-colored jackets," I said.

"Well, I didn't notice that," she said. "Anyway, I got real comfy in bed that night and all ready to read a good mystery story and here I had *The Tragedy of Macbeth*—a book for high-school students. Like *Ivanhoe*,"

"Or *Lorna Doone*," I said.

"Exactly," said the American lady. "And I was just crazy for a good Agatha Christie, or something. Hercule Poirot is my favorite detective."

"Is he the rabbit one?" I asked.

"Oh, no," said my crime-fiction expert. "He's the Belgian one. You're thinking of Mr. Pinkerton, the one that helps Inspector Bull. He's good, too."

Over her second cup of tea my companion began to tell the plot of a detective story that had fooled her completely—it seems it was the old family doctor all the time. But I cut in on her. "Tell me," I said. "Did you read *Macbeth*?"

"I *had to* read it," she said. "There wasn't a scrap of anything else to read in the whole room."

"Did you like it?" I asked.

"No, I did not," she said, decisively. "In the first place, I don't think for a moment that Macbeth did it."

I looked at her blankly. "Did what?" I asked.

"I don't think for a moment that he killed the King," she said. "I don't think the Macbeth woman was mixed up in it, either. You suspect them the most, of course, but those are the ones that are never guilty—or shouldn't be, anyway."

"I'm afraid," I began, "that I—"

"But don't you see?" said the American lady. "It would spoil everything if you could figure out right away who did it. Shakespeare was too smart for that. I've read that people never *have* figured out *Hamlet*, so it isn't likely Shakespeare would have made *Macbeth* as simple as it seems."

I thought this over while I filled my pipe. "Who do you suspect?" I asked, suddenly. "Macduff," she said, promptly.

"Good God!" I whispered, softly.

"Oh, Macduff did it, all right," said the murder specialist. "Hercule Poirot would have got him easily."

"How did you figure it out?" I demanded.

"Well," she said, "I didn't right away. At first I suspected Banquo. And then, of course, he was the second person killed. That was good right in there, that part. The person you suspect of the first murder should always be the second victim."

"Is that so?" I murmured.

"Oh, yes," said my informant. "They have to keep surprising you. Well, after the second murder I didn't know *who* the killer was for a while."

"How about Malcolm and Donalbain, the King's sons?" I asked. "As I remember it, they fled right after the first murder. That looks suspicious."

"Too suspicious," said the American lady. "Much too suspicious. When they flee, they're never guilty. You can count on that."

"I believe," I said, "I'll have a brandy," and I summoned the waiter.

My companion leaned toward me, her eyes bright, her teacup quivering. "Do you know who discovered Duncan's body?" she demanded. I said I was sorry, but I had forgotten. "Macduff discovers it," she said, slipping into the historical present. "Then he comes running downstairs and shouts, 'Confusion has broke open the Lord's anointed temple' and 'Sacrilegious murder has made his masterpiece' and on and on like that."

The good lady tapped me on the knee. "All that stuff was *rehearsed*" she said. "You wouldn't say a lot of stuff like that, offhand, would you—if you had found a body?" She fixed me with a glittering eye.

"I—" I began.

"You're right!" she said. "You wouldn't! Unless you had practiced it in advance. 'My God, there's a body in here!' is what an innocent man would say." She sat back with a confident glare.

I thought for a while. "But what do you make of the Third Murderer?" I asked. "You know, the Third Murderer has puzzled *Macbeth* scholars for three hundred years."

"That's because they never thought of Macduff," said the American lady. "It was Macduff, I'm certain. You couldn't have one of the victims murdered by two ordinary thugs—the murderer always has to be somebody important."

"But what about the banquet scene?" I asked, after a moment. "How do you account for Macbeth's guilty actions there, when Banquo's ghost came in and sat in his chair?"

The lady leaned forward and tapped me on the knee again. "There wasn't any ghost," she said. "A big, strong man like that doesn't go around seeing ghosts—especially in a brightly lighted banquet hall with dozens of people around. Macbeth was *shielding somebody!*"

"Who was he shielding?" I asked.

"Mrs. Macbeth, of course," she said. "He thought she did it and he was going to take the rap himself. The husband always does that when the wife is suspected."

"But what," I demanded, "about the sleepwalking scene, then?"

"The same thing, only the other way around," said my companion. "That time *she* was shielding *him*. She wasn't asleep at all. Do you remember where it says, 'Enter Lady Macbeth with a taper'?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, people who walk in their sleep *never carry lights!*" said my fellow-traveller. "They have second sight. Did you ever hear of a sleepwalker carrying a light?"

"No," I said, "I never did."

"Well, then, she wasn't asleep. She was acting guilty to shield Macbeth."

"I think," I said, "I'll have another brandy," and I called the waiter. When he brought it, I drank it rapidly and rose to go. "I believe," I said, "that you have got hold of something. Would you lend me that *Macbeth*? I'd like to look it over tonight. I don't feel, somehow, as if I'd ever really read it."

"I'll get it for you," she said. "But you'll find that I am right."

I read the play over carefully that night, and the next morning, after breakfast, I sought out the American woman. She was on the putting green, and I came up behind her silently and took her arm. She gave an exclamation. "Could I see you alone?" I asked, in a low voice. She nodded cautiously and followed me to a secluded spot.

"You've found out something?" she breathed.

"I've found out," I said, triumphantly, "the name of the murderer?"

"You mean it wasn't Macduff?" she said.

"Macduff is as innocent of those murders," I said, "as Macbeth and the Macbeth woman." I opened the copy of the play, which I had with me, and turned to Act II, Scene 2. "Here," I said, "you will see where

Lady Macbeth says, 'I laid their daggers ready. He could not miss 'em. Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done it.' Do you see?"

"No," said the American woman, bluntly, "I don't."

"But it's simple!" I exclaimed. "I wonder I didn't see it years ago. The reason Duncan resembled Lady Macbeth's father as he slept is that *it actually was her father!*"

"Good God!" breathed my companion, softly. "Lady Macbeth's father killed the King," I said, "and, hearing someone coming, thrust the body under the bed and crawled into the bed himself."

"But," said the lady, "you can't have a murderer who only appears in the story once. You can't have that."

"I know that," I said, and I turned to Act II, Scene 4. "It says here, 'Enter Ross with an old Man.' Now, that old man is never identified and it is my contention he was old Mr. Macbeth, whose ambition it was to make his daughter Queen. There you have your motive."

"But even then," cried the American lady, "he's still a minor character!"

"Not," I said, gleefully, "when you realized that he was also *one of the weird sisters in disguise!*"

"You mean one of the three witches?"

"Precisely," I said. "Listen to this speech of the old man's. 'On Tuesday last, a falcon towering in her pride of place, was by a mousing owl hawk'd at and kill'd.' Who does that sound like?"

"It sounds like the way the three witches talk," said my companion, reluctantly.

"Precisely!" I said again.

"Well," said the American woman, "maybe you're right, but—"

"I'm sure I am," I said. "And do you know what I'm going to do now?"

"No," she said. "What?"

"Buy a copy of *Hamlet*, I said, "and solve *that!*"

My companion's eyes brightened. "Then," she said, "you don't think Hamlet did it?"

"I am," I said, "absolutely positive he didn't."

"But who," she demanded, "do you suspect?"

I looked at her cryptically. "Everybody," I said, and disappeared into a small grove of trees as silently as I had come.

Books Are a Great Fit for Quarantine. The Book Business, Not So Much.

by Elizabeth A. Harris

You can read alone, you can write alone, but publishing is a very social business. During a normal week, Jordan Pavlin, the editorial director at Knopf, seldom ate at her desk. Depending on the day, she might be meeting with literary agents over lunch, catching up with an author over an after-work drink, or having a quick bite before a cocktail party for a newly released title.

She still doesn't eat at her desk. Since her office closed because of the coronavirus pandemic, lunch is at her kitchen table, with her three teenagers, every day. "I'm driving them crazy," she said.

Heavily concentrated in New York City, a lot of publishing work was traditionally done face to face—before the outbreak forced most offices to close. So while books are a good match for this moment when people are spending so much time at home, book publishing, in many ways, is not.

For many authors, turning in a manuscript is like handing over a chunk of their soul, and delicate conversations about revisions are generally best when you can look someone in the eye. Editors and agents build relationships over the course of years, learning each other's tastes in writers, themes and ideas.

The meandering conversations that lead there just don't work as well on Zoom.

From: <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/25/books/coronavirus-publishing-working-from-home.html>

Reviews

43 Missing by Carmen Amato. Laurel & Croton, 2017, 290 pp.

43 Missing is a police procedural, with a twist or two. Detective Emilia Cruz's usual beat is Acapulco, but in this story she is assigned to be part of a task force meeting in Mexico City to investigate the disappearance of 43 college students from a city in central Mexico.

In fact, the task force is assembled less to investigate the crime than to make sure the previous investigations, which turned up next to nothing, did all they could. Emilia knows it's a paper exercise to cover someone's *culo*, but she can't help asking questions anyway—and getting into trouble when she brings in an outside computer expert to track down what seem obvious errors.

On top of that, a diplomat from the U.S. Embassy offers her a “reward” if she'll help speed up the investigation so that representatives of *El Norte* can transport a known criminal to the U.S. without the danger of being hijacked by the gangs supposedly involved in the students' disappearance.

43 Missing is based on a real 2014 case of 43 teachers' college students who went missing and were never found. This strikes me as a dodgy sort of “reality” to base a mystery novel on, but maybe I'm too squeamish. Much of the action, when Emilia and her cohorts go to the scene of the disappearance and begin to put clues together, is exciting, with a plausible result. However, I think it was a mistake to add another, much more violent ending, to that, resulting in an unsatisfactory resolution to a subplot. ♦

Also included at the end of the Kindle version of *43 Missing* is a short story by the same author, which has an even less satisfactory ending, so I don't recommend it. On the other hand...

I recently discovered that Amazon offers a lot of short stories and novellas that you can download to your Kindle for free, or a nominal fee. Lots of these are worth reading. For instance:

No Honor Among Thieves a novella by J.A. Jance

Jance's two female characters, Ali Reynolds and Joanna Brady, get together in this short novel set in Joanna's southern Arizona jurisdiction but involving Ali's husband's security firm as well.

“A semi's gone over the embankment.” The call wakes Sheriff Brady in the middle of the night, and she speeds to the scene. The driver didn't just fall asleep at the wheel—he was shot, multiple times, by someone with serious firepower. And when the truck crashed through the guardrail, its payload wound up scattered all over the road—boxes upon boxes of Legos. B. Simpson's security firm has been tracking the Legos for their client to reduce black market sales, so he and Ali are a valuable asset in solving the case.

An exciting plot, with two solid lead characters. ♦

A Cat Was Involved, a Chet and Bernie short story by Spencer Quinn.

I loved the title on this one so blew a whole 99¢ to read it. The story describes how Chet (the dog) and Bernie (the PI) first met. Chet flunks out of police-dog training school when he's distracted from doing high jumps by a cat he spots over yonder and sprints after. Said cat was also involved in a car theft earlier that day, which Bernie then solves in his bumbling way.

The story is, of course, told from Chet's point of view, which makes it even funnier. ♦

The Bear Trap* and *Backtrack, Mike Bowditch short mysteries by Paul Doiron

In *The Bear Trap*, Mike's mentor, legendary Maine woodsman Charley Stevens, tells the new young warden a story from his own youth, to illustrate the unexpected characters—and dangers—he could find in the woods. The character is question has been stealing food from the locals, but when he breaks into a camp for underprivileged youngsters, Charley is determined to track him down. What he finds, and what he learns from the experience are unexpected and make for a nifty story.

Early in his career, Mike finds himself in a similar situation in *Backtrack*, when he is called to a camp in the Maine woods where three city doctors tell him that another of their number got “lost” and they want Mike to find him.

Hauled away from his Thanksgiving dinner, young Mike is skeptical of these city slickers who don’t know how to handle themselves in the woods, but he dutifully goes after the missing doctor, more concerned about whether he will prove his own tracking skills by finding the missing man. What he finds, and comes to learn with more maturity, lends an even niftier twist to this story. Highly recommended. ♦

—Linda Triegel (*ljt23@earthlink.net*)

Series mysteries:

All reviews by Susan Zates

NOTE: Print publisher noted; most also available (and/or read by the reviewer) in e-format.

The Cliff House Strangler by Shirley Tallman. St. Martin’s Press, 320 pp (HC).

(3rd book of the Sarah Woolson mystery series set in turn-of-the-20th-century San Francisco.)

Sarah Woolson is a plucky young woman attorney, an unexpected profession for a woman of high society. Most of her family deplores her career and her decision to start her own business, but she is determined to succeed.

Sarah’s brother Samuel is the exception to her family’s disapproval. He’s secretly a newspaper reporter, which would also dismay their conservative family, if they knew.

On a night Samuel is over-committed to chasing potential newsworthy events, Sarah agrees to cover a séance at the Cliff House. Madame Kirov emigrated with her brother from Russia, and has become quite a sensation with her predictions and visitations. Samuel hopes Sarah will discover tricks and gadgets used during the séance, to uncover them as frauds, a possible coup for the newspaper.

Robert, Sarah’s former colleague at a prestigious law firm, agrees to attend the séance with Sarah. He’s a reluctant supporter of her feisty energy and drive to succeed, but usually prefers she behave traditionally. He’s also reluctant to admit his attraction to Sarah (of

which she’s unaware). A fierce storm makes their trip to the Cliff House (by horse and carriage) challenging and dangerous, and provides a dramatic background for the séance.

A sensationalist newspaper reporter makes an unwanted, unexpected appearance at the séance. Most of the attendees’ identities surprise Sarah. All have reputations to lose if the much-hated reporter reveals they were there. Which makes for plenty of suspects when he’s murdered during the séance. The police make the easy arrest—Karpova’s brother. To them, he’s a foreigner, of no social or political consequence; the other attendees are locals, many socially prominent.

Madame Karpova requests that Sarah represent her brother. Needing clients for her business, and having her own doubts as to his guilt, Sarah cannot refuse. She knows the police will not look any further for the real killer, with a convenient suspect in jail.

Sarah also has agreed to a nearly impossible case: a woman who escaped her husband’s abuse, wants a divorce, and custody of their young sons. In San Francisco society, a wealthy husband always won in any case of this kind. Sarah’s sense of justice compels her to fight for the boys’ best chance of happiness, with their mother.

Sarah persists in her investigations of both cases, against great odds. A tremendous breakthrough in evidence, at the last minute, links the cases and achieves justice. ♦

Key:

PB = Mass Market paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

The Killings at Badger’s Drift by Caroline Graham. Adler & Adler, 1988, 264 pp (HC). (First book of the Inspector Barnaby mystery series, set in 1987 England.)

Elderly spinster Miss Simpson, out for a walk in the woods to find a rare plant, witnesses a scene that horrifies her. In her haste to flee, she falls (making noise).

When Miss Simpson is found poisoned in her home, her best friend, Miss Bellringer, insists it was foul play. The scene suggested accidental poisoning, but her friend knows Miss Simpson was a knowledgeable gardener and herbalist. Indeed, her English country cottage and garden is immaculately cared for, so neat and tidy that the false evidence planted by her killer is obvious.

Inspector Barnaby is happily married (his only complaint is his wife's terrible cooking). Sergeant Troy is his young, enthusiastic sidekick, a bit more brawn than brain. Together they investigate the mystery of who could possibly want to harm Miss Simpson, who had no enemies.

The residents of the small village have many secrets; some more dangerous than others. Barnaby and Troy pursue red herrings galore, as they check and cross-check alibis. Barnaby links a "shooting accident" to current intrigues. He suspects a local resident of blackmail; is proven correct by a grisly murder. Barnaby must dig into the past for the key clue.

Ed Note: Inspector Barnaby is currently snooping on PBS in *Midsomer Murders*. ♦

An Old Betrayal by Charles Finch. Minotaur Books, 2014, 304 pp (PB).
(7th book of the Charles Lenox historical mystery series set in 1875 London.)

As a favor and because he misses private detection, Victorian gentleman and Member of Parliament Charles Lenox agrees to meet a client. Although he's always swamped with work, Lenox finds himself drawn into the case, suspecting a threat to Queen Victoria.

Lenox is torn between his love of detection, love for his infant daughter and beloved wife Jane, and his sense of duty and responsibility to his country. He staunchly believes in the integrity of his secretary Graham and the character of his good friend Dr. McConnell, refusing to believe rumors he's told.

Lenox solves the case with his usual panache, then makes a momentous decision. Always a pleasure to read this series, with its rich historical detail and likable characters. ♦

C&D Members!

Your Nooseletter wants to hear all about that terrific mystery you just read. Email reviews to Ye Editor at the address on page 2.

Here's how:



HOW TO WRITE A BOOK REVIEW:

Title by Author. Publisher, date, # of pages.

For example:

Hole and Corner by Patricia Wentworth. Dean Street Press (reissue 2016), 197 pp (TP).

1 – Short introduction giving the gist of the story:

Patricia Wentworth is one of a number of "golden age" women mystery writers. While most famous for her Maud Silver series, she wrote a number of stand-alones, including *Hole and Corner*, first published in 1936.

2 – Brief description (1-2 paragraphs) of the plot:

Hole and Corner is very much of its time, but it's charming just the same. Our heroine, Shirley Dobbs, lives hand-to-mouth in a London boarding house, getting by well enough until suddenly she begins finding other people's belongings on her person. She promptly returns them, but when valuable jewelry belonging to her employer—a crotchety old lady for whom she serves as a kind of secretary/companion—appears secreted in her coat lining, Shirley panics and runs away.

Indeed, much of the plot involves Shirley running away when she thinks the Long Arm of the Law is about to snatch her. Fortunately, at one point she runs right into the arms of her employer's handsome nephew, Anthony, who lends tea and sympathy, as well as help solving the mystery.

3 – Sum up: Why you liked it (or didn't):

There's a lot of gentle humor in the story, and a reader can't help sympathizing with Shirley, no matter how ill-advised her actions might be. The ending has a nice satisfying twist, and of course, Shirley and Anthony were made for each other.

2020 MEETING DATES

NOTE: Due to the current pandemic, all meeting dates are tentative:

Tuesday, July 28, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 22, 7:00 p.m.

Meetings are free to the public.

NOTE Change of Venue:

Meetings in 2020 from April to November are tentatively scheduled for fourth Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., at Sandia Presbyterian Church, 10704 Paseo del Norte. Park in back of the building and enter by the back door.

Check our Web site, www.croak-and-dagger.com, for any new schedule changes and upcoming programs.

Nooseletter Submissions†

Croak & Dagger friends are encouraged to contribute articles, reviews, and essays on aspects of mystery writing *and* reading for publication consideration. Especially let us know if you have published a new book or story, or have an upcoming local author event. (Unbridled enthusiasm for your own mystery book is encouraged here.)

Length: Articles should average 500 words, but short items and ideas for sources are also welcome.

Deadlines: Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the last day of the month *prior* to publication: Feb 28, April 30, June 30, Aug 31, Oct 31, and Dec 31.

The Living and the Dead: As a general policy, articles and information should focus on living authors rather than dead ones, but that's not set in concrete shoes. Articles about specific historical development of the crime-mystery writing genre, for example, would be welcome.

Submissions: Please submit via e-mail to newsette@earthlink.net, with "Nooseletter" in the subject line. The *Nooseletter* is distributed to all members electronically.

Summary of Findings

The *Nooseletter* is the internal organ of the Croak & Dagger (New Mexico) chapter of Sisters in Crime (SinC). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and editors.

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