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Meet Debut Author
Joy Castro

Suspense, Mystery, Horror and Thriller Fiction

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Suspense covers many different genres. At Suspense Magazine we cover suspense/thriller/mystery and horror, along with all the tangent genres that come off of those four main categories. The problem is defining exactly what each genre actually is. We can always take the Webster’s dictionary on each, but where is the fun in that? I’ll try and break them down, so it will be a lot easier to understand.

Suspense is a state of mind more than an actual emotion like fear, sadness, excitement, love, etc. All of your emotions can create a suspenseful situation, and it is those emotional elements that cause us to be in suspense. Will he save the girl and will they fall in love? Is the sister really dead or was she faking it? These are just some of the questions and hopefully answers you will find in a suspense book.

A thriller has many of the same elements only the action is a little faster-paced and graphic. You can have some suspense involved, but normally the pace of the book will leave you breathless, as opposed to holding your breath. The James Bond stories would be a good examples of thrillers. There wasn’t much suspense, but more intense action that had you sitting on the edge of your seat.

Mystery falls into a separate category. Thriller and Suspense all have to take from a mystery to bring the story together. Mystery would be considered the most important element, since the reader has to be surprised, or the story would be boring because you’d know everything and the element of surprise would be gone. Now, within mystery you have Sherlock Holmes but you also have Alex Cross. Cross would have to hunt the killer, the identity of the killer would remain a mystery to Cross as well as the reader. With Sherlock Holmes, you have a crime, but multiple suspects. So the mystery is not “who is the one person that we have not met yet,” but more of “we have seven possible people and now we need to be a detective.”

Horror is the easiest to explain, because that runs only within fear, scary, ghostly, etc. Horror is also walking the fine line of being supernatural, with mystery, suspense, and thriller usually rooted in reality. Stephen King, Peter Straub, and Bentley Little are three great horror authors. All three are trying to scare you, not keep you in suspense or run you through at ninety miles an hour, but to scare the hell out of you, slowly and methodically.

When you understand the different genres, it is easier to look for a new author and exactly know which category they fall in, so you can make a better selection of author and have a great time reading their work. Because all readers like to discover new people and when they become popular, you can say that you have been a fan for years. Authors love to know that they have the ability to bring out so many emotions in the reader. You just have to know which emotions you like to let yourself have.

So by knowing the exact type of reader you are, it is easier to find great reads, and possibly save yourself some money and time by knowing which genre you love the most.

John Raab
CEO/Publisher
Suspense Magazine

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One early afternoon, in all other ways like any other afternoon, her mother takes her out in her stroller, soothing her with a laughing mom’s voice. She tells her about the wind that sings and then softens among the branches and the swallows that compete in skill to skim the pond for a few refreshing drops of water before flying off again in perfect circles into the clouds.

The little girl does not understand every word, but she follows her mother’s fingers as they imitate birds gliding through the air down to her face.

Then they will go home for snack followed by a nap. It is a reassuring life, where nothing unexpected happens. They stop at the edge of the woods, in the shade of the trees. The little girl plays with the light, squinting to change the intensity of the rays.

Before the screaming starts, before her mother’s distant terror terrorizes her in turn, before the panicked shrill pierces her ears, and the little girl takes refuge in sleep to bury an anxiety far too great for her to bear, her mother gives her a generous and warm hug, leaving her with the sight of the entire sky, and says, “I’ll be right back.” A final broken promise. Sitting as she is, the child cannot see the body, or what is left of it, sprawled on the ground, beaten to a pulp. Yet that moment of abandonment remains forever engraved in her adult memory.

The sky is calm and clear above the Seine River in Paris, where traffic is nervous and gray along the banks. Catherine Monsigny cannot figure out what links this fleeting moment with that fixed point in her past, that fuzzy, probably reconstructed memory that usually is tactful enough to leave her alone. She has even tried to convince herself that it has stopped broadcasting from that faraway land of her childhood.

She crosses the Pont Neuf, parking her scooter at the Place Dauphine. She shakes her head, hurting her ears as she yanks off her helmet, which she stows in her top box, and grabs her briefcase and large bag.

She walks quickly toward the courthouse, cursing her short legs, slipping into her court robe as she climbs the steps, and by habit she automatically replaces those old uninvited images with a quick summary of the case she is about to defend.

Her client—what’s his name again? Ah, yes, Cedric Devers—is accused of assault and battery. He admits using force and justifies it by blaming the harassment that preceded it. According to him, he met a woman—Monique Lemaire, fifty-six years old—in a bar, took her back to his place for a short session between consenting adults. Ciao, no see you next time, because there won’t be one.

Monique did not see things the same way, harassed him by phone, and one night too many, she took to ringing her seducer’s doorbell until he reacted. He opened the door. That was a fatal error. Stubborn with drink, she wouldn’t take no for an answer and tried to force her way in. He had to stop the noise and ended up pushing her. She fell, which resulted in a few bruises and three days’ disability leave.

Catherine has not yet met her client. They have spoken on the phone. She glances around to see that he is even later than she is. She pokes her head into the courtroom to check the proceedings.

The pending case is not yet over. Just as well. Her client will have the time he needs to arrive. Too bad for him. She does not like waiting. She paces.

“Maître Monsigny?”

She senses fingers lightly brush her shoulder, spins around and looks into the deepest gray—or perhaps green—eyes she has ever seen. She feels as though she’s falling into them. She grasps for something to catch her balance, and her professional composure kicks in, winning every time as it does. She throws him a sharp look and spits out, “Cedric Devers? You’re late.”

The thirtyish teenager, classy despite the jeans and sweatshirt he has tossed on, stares right into her eyes, unbothered, like a child, without blinking.
Would he never stop looking at her?

The lawyer turns away and walks toward the courtroom, because it is high time to do so and because she wants to escape his embarrassing look.

She sharpens the professional tone in her voice now that Cedric Devers has thrown her off. What an uncharacteristic sensation.

"I asked you to wear a suit. You are performing here. The first thing the judge will see is your attitude and your clothing, and the judge's impression counts."

"So you're a woman?" He bites his lip to crush a smug lady-man smile. Too late. The very tone of his question says he's taking up the challenge. Women are his preferred prey.

Male crudeness can become a woman's weapon. Even as she says to herself that he really does have beautiful eyes, Catherine's reflex is to lash out. "Studs don't turn me on. All I'm interested in is supporting women's causes. Yep, I'm a feminist bitch. Come on."

"We've got a little time, don't we?"

"There's no way to know, and arriving late always plays against a defendant. That's not so hard to guess."

"There was a huge line to get in."

"You should have read your summons."

"Reassure me. You're my lawyer, right? I mean, you are here to defend me?"

"That's right. And I won't wear kid gloves. Nobody will. You might as well get used to that."

For an instant, a crack appears in Cedric Devers' display of self-assurance. He's just another poser. He opens his arms in front of him and in an uncertain voice says, "Should I, uh, explain?"

She taps the case file under his arm, letting him know that it is all in there and that she does not need any additional explanations.

He stops at the door. "Is Monsigny your maiden name?"

"It's my name. Period," she hisses her counter-attack, tightening her lips. She has no intention of doing him the favor of explaining that she is single, and fossilizing. He would take that as an invitation.

He gets the message, aware that he has just skillfully cut off the branch he had yet to sit on: She thinks he's an idiot.

The truth is, Catherine is working. She has gotten a quick portrait of Cedric Devers: forty years old despite looking younger, a graphic artist who manages his own agency, a good income, clean cut. Now she has to discover the other side.

She is determined to accuse her passing fling and vehemently emphasizes that he went to bed with her on the first date, even though she herself was late, throwing a vengeful look at her client before pushing him to the front of the court. They had been five minutes away from missing the hearing.

As was foreseeable, an attentive court questions the plaintiff, going easy on her.

Mrs. Lemaire is upset. Her story is reasonably confused. She is determined to accuse her passing fling and vehemently emphasizes that he went to bed with her on the first date, which was also the last, something she neglects to mention. Everything indicates that she was perfectly consenting. She had thought he was nice. He threw her out early in the morning with the excuse that he had to go to work, even though she needed to sleep because she worked at night. He just as well could have called her a thief while he was at it.

Devers proves to be a quick learner. He listens attentively and respectfully, answers questions directly, without any flourishes. Humbly.

The barmaid plays up the emotions, and her act rings true. Catherine, forgetting that she herself was late, throws a forcefully look at her client before pushing him to the front of the court. They had been five minutes away from missing the hearing.

The ordinary trial clientele—the scared, the disconcerted, the regulars—are on the public benches. On the defense benches, people in black robes, some with ermine trim and some without, are preparing to represent their clients. Some indifferent colleagues have the bored look of professionals who have more important things to do elsewhere. Others are reading the paper or whispering among themselves.

Devers sits down at the end of a row and with his chin points out a stocky woman.

Monique Lemaire works in a bar, a job that doesn't play in her favor, implying that she has certain life experience. She won't be able to act like an innocent maiden. Yet she is smart enough to be careful about her looks. No jewelry, no makeup, dark pants, an impeccable white shirt buttoned up high under a modest jacket. Still, she's built like an old kettle.

Catherine can't help wondering what he saw in her.

Lemaire turns to her attorney, and Catherine notices that the shirt, as plain as it is, looks like it is going to burst from the pressure of her heavy, plump breasts.

OK, the lady exudes sex. Some women are just like that. Their bodies speak for them. In this case, it speaks for the defense.

Catherine greets the colleague she is facing. He's nicknamed Tsetse because he has a genius for monotonous, never-ending sentences.

He is the good news of the day.

The bad news lies in the prosecutor-judge duo, a twosome fed up with seeing couples who stay together only because they are poor and who hit each other because they don't have enough space. So separate! But where would they go?

This scenario is being played out once again in the case before Catherine's. The couple lives together; they are repeat offenders, have problems with alcohol, misunderstandings, three kids. The two of them together earn only 1,500 euros a month, which is not enough to pay two rents.

For a change, Cedric Devers offers the court someone who is well off, which could lean the balance to the wrong side.

Catherine, forgetting that she herself was late, throws a vengeful look at her client before pushing him to the front of the court. They had been five minutes away from missing the hearing.

As was foreseeable, an attentive court questions the plaintiff, going easy on her.

She is determined to accuse her passing fling and vehemently emphasizes that he went to bed with her on the first date, which was also the last, something she neglects to mention. Everything indicates that she was perfectly consenting. She had thought he was nice. He threw her out early in the morning with the excuse that he had to go to work, even though she needed to sleep because she worked at night. He just as well could have called her a thief while he was at it.

Devers proves to be a quick learner. He listens attentively and respectfully, answers questions directly, without any flourishes. Humbly.

The barmaid plays up the emotions, and her act rings more of loneliness and being ready to grab onto the first ship that passes. He states the facts and says with dignity that he too was distressed that night. He is sorry about how this misunderstanding, for which he is most certainly
responsible, has turned out. One lonely night he felt for a
woman in distress. She hoped for more than he could give.
He is annoyed with himself for this mistake, for which he is
clearly the only person responsible.

The waitress's lawyer gesticulates. He gets excited, cannot
imagine an excuse for the unjustifiable behavior of a man
guilty of taking advantage of the naïve trust of a worthy
woman. He embellishes his clichés. His words flow one after
the other without any meaningful conclusion.

The prosecutor stares at the woodwork, looking like
she's mentally writing down her shopping list. The presiding
judge's tired hand fiddles with the case file.

For Catherine, it is time to wake everyone up.

She stands and from the top of her five-foot-five and
a quarter-inch frame she raises a soft yet clear voice, using
short, sharp sentences to describe a well-established man
with no history of violence, as demonstrated by his attempt
to reason with an out-of-control woman who was banging
on his door in the middle of the night. Out of compassion
and fearing a public scandal, he had opened that door. There
was no actual act of violence, but rather a clumsy movement
resulting from his exasperation with the stubbornness of a
woman who was under the influence of alcohol, an idiotic
gesture that was understandable and whose consequences he
regrets, as he himself had said.

She asks that he be acquitted and sits down, whispering
to him that they would have the decision at the end of the
session.

When the judge leaves with her mountain of case files
under her arm, they also leave, and Catherine abandons her
client to call her office.

She goes out to the courtyard for a smoke, where she
watches Devers' agitation from the corner of her eye. He isn't
acting like a smartass any more. He even comes and asks
her what she thinks, like a worried child whose mischief has
proven worse than expected. He has a certain charm when he
stops playing the tough guy, and Catherine experiences some
pleasure in stripping him of the vestiges of his protective
armor.

She doesn't really know. With a court like that anything
is possible, and it is impossible to tell what side it will come
down on.

He congratulates her on her closing arguments, looking
for some comforting sign. He notes that she was brief,
showing regard for the number of cases that followed; that
could have appeased the court. No, he's not dumb.

From time to time, the look in his eyes changes. He
no longer appears to be grasping the information that the
person in front of him is sending him silently, absorbed as
he is in a contemplation that glazes over his eyes and makes
them bigger.

It is disconcerting.

She says, "It's true that your girlfriend did not start out
with a good deal. Life is unfair."

Cedric Devers closes his eyes. "Can you say that again?"

"Life is unfair. It's a platitude."

She frowns slightly. He's strange.

After being so clearly worried, he doesn't pay particular
attention to the verdict.

She expected a week of public service. He is acquitted.

She holds out her hand to her client. She is expected
elsewhere. She is in a hurry; she lets him know.

He opens his mouth, changes his mind to speak and
closes it again, which is just as well, as she has no intention of
raising a glass to their victory with him.

She puts her robe back in her bag, intending to drop
it off at the drycleaner. His eyes take in the thin figure that
her tight skirt and fitted jacket highlight. He can't resist
devouring her in his mind's eye, where he lifts her blond hair
into a chignon, revealing her graceful neck. He exaggerates
her thin waist with a red leather belt, imagines a flowered
dress swirling around her thighs. When she has disappeared,
he stills sees her going up a step, her dress opening, showing
her frail legs. The summer-colored fabric falls to the floor,
her breasts appear, small and round.

He turns around. He should get to work.

Catherine finds her scooter, checks the time and decides
she can make a detour to the Goutte d'Or.

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non-fiction to new readers across the English-speaking world.
If we love it, we'll translate it. www.lefrenchbook.com

About the author: Author, screenwriter, and actress Sylvie
Granotier loves to weave plots that send shivers up your spine.
She was born in Algeria and grew up in Paris and Morocco. She
studied literature and theater in Paris, then set off traveling—
the United States, Brazil, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, ending
with a tour of Europe. She wound up in Paris again, an actress,
with a job and some recognition. But she is a writer at heart,
and started her publishing career translating Grace Paley's
short story collection Enormous Changes at the Last Minute
into French. Fourteen novels and many short stories later,
Sylvie Granotier is a major crime fiction author in France. She
has met with continued success, and is translated into German,
Italian, Russian, and Greek. The Paris Lawyer is her first novel
to be translated into English. This legal procedural that doubles
as a psychological thriller is full of plot twists that bring us
into the heart of French countryside, La Creuse, a place full
of nineteenth-century landscapes and dark secrets. Sylvie splits
her time between Paris and the Creuse.

About the translator: Anne Trager has lived in France
for over 26 years, working in translation, publishing, and
communications. In 2011, she woke up one morning and said,
"I just can't stand it anymore. There are way too many good
books being written in France not reaching a broader audience."
That's when she founded Le French Book to translate some of
those books into English. The company's motto is "If we love it,
we translate it," and Anne loves crime fiction.
In this series, author Anthony J. Franze interviews other suspense writers about their views on “the rules” of fiction. This month, some of the year’s hottest debut authors identify writing advice that helped them get publishing deals. Next month, #1 New York Times bestselling author Catherine Coulter gives her rules for writing sharp, fast, and deadly.

A professional writer, so the expression goes, is an amateur who didn’t quit. But anyone who’s tried to write a novel—much less get one published—knows that “never quitting,” though a popular sentiment, is much harder than it sounds. A first novel often is written in the wee hours, after a long day’s work, with family and friends scratching their heads (or rolling their eyes) about why anyone would spend their free time writing a story. And not just any story, but one that, odds are, few will ever read given the difficulties of breaking into the publishing world.

At this year’s ThrillerFest—the annual conference held by the International Thriller Writers (ITW)—the organization celebrated writers who didn’t quit: ITW’s 2012 Debut Authors (I am proud to be one of them). The debut authors I met at ThrillerFest managed not only to finish their novels, but to secure critical acclaim, multi-book deals, foreign sales, and movie options. Given their successes, and in light of this writing series, I asked these rising stars to share the rules or advice that helped them beat the odds.

Just Write:

“The most significant piece of advice I got was from Stephen King’s masterful little book “On Writing,” ” said Julia Heaberlin, author of the acclaimed “Playing Dead.” King basically advised that if you’re waiting for the perfect time in your life to write, or for a perfectly appointed serene writing space, you’ll never be a writer. After reading that, Heaberlin immediately sat down at her kitchen table and began to write. “The day I wrote in a urologist’s office was the day I knew that I was, officially, a writer.”

“Writing is more discipline than inspiration,” agreed Melinda Leigh, author of the stunning “She Can Run,” a 2012 ITW nominee for Best First Novel. “Writing a thousand words a day will yield a 90,000-word rough draft in approximately three months. Five hundred words (that’s just two pages!) a day? It’ll take you six months. But you’ll finish it. Guaranteed.”

But it isn’t just about sitting down to write. “You have to write like you’re never going to get another chance,” said Eyre Price. He got that bit of wisdom not from another writer, but from a legendary bluesman, and used it to craft his superb and
soulful “Blues Highway Blues.” Price explained that “if there's no passion in writing the words, there won't be any in reading them.”

Kill Your Darlings:

Like Julia Heaberlin, several of the debut authors identified Stephen King’s “On Writing” as a source of inspiration and writing advice. In the book, King tells writers to ruthlessly edit their work: “Kill your darlings, kill your darlings, even when it breaks your egocentric little scribbler's heart, kill your darlings.” That’s a principle Jeremy Bates followed when writing the white-hot “White Lies.” “Don't be shy with the delete key,” urged Bates. “If I think that maybe a sentence or a paragraph or even a chapter doesn’t fit, it probably doesn’t—and I don’t feel bad deleting it. Only once it's gone do I often realize how completely unnecessary it was in the first place.”

Carter Wilson likewise said that writers can’t be afraid to cut or even change aspects of the story. “Don't treat your manuscripts as holy objects. Listen to your agent and your editor, and be prepared to make changes.” For his stellar “Final Crossing,” Wilson found that comments from his agent “completely opened my eyes to the flow of a book, and my writing has tightened to a staccato pace.”

But knowing when to start polishing is just as important. Chuck Greaves wished he’d understood this principle when he started writing his award-winning “Hush Money.” Greaves said that he “sweated over every sentence” as he wrote, resulting in a manuscript that ran nearly double its target length. When it came time to start editing, he nearly wept as his gleaming prose went fluttering to the cutting-room floor. “When writing “Green-Eyed Lady,” the first sequel to “Hush Money,” I satisfied myself that each chapter was good enough, then moved on, leaving perfection for the editing process. I wept less, and finished the book in nearly half the time.”

Write Atmosphere:

“Space, light and texture.” Nancy Bilyeau recalls this advice from her screenwriting teacher whenever she writes a scene. When she crafted her historical thriller “The Crown,” which was on the short list for the prestigious Ellis Peters Historical Dagger Award, Bilyeau “weaved in details on what it looks and sounds and smells like to be my character in 1537-1538 England.” Reviews have singled out the vivid description as what sets the novel apart.

For James Tabor, author of the absorbing “The Deep Zone,” the key to good description is to go beyond helping readers see, hear, taste, feel, or smell. He said the point was best made by the late Raymond Chandler, whom he quoted: “The things [readers] remembered, that haunted them, were not for example that a man got killed but that in the moment of his death he was trying to pick up a paper clip off the polished surface of a desk and it kept slipping away from him.”

Make Them Believe:

According to Lissa Price, author of the breakout international bestseller “Starters,” writers need to hook readers with a
“believable, enticing world with a character that feels real.” Dean Koontz loved this dystopian thriller that has teens renting out their bodies to seniors to be young again. Price advises writers to “gather up your courage, go full on and climb inside the head and skin of your characters.” Donna Galanti adhered to a similar principle when writing “A Human Element,” which bestselling author MJ Rose called “a riveting debut.” Galanti’s editor advised that “to keep the fiction dream alive we need to have readers suspend disbelief—and never show our underpants.” What that means, Galanti said, is that writers “must create a world in which a plot point can happen. Don’t create an event just to ‘show’ something. Readers don’t want a world where stuff happens like in real life.” They want a world where even if the character didn’t see it coming—they did.

Brian Andrews makes his characters believable by remembering that “characters are motivated by self-interest.” In writing his gripping “The Calypso Directive” (featured last month as a Suspense Magazine sneak peek), Andrews said, “I consistently reminded myself that my characters are not me. They should not behave as I would behave in a given situation, rather they should behave according to how their self-interest influences their perception of the world around them.”

To bring authenticity to the characters in her exceptional “Living Proof,” Kira Peikoff followed one simple tip: “Don’t write dialogue that is ‘on the nose.’ People don’t always say exactly what they mean. It is the subtext of their conversation, their gestures and expressions that often provide the real meaning.”

Go Emotion or Go Home:

“Make me fall in love with a character, make me want what she wants and see the world as she sees it, and I’ll be tied up in knots if she so much as loses her car keys,” said Amy Rogers. “Suspense doesn’t require a terrorist attack, viral pandemic, or conspiracy,” she said. Rather, what draws readers in is the emotional investment. That’s not to say that Rogers disavows a thrilling premise. In her haunting “Petroplague,” oil-eating bacteria threatens civilization. “But my writing rule is to remember that ever-bigger threats by themselves don’t hook the reader. Only an emotional bond with the characters can do that.”

Liese Sherwood-Fabre said she also focuses on the emotional connection between the reader and the characters. She had a “light bulb moment” after reading Sol Stein’s description of how one writer created an emotional connection between her main character and readers. “In the opening scene, the character observes her nightly ritual of patting her sleeping son’s head before leaving to work as a police decoy. Throughout the rest of the book, Stein points out, readers remember this woman as a loving mother with a small child waiting for her at home, and any danger she faces is heightened because of this emotional attachment.” That advice, and a tip from her creative writing professor about putting child characters in peril, were the genesis of her emotionally rich “Saving Hope.”

Give Them A Reason to Turn the Page:

“Always give your readers a reason to read the next page,” said Trevor Shane, author of the outstanding “Children of Paranoia.” Shane said there’s a transaction between reader and writer: Readers give the writer a piece of their lives, and the writer gives them a reason to turn the page. How do you make them want to turn the page? “That’s the art,” he said. “Ask questions to which your reader wants to learn the answers. Foreshadow something thrilling so that your reader needs to get to it. Make
characters so great that your reader simply wants to spend more time with them to see how things are going to turn out for them. Or do something totally unique and surprising so that your reader simply wants to see what you are going to do next.” But no matter what, “do something on every single page.”

**Break the Rules:**

I’ve previously written about authors who break the rules (July *Suspense Magazine* Part II in series) and at this year’s ThrillerFest, Lee Child taught a course on just that. So it probably shouldn’t come as a surprise that a couple 2012 debut authors preach caution about “the rules.” Like Child, **Jeremy Burns** is skeptical of some conventional writing rules, such as “write what you know.” Burns said, “What you know could be very, very boring. A better adage would be to write what you are passionate about.” Burns is passionate about history so, naturally, his killer debut “From the Ashes” is a historical conspiracy. For **Jeff Wilson**, rules can be detrimental because “by the time they are all heard, absorbed, catalogued and incorporated a writer can find him or herself utterly paralyzed and unable to recall just what the hell it is they wanted to write, or why.” When writing his knockout “The Traiteur’s Ring,” Wilson followed the advice from a fellow writer: “Don’t worry so damn much about someone else’s rules and write like yourself.”

Each one of these authors was once an unknown amateur, struggling to write five hundred words a day at the kitchen table or doctor’s office or God knows where else. Now, they’re “writers”—rising stars in the suspense genre. They didn’t quit. And here’s to you not quitting either.

*Anthony J. Franze is a lawyer in the Appellate and Supreme Court practice of a large Washington, D.C. law firm and author of the debut legal thriller, “The Last Justice.” In addition to his writing and law practice, he is an adjunct professor of law, has been a commentator for Bloomberg, the National Law Journal and other news outlets, and is a contributing editor for the Big Thrill magazine. Anthony lives in the D.C. area with his wife and three children.

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The carnie was tall and slightly stooped forward. He wore a faded, gold-colored eye patch over one eye and an odd, thick-lensed monocle over the other. The silvery chain of the monocle hung in front of his hooked and scarred nose before curving suddenly to end in a clasp attached to a hoop earring in his left ear. His face was pockmarked, as though a bout with acne ended in one humiliating round. He was dressed like a storybook pirate that dragged his captives behind a Harley instead of keel-hauling them. His hoarse voice complemented his battled appearance.

"Step right, step left, step right up! Five shots for a dollar! Spin two dials and win a prize! Spin three and win a grand prize!" He gestured behind himself to a hanging rack of garishly-colored giant stuffed bears and coughed. The ubiquitous cigarette of the carnie fit into his mouth like a wiggling prosthetic. "Five shots for a dollar!" he continued then in a lackluster pitch.

Roger, Ingrid at his side, shook his head as they drew within five yards of the carnie.

"A dollar?" Roger said to himself. Ingrid chuckled. "Remember when everything was a quarter to play?" she asked, looking at him with a relaxed smile. She was happy to be in the carnival atmosphere and so was he. Arm in arm, they strolled a little closer to the carnie's shooting gallery. Below the overstuffed bears were a series of metal racks upon which small tin ducks and tigers wobbled on spokes that passed through their midsections. It was a simple affair: the idea was to try and shoot two of the animals so that they spun around. As a gaggle of children ran before them, Roger turned and muttered to Ingrid.

"See how you have to shoot 'em? You can't do it standing up. You've got to sit in that chair and aim upward. It's not as easy as it looks," he added knowledgeably. She nodded her head in agreement.

"Still," she began, "it would be kind of fun to win a prize at a carnival."

Roger smiled back at her, but he could feel himself burn. Earlier in the evening he tried his luck at knocking down the pyramid of bowling pins and only managed to tip over the one on top. The milk pail toss went no better for him; after five dollars worth of attempts, the best he could win her was a small plastic squirt gun—a gumball machine reject really. The rides had been wonderful, but he couldn't help but think the rides at a real amusement park were far superior, not to mention a whole lot safer. The Ferris Wheel, the lovers’ main attraction, didn't provide quite the view he hoped for, and they hadn't gotten stuck on top either. When it did stop to let people off, they were the first ones at the bottom right by the exit.

"You're right," he said with forced cheer. "I feel lucky on this one. After all, a year in the army should have taught me how to shoot." It had, in fact, but early in his training. He had no use for a rifle behind a computer writing code in Dayton.

Still arm in arm, they approached the grizzled carnie. Up close, the wretched scarring on his face was more difficult to behold. The thick monocle exaggerated the proportions of his eye, giving him a strange mixture of nerdiness and fiendishness.

"How about you, sir?" he said perfunctorily to Roger. "Five shots for a dollar!"

Roger passed a crisp bill over to him. The carnie stuffed it into the bag tied around his waist.

"Now, you know the basics of a pellet gun, my boy?" he asked, grinning in such a way that Roger assumed it was part of his carnie persona.

Right. Get the customer a little riled. Good.

"Sure I do. I've served," Roger said, glancing at the
Roger had again dinged the metal rack that held the tin
and fired. The metallic
shoulder. He smiled up at Ingrid before sighting along the
lady home a prize. "He winked a magnified eyelid at Ingrid.
'n' tigers. Send two of 'em spinnin' and you'll take this lovely
you get for your dollar. Take careful aim at any of those ducks
again and took a drag off his cigarette.
returned the grin. The carnie almost scowled, then coughed
ambiguous grin was intact.
awkward.
realized that he was too tall for it. Immediately, he felt
chair. It sank a little into the moist earth, and he quickly
seat right here."

solidarity.

Ingrid's worn uniform shirt to signify military
The ducks and tigers continued wobbling.
followed by a thud as it struck the canvas of the tent behind.
The pellet fired out with the same
saying "Duh" and took aim again.

"Sure, they move, " growled the carnie. "Now, lookit. " He
touched his shoulder gently. He didn't acknowledge her.
"I didn't hit the rack!" proclaimed Roger. He was tense.
"I know I hit that tiger. I had it right in my sight! I bet those
things don't even spin!" Ingrid moved behind him and
touched his shoulder gently. He didn't acknowledge her.
"Sure, they move," growled the carnie. "Now, lookit." He
stepped a few paces forward and flicked one of the ducks. It
spun around and around, its gay face unchanged. "So, you
got three shots left. There's still a chance to take this lady
home a prize!"

Roger looked up at Ingrid. She shrugged and gave him
a half-hearted smile. She was beginning not to care about
getting anything here. She rubbed her arms and looked behind
her at the lights and commotion of the carnival. Throngs of
people cast wavering shadows all around. Swooping rides
with their songs created a din above the seagull chatter of the
crowd. A policeman leaned tiredly against a pole some ten
yards away.

Another clang brought Ingrid's attention abruptly back. Roger
had again dinged the metal rack that held the tin
animals. He was visibly angry now and even stomped his
foot.
"Damn it!" he exclaimed. He prepared to shoulder the
rifle again. Ingrid broke in.
"Roger, honey, maybe we should just move on. I don't
want a prize that bad." She looked concernedly into his eyes.
"Well, sure you do!" said the carnie. "You look empty-
handed to me. Young lady can't go home without her prize." He
appeared to think for a minute. "Hell, maybe you should
pick up this here rifle and try your luck."
In a fury Roger shouldered the rifle and fired again. This
time a different clang sounded and one of the ducks spun
around twice. He jumped to his feet and whooped.
"Hot damn!"
"I guess I'll give that one to you," said the carnie.
"What do you mean? That clearly spun. I hit that duck!"
"If you want to call it that."
"Yeah, I wanna call it that—"
"I mean," the carnie continued, stepping over by the racks
again, "if you had made it spin like this, I wouldn't doubt it." He
gave one of the tigers a vigorous spin. The wind picked up
at the same time, and one of the ducks did a complete turn.
"See what I mean?" the carnie asked, pointing at the
duck. "That coulda been the wind just now. I'm not so sure I
oughta give you that last one."
"Are you crazy?" Roger shouted. "That was a clear shot. I
had that duck in my sights and I hit it. I nailed it!"
"Roger, forget about it!" Ingrid exclaimed. She stepped
in front of him and grabbed him by the shoulders. "Let's just
move on." She looked over his head. The policeman was no
longer so lazily leaning against the pole and was staring in
their direction. "C'mon," she almost begged. "Let's just go."
"No!" Roger rasped. "I've got one shot left. And I did
hit that duck!" He returned his attention to the carnie.
"Tell you what, my boy," said the carnie, and this
time he did say it with a sneer, "double or nothin'. If
you peg one of these tigers, and it's a sure hit, you'll
walk away with one of our grand prizes. If you miss,
you get nothing and I close down for the night."

"Roger—"

"Take careful aim, m'boy."
"Roger—"
"That's it! One more and the prize is yours."
"Roger!"
"Don't be a sissy about it."
"Roger, what are you doing? Roger!"
"Heh, heh, I knew you'd come 'round, boy!"
"Roger! No! Stop!"
"C'mon an' fire!"
Roger fired. ■
Joy Castro has lived quite a life. She was born in Miami in 1967 and adopted four days later by a Cuban-American family of Jehovah’s Witness faith. She grew up believing in what they call “the truth” and going door to door, but she ran away at fourteen when the home became abusive, and left the religion at fifteen. On her own from the age of sixteen, she raised her son, born when she was a college junior, while finishing school and earning her graduate degrees. Raised to believe herself Latina, she found her birthmother at twenty-six and discovered that her actual ethnic background was quite different. In “The Truth Book: A Memoir” (which was named a Book Sense Notable Book by the American Booksellers Association and was adapted and excerpted in The New York Times Magazine), Castro writes about religion, violence, adoption, ethnic identity, and her father’s suicide, as well as the warmth, beauty, humor, and passion for reading that sustained her through it all.

Castro earned her B.A. at Trinity University and her M.A. and Ph.D in literature at Texas A&M University. After graduate school, she worked for ten years at Wabash College, one of three remaining all-male private liberal arts colleges. In 2007, she joined the faculty at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she is currently an associate professor with a joint appointment in English and Ethnic Studies and serves as the associate director of the Institute of Ethnic Studies.

An award-winning teacher, she has published articles on innovative strategies for the college classroom. Her published literary scholarship focuses on issues of class, gender, and race in the work of experimental women writers of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries such as Jean Rhys, Meridel Le
Sueur, Sandra Cisneros, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Margery Latimer.

Committed to broadening the reach of higher education to communities in need, she has offered free courses to at-risk teenagers, victims of domestic violence, and survivors of sexual assault, and for several years she ran the biannual Creative Writing/Creative Teaching conference for Indiana high school and middle school teachers.

Named one of 2009’s Best New Latino Authors by LatinoStories.com, Joy has a debut novel, “Hell or High Water,” released by St. Martins/Thomas Dunne in July 2012. Set in post-Katrina New Orleans, it features a young Cuban American reporter tracking the registered sex offenders who disappeared during the hurricane evacuation.


In “Hell or High Water,” Nola Céspedes, an ambitious young reporter at the Times-Picayune, catches a break: an assignment to write her first, full-length investigative feature. It’s a far cry from the club openings and plantation tours she usually covers and could become a story that will send ripples through New Orleans in the two years since Hurricane Katrina. The piece is about sex offenders who have fallen off the grid since the city was evacuated.

While Nola speaks with survivors, offenders (some still on the registry, others not), and experts, she also becomes fixated on the search for a missing tourist in New Orleans. As Nola’s work leads her into darker corners of the city, she has to hide her work from her friends, feels her carefully constructed identity is threatened, and must ultimately revisit her painful past.

Vividly rendered in razor-sharp prose and with a knockout twist, “Hell or High Water” brings New Orleans to life in a riveting journey of trust betrayed and the courageous struggle toward recovery.


**Suspense Magazine** is honored to have her in this month’s edition. We hope you enjoy getting to know her as much as we did.

**Suspense Magazine** (S. MAG.): From the beginning, your life was set on fast-forward. What specifically brought you to writing? How has it helped you persevere?

Joy Castro (JC): **Thank you.** What a kind and empathetic question. It’s felt that way to me sometimes, as though I’ve been ricocheting through too many experiences way too fast.

And yes, writing has helped. I’ve always been a daydreamer, and my mother taught me to read when I was three. When I was very small, I would make little books and illustrate them with animal characters. So I’m fortunate: the world of books, imagination, reading, and writing were always there for me, a mainstay, a touchstone during difficult times.

**Imagination isn’t frivolous. It allows us to envision alternatives.**

Of course, that’s why artists and writers are typically perceived as dangerous by totalitarian regimes, whether those regimes operate at the level of the nation-state or at some other level. Because we are. We’re dangerous to illegitimate regimes, because we can imagine other paths, and we have the means to express our vision. **Imagination is a form of power that’s very difficult to control.**
S. MAG.: Nola Céspedes is quite a character. Would you have liked to do what she does, getting the opportunity she has in writing her full-length investigative feature? Or does she have nerve you know you wouldn’t?

JC: Thank you! I loved dreaming up Nola Céspedes: a tough, hard-boiled, wise-cracking protagonist who’s compassionate and justice-driven but who’s also got some issues, some flaws. When I started to hear her voice in my head, it was a thrilling day.

My own opportunity was actually even more wonderful, because I got to do all of the research Nola does in the novel and investigate the tricky issues she probes, but I didn’t have to take the crazy personal risks she takes.

As it turns out, I actually do have plenty of nerve, but it’s certainly more pleasant not to have to employ it. I’m older than Nola is. She’s in her late twenties; I’m in my early forties. She’s attracted to danger. I’m much less reckless now than I used to be.

S. MAG.: When you decided to make “Hell or High Water” about sex offenders who have fallen off the grid since the city was evacuated after Hurricane Katrina, did you think it could really happen? Did it in fact, happen? And finally, did you consult the police in the area about what they were doing or would do about it?

JC: The book was inspired by the facts. Over thirteen hundred registered sex offenders really did go off the grid during the Hurricane Katrina evacuation, and by 2008, when “Hell or High Water” is set, around eight hundred of them had never been relocated. So I began with that rather intriguing true situation and built the novel from there. I drew upon news accounts in the Times-Picayune and upon the online sex offender registry in New Orleans.

S. MAG.: What inspires you and gives life to your stories?

JC: Love, hope, yearning—and outrage. Those form the core. They’re the fuel.

Great writers inspire me. I read their work or hear them read, and I think, Wow, I want to do that.

S. MAG.: Having gone through so much, thinking only of yourself, what is your idea of fun? If given a choice to skip work for a day, how would you spend the entire day?

JC: Oh, what a friendly question! I love being out on the water—the wind, the sun, the waves—so I’d probably spend the day on a sailboat on Lake Pontchartrain with my husband, a few choice friends, and some great food and drinks. As they say in New Orleans, Laissez les bons temps rouler.

S. MAG.: You had to have seen and been through more than most. Keeping that in mind, describe a person or situation from your childhood that had a profound effect on the way you look at life now.

JC: My fifth-grade teacher, Mrs. Rosalie Dolan at Lumberport Elementary in West Virginia, was kind and beautiful, and she took an interest in me. She looked a bit like the actress Anne Archer and dressed like Jackie Kennedy, and she was firm but always soft-spoken and fair and gentle. Mrs. Dolan gave me a horse poster (I was one of those girls who’s obsessed with horses) and encouraged my love of reading and writing. She affirmed my nascent values. Honestly, I longed for her to take me home with her.

The effect she had was that I saw that a teacher’s kindness could make a difference—that teaching could be a form of love. It’s probably no accident that I became a professor.

S. MAG.: What was it like to work at an all-male, private liberal arts college?

JC: Complicated! I loved a lot of things about my ten years there, straight out of grad school, but it was difficult, too. There were several factors at work in addition to the gender thing. It was located in rural Indiana, and it was a wealthy, luxurious institution, while I came from a family experience that ranged from quite poor to lower-middle-class. There were very few Latinos and Latinas there. The student body was all male and about seventy percent of my colleagues were male, so it was a lively and challenging place to teach women’s literature, Latina literature, and feminist theory. I was sometimes treated in a sexist and demeaning way, even by people who meant well.
Because I really had a lot to puzzle through, I used writing to help myself understand the experience, and that essay appears in my forthcoming collection “Island of Bones.” Writing about it helped me figure out what it all meant to me.

Some of the gifts of working there were that I learned how to be diplomatic and that I learned not to back down. Another gift was that I had a tenure-track job and financial security right out of graduate school, which is getting rarer and rarer, so as a breadwinner for my family, I appreciated that stability. I was lucky to have a fantastic mentor there, Warren Rosenberg, who guided and helped my career. He was really generous, and I loved him.

I also learned a real affection and respect for my students and colleagues. To connect and communicate across difference isn’t easy. Many people surround themselves with only people who agree with and reinforce their own beliefs. I value having the opportunity to do otherwise. It helped me become more self-sufficient. Enclaves feel good, but it’s nice to know I don’t need one.

I work now at a research university in a terrific small city. We have a great graduate program in creative writing, and I’m joint-appointed in ethnic studies. Many of my colleagues, friends, and students now are women, which is just a psychic relief. I’d been lonely at the all-male college. I definitely prefer where I am now, but I’m glad to have learned so much from my first job.

S. MAG.: Was meeting your birth mother all you thought it would be?

JC: Hmm. You don’t pull any punches, do you? Well, the sad, true answer is no.

I had a vexed relationship with my adoptive mother, the one who raised me, whom I loved but who was neglectful and abusive. My stepmother, whom I also loved, made no bones about the fact that she wasn’t maternal and that she behaved kindly to my brother and me only out of a sense of obligation to our father.

So when, at twenty-six and a young mother myself, I finally met my birthmother, I had huge, profound, powerful hopes for communion and connection. Even at the time, I suspected that my expectations were unrealistic, but I couldn’t help it. I had so much unmet need that had built up over the years.

My birth mother is a lovely person, and I’m glad she’s in our lives. But a twenty-six-year void creates multiple, complicated distances that no amount of effort and goodwill can fill, though we have both tried and continue to try.

I finally just had to come to grips with the fact that I was never really going to have the loving, close, connected kind of mother I’d dreamed of. That experience wasn’t going to be part of my life.

But that’s just real. Lots of people don’t have that. So I decided I would just be that kind of mother instead: that I would parent my son—and now, my foster daughter—in the ways I would have wished to be parented. That’s maybe about the best you can do.

S. MAG.: In “Hell or High Water” Nola confronts a painful past. Was writing for her cathartic for you?

JC: Oh, yes. I can’t say more without spoiling things for readers, but: oh, yes. I’m not sure about “catharsis,” per se, because I’d already worked through my own issues before beginning to write this book. But I can definitely say that it was a profound pleasure to write particular scenes. Comeuppance is a beautiful thing.

S. MAG.: Complete this sentence: If I had to stop writing tomorrow I would _________.

JC: If I had to stop writing tomorrow I would find other things to explore and enjoy. I love to write, but I don’t think I’d go crazy without it or anything, as I’ve heard writers say they would. There are too many other fun things to discover in the world.

I’d probably talk the ears off my friends and family, though. They might come to miss the quiet. When I was very small—two, three years old—before I learned to write, my dad used to call me ‘Mighty Mouth’ because apparently I just talked an unbroken stream. Maybe I’d revert to that…

Suspense Magazine had a great time getting to know Joy Castro just a little better. If you’d like to read about Joy and her work, feel free to look at her website at www.joycastro.com. ■

SuspenseMagazine.com
THE DREAM

By Liam Delaney

She opened her eyes and breathed slowly. That damn dream. A few short steps to the kitchen, button pressed and coffee began to leak into the percolator. Sunlight slowly came through the window throwing sparkles across the counter. The clock ticked away, counting out the minutes and hours. Finally, breakfast finished, she stood, put her plates in the sink, and drove to work.

She came home late that night, late same as every night. Stale coffee poured from percolator to mug to mouth. Don’t want to sleep tonight. Don’t want to go back to that room again. Don’t show me what’s behind the door. Television was becoming the remedy. Late nights with live canned laughter. But sleep will always find a way in. Two hours of late night hosts making corny jokes and she was fast asleep on the couch, coffee making a cold, brown stain on the carpet.

She awoke in the room. Wallpaper as dark as wet India ink. Hardwood floor like a bottomless pit in the ocean. That same couch was there, intensely dark red with the slick look of a pool of blood.

Footsteps boomed down the hall. Cold streams of sweat ran across her body staining her t-shirt. He was coming. Closer. Closer. Stomping ever closer. She had to leave. She frantically searched the room. Tried the huge black door. The handle came off in her hands. She felt along the wall, searching for another door, a window, salvation. Smooth as new spun silk. She saw the wardrobe. Huge like a clock tower. Black as motor oil. She opened it. Empty. But it’s a cliché. Everyone hides in the wardrobe. There has to be a better way. There has to be an exit. Someone has to save me.

The footsteps stopped, the door creaked as the hulking form behind it began to turn the knob. She fell into the wardrobe and pulled the doors shut as he stepped into the room. His form was silhouetted in the dark, purple light from the hall. He stepped into the room and the steel tips of his boots glinted like axe blades. She could see the scuff marks on the rough leather, the filth encrusted on the rubber soles. His footsteps on the wood were like hammer blows. The purple light crept into the room, tinting everything a nauseating lava lamp color. He searched. Under the couch. In the corners. Always coming closer to the wardrobe.

Her hands were clasped against her mouth. No breath passed through her lungs. No sound passed between her lips. Her heart pounded against her ribs, desperate to tear free. His huge boots boomed closer. He stood in front of the wardrobe. The dangling handle clinked as he grasped it. The door opened silently. She crammed herself into the corner. Have to avoid his eyes. Have to avoid his hand. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide. He reached towards her with a massive gloved hand. His hand came closer. Stank of oiled leather. His fingertip brushed her face.

She awoke on the floor. The television was playing an infomercial for knives. She looked around. The clock read three a.m. That damn dream. The one she had ever since moving from this house a month ago. Always the same room. Always the same man. Always the same ending. She stood slowly and walked to her bed. The dull noise of the television was pleasant, lulling her to sleep. Eventually her eyes closed and she fell into the abyss.

She awoke once again in the black room. Immediately sweat poured across her body. The silence weighed on her. She looked around. How do I get out? Please let there be a way out. The door was open. The knob still on the ground where she
dropped it. Purple light dripped into the room under the door. She tentatively touched the door and it swung open with a low moan. As she stepped into the hallway the temperature dropped. The fog on the floor lazily flowed from one end of the hallway to the other. She turned. The wall behind her was huge and black. She put her hand against it to feel the rough stone.

A hand burst through and grabbed her wrist. It clamped on like a bear trap and began to pull her through the wall. She screamed and twisted her arm backwards and forwards. No! Not like this! Wake up! Please somebody wake me up! As she was drawn closer and closer to the wall a face pushed its way through. It was covered in a black gas mask. The lenses were spattered with drops of crusted red liquid. The filters on either side dripped with sticky red blood. She could hear the man breathing as he pulled her closer. Closer. She began to hit him. She pulled on the mask, tearing at it with her fingers. Slowly she felt the cool stone creep up her arm. She was neck deep and the pressure was crushing her neck. Her screams became muffled as her mouth passed through the wall. Still the man in the gas mask pulled her. As her left eye began to pass, something began to beep, loudly.

She awoke with her alarm clock blaring. The sun cast translucent shadows onto her bed. Her chest was rising and falling rapidly. The dream again. It felt so real. Her blood rushed through her veins. She touched her forehead. It was cool and damp. She rose slowly, breathing deeply, letting the sun wash over her. A moment later the shower was running and she was relaxed, the dream all but forgotten.

The day unfolded the same way as any other. But dragged along behind her. Everything was tainted. Coffee didn't taste as good. The conversations with her friends weren't as stimulating. The drinks at the bar weren't as relaxing.

As she drove her car back up the driveway she looked at the plastic bag in the driver's seat. No-Doze, coffee, a bottle of amphetamines she bought off a friend. Not a chance of sleep tonight. The man in the gas mask wasn't gonna catch her.

She turned on the television and tried to watch whatever was playing late at night. But same as the night before she just couldn't get into the canned laughter, couldn't lose herself in the world of dated jokes and musical sell outs. Despite the coffee, despite the No-Doze, despite even the amphetamines, the Sandman found a way. Her eyes closed like lead curtains. Her breathing slowed. Her mind drifted farther and farther away from the world of poorly written sitcoms.

She awoke in the hallway with her back up against the wall. The cold, rough stone pressed against her t-shirt. There was a door at the other end, a light at the end of the tunnel. She ran for it. Salvation. Freedom from this hell. Behind her there was a popping sound. She glanced back and saw her huge enemy stepping through the wall. She ran harder, breath rushing in and out of her lungs as she drew nearer to the door, to safety. His footsteps behind her were booming like cannons. They came closer. The light came closer. She could hear him breathing, feel the light on her face. He was reaching for her. She leapt through the door.

She was standing in a barren park. Lightening flashed in the distance. The sky was the color of steel wool. Wind tore through the dead trees, making them crack and spring back and forth. A gravel path led through the park to the edge of a cliff. She stepped forward and looked behind her. Emptiness reigned. Turning in a circle showed her the park, stretching into the distance forever. Broken and splintered picnic tables littered the area. She walked, the thunder booming, gravel crunching beneath her canvas sneakers. All was silent except the howling wind, explosions of thunder, and the ocean shattering against the cliff.

A creak. She whipped around, chest heaving, sweat pouring, heart stopping. Nothing but a swing set: rusted, dilapidated, swinging in the wind. She turned back to the path.

The horizon was gone. She could hear the muffled breathing, smell the leather. She slowly looked up and saw him towering over her. She was reflected in the lenses of his gas mask, her face and body distorted. She slowly backed up, unsure if he had seen her. Slowly, step by step. Back towards the emptiness, away from the cliff.

She stepped out into the air and tumbled. The top of the cliff sped away from her as she fell towards the ocean. He stood there, staring down at her. Something dripped onto her face. She rubbed it and looked at her fingers. Blood.

Her world became a frozen wasteland as she crashed into the waves. The air fled her lungs and she was sinking. She sank like an anvil. She tried to swim to the surface but the ocean was gelatinous. She couldn't hold her breath. She screamed, an explosion of bubbles tearing towards the surface. There was nothing left in her lungs and they began to burn like coals. Her mind screamed for air. But there was none to be had.

She touched bottom, the sand floating up where her feet touched. She tried to swim again. But she didn't move. She began to sink into the sand. She frantically clawed at the water, dug at the sand around her legs. The water got colder and colder. The sand churned up around her as she was pulled deeper. Her throat was crushed as the sand reached her neck. It reached up to her chin. As she looked up the man in the gas mask was standing there. He stared down at her. His black gas mask was the last thing she saw.

In the other room her alarm clock was blaring. The television was playing Good Morning America. The sunlight crept through the window and gently kissed her frozen cheek. The alarm clock beeped on unanswered.
While summer is flying by at its normally quick pace, that doesn’t mean you don’t have time to read some suspenseful books before thoughts turn to autumn and fallen leaves.

Here are some books that will keep you on the edge of your seat, wherever that may be the remainder of the summer:

**“Dublin Dead,” Gerard O’Donovan.** In this Irish thriller, a sequel to O’Donovan’s debut “The Priest” (2010), journalist Siobhan Fallon has a hunch that there is something not quite right regarding a millionaire estate agent’s suicide, but the official investigation is cursory: Dozens of people who work in the Irish property industry have committed suicide in the recent years, so what’s one more?

A female reporter who gets the scoop no matter what it takes, Siobhan investigates the estate agent’s life and death. Meantime, her friend DI Mike Mulcahy is trying to solve the murder of a noted Dublin gangster in Spain. The twists and turns here come from attempting to work out the inevitable tie between the two deaths.

**“Blue Monday,” Nicci French.** This is the first in a new series of psychological thrillers unveiling an interesting London psychotherapist. In this book, Frieda Klein is a solitary, incisive psychotherapist who spends her sleepless evenings strolling along the ancient rivers that have been forced underground in modern London.

The kidnapping of five-year-old Matthew Farraday provokes a national outcry and a frantic police search. Meantime, Frieda cannot get out of her head that one of her patients has been having dreams in which he has a desire for a child, a red-haired child he can describe in flawless detail, a child the spitting image of Matthew. As a result, Frieda finds herself in the center of the investigation, serving as the unwilling assistant to the chief inspector.

**“Catch Me” D.D. Warren #6, Lisa Gardner.** The relentless Boston investigator must solve a coldly calculated murder prior to it happening. As the plot evolves, a lone woman outside D.D.’s latest crime scene startles her
with a remarkable proposition: Charlene Rosalind Carter Grant thinks she will be murdered in four days. And she requests Boston’s top detective handle the death investigation. Is Charlene really in danger, or is she keeping a secret that could end up being the greatest threat of all?

“All I Did Was Shoot My Man” Leonid McGill #4, Walter Mosley. As you delve into this mystery, you will discover that Leonid is trapped between his sins of the past and an all-too-vivid present. Seven years ago, Zella Grisham returned home to discover her man, Harry Tangelo, in bed with her friend. The weekend prior, $6.8 million had been stolen from Rutgers Assurance Corp., whose offices are across the street from where Zella was employed. Zella does not remember shooting Harry, but she didn’t deny it at the same time. The district attorney was leaning towards calling it temporary insanity—until authorities found $80,000 from the Rutgers heist hidden in her storage space. Leonid McGill is convinced of Zella’s innocence. But as he begins his investigation, his life starts to fall apart...

“What Doesn’t Kill You” Catherine Ling #2, Iris Johansen. Abandoned on the streets of Hong Kong as a child, Catherine Ling only knows one thing: survival. As a teen, she came under the tutelage of a secretive male known only as Hu Chang—a skilled assassin and master poisoner. As a young woman, she was recruited by the CIA, and now she is regarded as one of their top operatives. When her old friend Hu Chang creates something deadly and completely untraceable, the hunt is on to be the first to locate it. With rogue operative John Gallo also in the chase, Catherine finds herself fighting against a group so villainous and a man so evil that she may not survive the game to protect those most important to her.

“Dead and Alive,” John Richmond. In this thriller, young Will Tomlinson strolled into his apartment one June afternoon and discovered a dead man on his couch. Will did not know the dead man, or how he had ended up in his apartment. Most importantly, Will is befuddled as to how the man died.

Will is then pursued by a relentless homicide inspector, Lupo. With questions to be answered, Will begins his own investigation, with the aid of his long-lost childhood friend, Belew. As Lupo turns up the heat on Will, he sees his personal and professional life suffer as a result. What Will discovers at the center of this mystery will change his life.

“Black List,” Brad Thor. Somewhere in the far reaches of the U.S. government is a deeply protected list. Members of Congress are prohibited from seeing it—only the President and a secret team of advisers have such privileges. Even more intriguing, once your name is on the list, it doesn’t come off...until you’re deceased. Now, someone has added counterterrorism operative Scot Harvath’s name to that deadly list. As a result, Harvath must get away from the teams dispatched to kill him long enough to untangle who has targeted him and why he is on that list to being with.

For those needing some quiet moments away from the hustle and bustle of daily life, reading one or all of these mysteries should make your summer even hotter.

About the author:
With twenty-three years of experience as a writer, Dave Thomas covers a wide array of topics from background checks to the latest books and movies to add to your collection.
“Shell Game is a financial thriller using the economic environment created by the capital markets meltdown that began in 2007 as the backdrop for a timely, dramatic, and hair-raising tale. Joseph Badal weaves an intricate and realistic story about how a family and its business are put into jeopardy through heavy-handed, arbitrary rules set down by federal banking regulators, and by the actions of a sociopath in league with a corrupt bank regulator.

Like all of Badal’s novels, “Shell Game” takes the reader on a roller coaster ride of action and intrigue carried on the shoulders of believable, often diabolical characters. Although a work of fiction, “Shell Game,” through its protagonist Edward Winter, provides an understandable explanation of one of the main reasons the U.S. economy continues to languish. It is a commentary on what federal regulators are doing to the United States banking community today and, as a result, the damage they are inflicting on perfectly sound businesses and private investors across the country and on the overall U.S. economy.

“Shell Game” is inspired by actual events that have taken place as a result of poor governmental leadership and oversight, greed, corruption, stupidity, and badly conceived regulatory actions. You may be inclined to find it hard to believe what happens in this novel to both banks and bank borrowers. I encourage you to keep an open mind. “Shell Game” is a work of fiction that supports the old adage: You don’t need to make this stuff up.

“FICTION MASTER, JOSEPH BADAL HAS ANOTHER WINNER IN “SHELL GAME.” TAKE A ROLLER COASTER RIDE THROUGH THE MAZE OF MODERN BANKING REGULATIONS WITH ONE OF MODERN FICTION’S MOST TERRIFYING SOCIOPATHS IN THE DRIVER’S SEAT. ALONG WITH ITS COMPPELLING, FAST-PACED STORY OF A FAMILY’S STRUGGLE AGAINST CORRUPTION, “SHELL GAME” RAISES IMPORTANT QUESTIONS ABOUT AMERICA’S FINANCIAL SYSTEM BASED ON WELL-RESEARCHED FACTS.”

—ANNE HILLERMAN AND JEAN SCHAUMBERG, WORDHARVEST
If you’re a regular *Suspense Magazine* reader, you’ll be familiar with the work of Anthony J. Franze, who writes our monthly series “America’s Favorite Suspense Authors on the Rules of Fiction.” Anthony also happens to be one of this year’s hottest debut authors, and this month we’re including an excerpt from his legal thriller, “The Last Justice.” Because of this special preview, the publisher has agreed to make “The Last Justice” available for the entire month of September 2012 at a special reduced Kindle price of only $2.99! See what you think:

### PROLOGUE

**Black Wednesday**

Solicitor General Jefferson McKenna fell forward onto a screaming woman, smearing her crisp blue blazer with his blood. The government’s top lawyer, bleeding from the shoulder and chest, lay helpless on the floor of the United States Supreme Court, watching the chaos unfold.

*Pop! Pop! Pop!* That horrible sound again. McKenna tried to get up, but managed only to roll onto his side before a violent pain ripped through him. He felt himself slipping in and out of consciousness but was determined to stay alert. He shifted his eyes toward the sound and strained to make out the blurry silhouette standing at the center of the elevated mahogany bench.

*It can’t be.* The black-robed, silver-haired figure waving a pistol came into focus: Chief Justice Thomas W. Kincaid.

To Kincaid’s right, four other justices were slumped over, blood and brain matter spattered across their high-backed leather chairs. To his left, another black robe down . . .

*Pop!* More screams. A Supreme Court police officer staggered and landed on the floor with a thud next to one of the Siena marble columns that encased the courtroom. McKenna’s eyes trailed the two black wing tip shoes that stepped calmly over the officer’s body.

Four more quick pops, and Chief Justice Kincaid grabbed his chest with his left hand. He paused, jumped onto the long wooden counsel’s table, and then collapsed over the edge and hit the floor. And there he and McKenna lay, staring at each other across the courtroom’s red rosette-patterned carpet.

The next instant, two officers jumped onto Kincaid and secured the gun still clenched in the elderly justice’s hand. Blood dripping from the corner of his mouth, Kincaid gazed into McKenna’s eyes.

*My fault,* was McKenna’s last thought before losing consciousness.

*All my fault . . .*

### CHAPTER 1

**Six months later**

**Midtown Manhattan, New York**
Jefferson McKenna reached for his cell phone, vibrating on the nightstand in his suite at the W Hotel. Head still pressed to the pillow, he squinted at the alarm clock near the bed, its green glow the only light in the room: 2:32 a.m. The phone vibrated again, crawling toward the edge of the nightstand. Snatching it before it got away, he pressed the answer button.

"Hello?"

"This is Detective Assad with the NYPD. With whom am I speaking?" the voice said in too demanding a tone for the hour.

McKenna sat up and switched on the bedside lamp.

"This is Solicitor General Jefferson McKenna," he said, matching the detective's tone and waiting for the name to register. It didn't seem to.

A year ago this would have been no surprise—few outside the Beltway had even known there was a solicitor general's office, much less the name of its holder. But that was before Black Wednesday; before the vigils, the flags at half-staff, and the media frenzy over the bloodbath at the high court. Now, to the admiring want to meet the striking darkly handsome appeal, "and weekly eligible bachelors list for his "brooding, " he said, quickly looking away. "It's Parker Sinclair."

He tried to shake off the picture of Parker, lying dead on a city sidewalk, the front of his white button-down shirt soaked in blood.

"His wallet was missing," Milstein said. "Your phone number was in his pocket. I take it you knew him?"

"Yes. Parker used to work for me a couple of years ago," McKenna said, letting the disturbing picture sink in. "I'm in town on business. We were supposed to meet for dinner earlier this evening." McKenna ran his fingers through his thick brown hair. "He never showed."

"Do you know how we can reach his family?" Milstein asked, scribbling something on a small notepad.

"I'm not sure," McKenna said. "We haven't kept in close touch. I know where he works, though. Parker's a law clerk for the Second Circuit Court of Appeals. I'm sure you can get the information you need from Judge Petrov's chambers."

McKenna was still reeling inwardly from the picture. Parker Sinclair had been his law clerk two and a half years ago, when McKenna was a federal district court judge just before he was nominated for solicitor general. He had recommended Parker for a prestigious federal appellate clerkship with the legendary Judge Ivan Petrov.

"So you two had dinner plans?" Milstein asked, watching him closely.

"I gave a speech at Columbia Law School earlier this evening. Parker happened to be there and said hello. Since we hadn't seen each other in some time, I agreed to meet him for a late dinner after my speech. He had to leave early, so we planned to meet at Aquavit, a restaurant on East Fifty-ninth. We were supposed to meet at ten o'clock, but I gave him my cell number in case something came up."

"And he just didn't show?" Assad asked.

"That's right."

"Did he call and say he wouldn't make it?"

"No. And I didn't know how to reach him, so I just came back to the hotel and..."
ordered room service.”

McKenna noticed Milstein casually scanning the room, no doubt looking for a room service cart or dirty dishes.

“Did you notice anything unusual about him?” she asked. “Anything at all out of the ordinary?”

“Nothing sticks out in my mind, but we spoke for only a couple of minutes.”

Milstein looked thoughtful. “Have you and Mr. Sinclair had any problems in the past?”

“No,” McKenna said decisively. “No disputes?”

“No,” he repeated, this time with a bit of edge to his voice. “Look, I know you’re just doing your job, but I’ve told you, this was the first I’ve seen Parker in years. And it was for two or three minutes, max.”

“Was there a particular reason you two were having dinner?”

“A reason? No, we were just catching up. Given my current position, it’s not unusual for former colleagues to want to get together. Parker had been a good clerk, so I just thought it beat dining alone.” McKenna was not one to throw his weight around, but he didn’t like the suggestion implied in Milstein’s questions, and he thought it was time to remind the detectives of just whom they were dealing with.

“Your position?” Assad asked, taking the bait.

“As I said to you on the phone after you woke me up, I’m the Solicitor General of the United States.”

Milstein looked up from her notepad and examined McKenna. Her expression showed a glimmer of recognition.

“Black Wednesday, right?” she asked. “You were shot when the—” she started to say, but he cut her off with a clipped nod.

“The speech at Columbia was just a favor to a friend. The reason I’m in town is for a meeting with the Supreme Court Commission.”

The detectives may not have heard of the solicitor general’s office, but surely they knew of the commission. It had been six months, but the nation was still coping with the tragedy of Black Wednesday, and the commission’s investigation into the slaughter at the high court remained a staple of front-page news.

As it turned out, Chief Justice Kincaid had not murdered his brethren. On the contrary, he was one of the few people in the courtroom who had seen the mysterious man, dressed as a lawyer with business at the court, who calmly shot five justices dead before vanishing from the scene. As long rumored, the chief justice packed more than just his conservative ideology under that robe, and sure enough, he had surprised the assassin by returning fire. McKenna and five others were hit in the crossfire. The Supreme Court police officers who mistakenly shot Kincaid had killed the only witness to see the shooter’s face.

“You’re on the commission?” Assad asked.

“Yes, my office has a small role. As I’m sure you can understand, I’m not at liberty to say more.”

McKenna didn’t mind disclosing his participation in the commission since it was a matter of public record. It had been widely reported that his office had been assigned to help assess whether any cases pending in the Supreme Court had a connection to the murders. Though there were protests that McKenna, himself nearly killed in the attack, had a conflict of interest and thus should not be part of the investigation, his office’s participation was essential. For one thing, the solicitor general’s office is involved some way in every one of the cases filed each year in the Supreme Court. Indeed, the office is so influential with the nine-member court that the solicitor general sometimes is referred to as “the tenth justice.” In less than six hours, he would appear at a commission meeting to present his office’s findings to the multi-agency law enforcement arm of the commission.

Detectives Milstein and Assad questioned him for another thirty minutes. Assad, who had become more deferential after learning that McKenna was a high-level Justice Department official, chose his words carefully. Milstein, however, was unflinching. What had McKenna done after giving the speech? Had anyone seen him at the restaurant? Could anyone else account for his whereabouts after leaving the restaurant? Was he sure that he and Sinclair had no disputes?

After finishing the interview and thanking McKenna, the detectives walked to their car. Lexington Avenue was quiet, and the October mist covered the backstop.

Assad reached for Milstein’s hand.

“We’re on duty, Chase,” she said, pulling away.

“It’s after three in the morning, Em,” he muttered. “I don’t think we have to worry too much about anyone seeing us.”

“That’s not the point.”

“This is getting old fast,” he said, sliding into the front seat.

“It’s late, Chase,” she said. “Let’s not have this fight.”

The drive to his apartment was silent except for the rhythm of the windshield wipers and the faint hiss of water off the tires.

Assad looked over at Milstein, who sat staring out the window clenching her jaw. She was just as beautiful angry.

“So, what did you make of him?” he said, breaking the silence.

“I’m not sure. He seemed like he was holding back.”

“Didn’t feel it. Maybe you were just sensing his embarrassment from that Speedo he was wearing. I haven’t seen short-shorts like that since Bill Clinton used to jog by the precinct house.”

Milstein smiled.

“That’s what I wanted to see,” Assad said.

“I’m serious,” Milstein said. “There’s something he isn’t telling us.”

“Women’s intuition?” said Assad playfully.

“You want to sleep alone tonight, don’t you,” she replied. “ Seriously, there’s something he didn’t tell us. I just know
CHAPTER 2

3:40 a.m.
Poospatuck Indian Reservation,
Long Island, New York

A beige ten-year-old Buick Century pulled into the dark gravel lot of Squaw's Smoke Shop and parked under a scraggly stand of trees. The “shop” was nothing more than a dilapidated trailer covered with faded cardboard signs advertising “tax free” cigarettes.

A tall man with black, lifeless eyes and a pockmarked face got out of the car and scanned the lot. He wore a camouflage hunting jacket and his heavy boots thumped loudly as he walked up the wooden steps to the trailer’s door. He knocked and a few moments later Bobby Ray Cherry's unshaven face took another quick look around it. “Who' d you tell about me?”

“Who' d you tell me?” the visitor demanded. When Bobby Ray did not comply, he grabbed a fistful of his stringy hair and jerked his head up. The visitor’s black eyes stared intently into Bobby Ray’s. “I'm gonna give you one more chance, Bobby Ray. Who' d you tell?”

“I . . . didn’t . . . tell . . . nobody.”

The visitor stood and gave an exasperated shake of the head. “How about your girlfriend? Did you tell her?”

“She don’t know nothin’ about you!” Bobby Ray said in a desperate tone, spittles of blood shooting from his mouth.

“That's not quite true,” the visitor said. “Britney and I go way back. She didn’t tell you about when we were kids?”


Slumped over in the chair, his face and shirt drenched in blood, Bobby Ray just looked at the man.

“I believe you because it’s the same thing that whore Britney told me a hour ago right before I cut her throat. ” He then walked over to Bobby Ray, placed the blade at his neck, and slit the flesh from ear-to-ear. After carefully wiping the blade on Bobby Ray’s shirt, he resheathed the knife in his boot.

By daybreak, Bobby Ray Cherry and his girlfriend, Britney Goodhart, were buried in a wooded area behind a rest stop on Montauk Highway, a mile from the reservation.

Driving back toward the city, the visitor punched a number into his disposable cell phone and calmly spoke into the speaker, “It's done.”
Ben Sussman was born and raised in Los Angeles, but after finding writing was what he wanted to do, left the West Coast and enrolled at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts. After he earned his Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, he came back to California, where he procured positions at Creative Artists Agency, Paramount Pictures, and Disney.

Once settled, he returned to his first love of writing. He sold a screenplay, *Finishing School*, to Twentieth Century Fox/New Regency then began writing on assignment for Walt Disney Pictures & Touchstone Television.

*Suspense Magazine* is happy to bring you a few words from Ben, who’s published his second novel, “Internal Threat.”

*Suspense Magazine* (S. MAG): A bestselling author once told us that the most effective book pitches can be done in seven words or less. Can you describe “Internal Threat” in seven words?

Ben Sussman (BS): Twenty-four hours to save his son.

S. MAG.: Both of your books seem to contain time-sensitive chaos. Do you feel this brings about a sense of urgency for not only your characters to meet the time limit but for your readers to hurry toward the end?

B.S.: Absolutely! I’ve found that adding what is usually referred to as the “ticking clock” in screenwriting works just as well in my novels for exactly the reasons you describe. I’m there to provide as much entertainment as possible for the reader. When I’m reading, one of the things that completely hooks me is the story’s pace. I love it when I’m burning through the pages because I just can’t wait to see what’s going to happen next. I do my best to bring that feeling to my own work.

S. MAG.: How has your writing changed from “The Four Horsemen” to your newest book, “Internal Threat”?

B.S.: I’ve shortened the timeline, for one thing. “The Four Horsemen” still has its “ticking clock” but, with “Internal Threat,” I wanted to push that even further. By placing it in nearly real-time and condensing the timeline into one night, I’ve quickened the
pace to make the reader feel the same anxiety that the protagonist does.

S. MAG.: Do you push yourself to the limit more on your book writing or your screenwriting?

B.S.: “Book writing” he says without hesitation. When I was a screenwriter, I often felt constrained by the art form itself, as well as the business that rules it. I found myself always chasing that next sale and that means trying to guess what genre the market is interested in. With my novels, I was free to explore what I was interested in, letting the story dictate the page length and not vice versa. That creative freedom allows me to take more chances and stretch my writing muscles to the limit.

S. MAG.: Some authors claim that while writing, their characters take over and pen their own story. Do you feel this happens to you?

B.S.: I’ve been told I’m an “audio” person so that means I usually hear my characters talking to me. I feel like a director of improv sometimes, telling the actors what the location is and where the scene needs to end up but having their own dialogue and movements take us there.

S. MAG.: Finish this sentence: “If I stopped writing tomorrow I would ______.”

B.S.: …desperately search for something to fill every moment of my spare time. The future looks pretty bleak in this scenario.

S. MAG.: We know what your bio says about you, but can you share with the audience something we can’t readily read online?

B.S.: When I break out of my writing cave, I head up the coast to Los Olivos not just for the wine but for the inspirational California scenery. Even though I was born and raised here, I never get tired of exploring this state. Also, I often become utterly transfixed by certain time periods. Currently that’s the early 1920’s, inspired by Boardwalk Empire, which is inspiring a subscription to Ancestry.com and a desperate hope that I’m related to a long-lost gangster.

S. MAG.: What did you read growing up? And what authors would we see on your bookshelves today?

B.S.: I was heavily influenced by a screenwriter named Shane Black, who I studied obsessively. In my time at NYU, I would purchase copies of his scripts in the back alleys of New York like some sort of literary drug deal. I also worked the night shift at Barnes & Noble in Manhattan through college. I felt like a kid in a candy store and read everything I could get my hands on. But the books that contained heavy action and thrills were what grabbed me the most. Authors like Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Jim Thompson and John D. MacDonald paved the way to current authors like James Patterson. Today, you’d find all of the “Game of Thrones” novels lining my shelves, side-by-side with works from writers like James Rollins and Steve Berry.

S. MAG.: Have you ever written something that’s just been tucked away? Maybe something you plan on dusting off and taking a new look at?

B.S.: The very first screenplay I wrote was called Where the Sun Dies, which was my first attempt at an L.A. noir detective story. I learned a lot from writing it but those pages deserve to stay in that dusty locked drawer.

S. MAG.: What can your fans expect to see coming from you in the next year’s time?

B.S.: Sequels! I am currently working on the sequel to “The Four Horsemen” and will follow that with another Matt Weatherly novel, which will pick up where “Internal Threat” left off.

Suspense Magazine would like to thank Ben for taking time to speak with us and readers about himself and “The Internal Threat”. If you want to know more about him, check out his website at www.bensussman.net or visit him on his Facebook page at www.facebook.com/pages/Ben-Sussman/136083603095742.
From accidental shootings to helicopter malfunctions, Hollywood has seen its fair share of filmmaking mishaps. There are some movies that have a much darker, much more sinister feel to them because of their history. Filming, for the most part, goes off without a hitch, but there are occasional films that have way too much tragedy attached to them for comfort. Those movies are the ones with a dark stigma clouding them; the ones that are whispered about in small circles or pushed so far from the spotlight, most people don't even know they exist.

They are believed to be...

**Cursed**

In light of the recent Colorado movie-theater shootings, I started thinking about movies and the impact that tragic events can have on them. I don't consider myself a superstitious person. I don't cower in fear when a black cat crosses my path, I'm quite fond of the number thirteen and I pick up every penny I see, because let's face facts...every penny counts whether it's on heads or tails! So what drew me to this topic? The answer is simple: pure, morbid, natural, human curiosity.

Now when I say *cursed*, I'm not talking hoodoo, voodoo with chanting, trembling and chicken bones. I am talking about the kind of curse where people die, some in ways that are quite disturbing. Some die during the writing process, some die during or right after filming, and some never even make it past reading the script.

For the next few months we will look at a variety of films that all have tragic or questionable accidents linked to their titles, each one resulting in the death of one or more of its crew members or actors. I will introduce you to one of my favorite cursed Hollywood movies, one that's been associated with so much carnage that it was “buried” by its writers and producers because five leading men died trying to play the part. There will be a classic horror with its own horrible history, a cancer-laden John Wayne film that saw an “outbreak” type spreading of cancer throughout the actors and crew, a questionable “accidental” shooting death and even a sci-fi/horror with a tragic and bloody filming malfunction that sent Hollywood reeling. We will even talk about new films and some of the superstitious notes that are being sung about them.

Movie curses are not something we haven't heard of before, especially since the tragic circumstances surrounding Christopher Reeve and his horse riding accident. But the Superman Curse was spoken of for many, many years prior to Reeve's accident. For every one person who believed that something sinister was driving the Superman franchise, there were ten more who just didn't buy the ludicrous rumors. But the curse rumors were taken seriously by many actors, prompting several of them to turn down multi-million-dollar deals and the opportunity to play this iconic hero on the big screen.
In 1951, the film *Superman and the Mole Men* hit theaters and the world got its very first glimpse at the man who would forever be synonymous with the franchise. George Reeves was an instant success in the title role of the film, and he earned the reoccurring title role in the television series. On June 16, 1959, just a few days before he was set to be married, Reeves was found dead of a single gunshot wound to the head at his home, a Luger pistol lying beside him. Even though he was found lying next to the gun, his prints were not found on the weapon, a fact that is difficult for thinking individuals to simply look past. Though highly suspicious, the death was ruled a suicide, and it remains so to this day.

There were many cases of death or tragic injury that have been associated with the so-called Superman curse, some you know about and others that might come as a shock.

In 1963, President John F. Kennedy’s staff approved a Superman story in which Superman spreads the word on the president’s physical fitness plan. Originally scheduled to be published in April 1964, the comic book would never be seen by Mr. Kennedy. On November 22, 1963, the president was shot and killed and the Superman story was re-written at the request of Kennedy’s successor.

Richard Pryor starred as a bad guy in 1983’s *Superman*. Three years later, he announced that he had been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Richard Pryor died of cardiac arrest on December 10, 2005.

Richard Lester, the director for *Superman II* and *Superman III* was so distraught by the death of Roy Kinnear during the shooting of *The Return of the Musketeers* that he walked away from directing and Hollywood forever.

Marlon Brando, who played Superman’s biological father Jor-El in *Superman: The Movie*, had a ton of heartache follow him past the filming of *Superman*. In May 1990, Brando’s first son, Christian, shot and killed a man who was dating his half-sister, Cheyenne Brando. Christian pled not guilty to murder charges stating that the shooting had been accidental. It would not be enough of a defense, and in the end, Christian was found guilty of voluntary manslaughter and sentenced to serve ten years in prison.

Things would only get worse when, in 1995, Cheyenne, still dwelling on her lover’s death, committed suicide by hanging herself. She was only twenty-five-years-old.

On July 1, 2004, Marlon Brando passed away. He was eighty. The cause of his death was intentionally withheld from the public with his lawyers citing privacy concerns. It was later revealed to the world that death had been slow and painful for this revered Hollywood icon. Lung failure brought on by pulmonary fibrosis was the cause of death, but Brando had also been suffering from liver cancer, congestive heart failure, and diabetes, which caused Brando to slowly go blind.

Lee Quigley (who played the baby Kal-El in the 1978 movie) died in March 1991, after inhaling fumes from cleaning solvents. He was just fourteen.

Christopher Reeve played Superman in the movies that ran from the 1970s throughout the 1980s. Then, on May 27, 1995, Reeve was paralyzed from the neck down after being thrown from his horse. He died on October 10, 2004 from heart failure that stemmed from his medical condition.

Margot Kidder, who played Lois Lane opposite Reeve, suffered from extreme bipolar disorder. In 1996, Kidder was reported missing and wasn’t found for several days. She was recovered by police naked and cowering in some underbrush just outside Los Angeles. Kidder was taken into psychiatric care and later diagnosed.

On July 2, 1996, on the anniversary of their grandfather’s suicide, *Superman IV* actress Margaux Hemingway was found dead of an overdose of sedatives. Though her death was ruled a suicide, her sister, Mariel believes that there is more to the story and still questions the coroner’s findings.

Lane Smith, from the television series *Lois & Clark*, was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig’s disease in April 2005. He died just two months later.

Dana Reeve, the widow of Christopher Reeve, revealed she had been diagnosed with lung cancer in 2005. Despite being in great health and having never been a smoker, Dana lost her battle with cancer on March 6, 2006 at the age of forty-five.

Jeph Loeb, writer of *Superman* comics and the *Smallville* TV series lost his son, Sam Loeb, to cancer.

Not convinced a curse could be to blame? Here’s a final thought to help you decide…

Of all the people who met with tragic ends after being associated with Superman, none played villains in the films or on television. In fact, those actors and actresses who played bad-guy roles in the franchise saw the opposite effect in their everyday lives. Many went on to be hugely successful in all of their endeavors. Just ask Gene Hackman or Kevin Spacey.

Once again…

Someone...somewhere is always getting away with murder!
**WHITE HEAT** is a “...taut crime yarn set in 1992 against the turmoil of the Los Angeles riots that followed the acquittal of the police officers charged with assaulting motorist Rodney King...”

–Publishers Weekly

**WHITE HEAT**

Begins where the ‘Rodney King’ Riots Leave off

**The Controversial Thriller by**

**Paul D. Marks**

He had to make things right...

He had to find the killer.

P.I. Duke Rogers finds himself in a racially charged situation. The case might have to wait... The immediate problem: getting out of South Central Los Angeles in one piece – during the 1992 ‘Rodney King’ riots – and that’s just the beginning of his problems.

“A gripping tale of prejudice and deceit, set against the tumultuous backdrop of the 1992 L.A. riots. White Heat is all the title promises it to be.”

–Darrell James
award-winning author of Nazareth Child

“Expect the unexpected...in an action-walloping award-winner of harrowing twists and turns...”

–Gordon Hauptfleisch
Seattle Post Intelligencer and BlogCritics.org

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TIMELESS INNOCENTS
By Janis Susan May

“Timeless Innocents” by Janis Susan May is an e-book novella tale of around twenty-six thousand words with a cover that resembles the ugly Chucky doll of the suite of films.

It’s a creepy little tale of lawyer Brianna Forte who, as executor of the Clerkwells’ (her Auntie and Uncle) estate, must catalogue and liquidate their assets. Their possessions include hundreds of strangely life-like figurines called ‘Timeless Innocents’. Immediately, she is drawn into the mystery of the Clerkwells’ life as she discovers, despite the Clerkwells’ modest lifestyle, the dolls they avidly collected are worth a fortune. Add to this, a constant stream of pushy people attempting to purchase them from her and we are in Twilight Zone territory.

Her investigations are further complicated by an ex-boyfriend who is unable to accept their breakup and whose anger is rapidly escalating, and we are drawn into an intense, claustrophobic evening within the Clerkwells’ house as Brianna begins to realize something is very wrong with the dolls.

I love short stories and novellas and horror lends itself particularly well to this form. Well written shorts and novellas should be well-paced and an exciting read from the first page to the last with a manageable stage and cast of characters. Authors just don’t have the time to be self-indulgent.

 Turnbull has his personal effects, but has also completely lost his briefcase, get no ‘service’ on the phones and we are in nowhere. It was here in this tiny spot where two agents disappeared from the radar, with no word heard from them for the past month.

As Ethan heads into the village to begin his job, he immediately finds himself knocked out and wakes up in the middle of a park with absolutely no memory of how he got there. Taken to the local hospital, Ethan runs up against a medical staff that is very up against a medical staff that is very.

NIGHTWATCHER
By Wendy Corsi Staub

Staub is boss when it comes to relaying fictionalized accounts of revulsion. “Nightwatcher” is one such book. A disturbing yet suspenseful tale that will take you into the mind of a serial killer amidst the calamity and horror of real terror on American soil.

Saint allows glimpses into the psyche of not just the serial killer but of his victims as well. As they go about their days leading up to their murders, through Staub, they tell us their own feelings relating to the 9/11 attack in New York, all the while unknowingly touching the life of the serial murderer. This is where I caution the reader. If hearing or reading about the real event has ever bothered you in any way, this may not be for you. But if you can get past that, Staub will take you out places… places unsuspecting to the serial killer, who Detective Manzillo is trying to catch and bring to justice.

Suspenseful, powerful, tense and—as usual—wonderfully written with an ending that will leave you guessing—well, maybe not the reader, but certainly Manzillo. As clarification, you can read an excerpt of “Sleepwalker,” which is “Nightwatcher’s” successor in crime that Staub includes at the end of this book. A great read!


IMITATION OF DEATH
By Cheryl Crane

Nicolette (“Nikki”) Harper is the daughter of Victoria Bordeau—a famous movie star back in her day and they have a great relationship. When our story begins, Nikki is living with her mom while her own house is being repainted, and even though Nikki doesn’t live the ‘high life,’ she does like to try it occasionally.

Lounging by the pool one afternoon, Nikki, her mom, and a friend are enjoying their day when the house next door becomes annoying with loud music and even louder voices. Heading over to quiet them down, they walk directly into a fight between their gardener, Jorge, and Eddie Bernard, the spoiled man who lives next door. Though the argument ends, the next morning arrives and Eddie turns up dead in the alley behind Victoria’s mansion; sticking out of the man’s chest is a pair of pruning shears belonging to Jorge.

Nikki decides to do a little investigating on her own…as things unfold, Nikki finds out—not surprisingly—that Eddie had many enemies among his guests. So did the gardener actually kill, or did someone else prune their host? This plot is seriously fun!

Watching Nikki utilize her mother’s ‘fame’ in order to meet the many suspects who are not disappointed that Eddie has met his maker, is hilarious. Of course, the author should know all about the ins-and-outs of fame considering Ms. Crane is the real life daughter of the stunning, Lana Turner, and you can truly see Lana in the form of Bordeaux who’s entertaining beyond belief when she voices her opinions and makes sure everybody listens. Thus far, the Nikki Harper books have been incredibly well written and most definitely memorable. Therefore…enjoy!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine

PINES
By Blake Crouch

Almost from the very beginning this story takes off like a shot and allows readers to lose themselves in a tale of suspense with a very ‘creepy’ edge.

Ethan Burke is an agent in the Secret Service who is sent to the small town of Wayward Pines, Idaho on a mission. Frankly, this place is so small it feels as if he’s in the middle of nowhere. It was here in this tiny spot where two agents disappeared from the radar, with no word heard from them for the past month.

As Ethan heads into the village to begin his job, he immediately finds himself knocked out and wakes up in the middle of a park with absolutely no memory of how he got there. Taken to the local hospital, Ethan runs up against a medical staff that is very...
HUNTRESS MOON

By Alexandra Sokoloff

FBI Special Agent Matthew Rourke lives to work. He’s aware of his shortcomings, but he’s equally aware of his strengths and as the stage is set, he’s planning to close out an important case. Rourke and team are ready to shut down a drug ring and they’re bringing in the inside man to nail down the details. But you can’t always predict how quickly your direction can change and Rourke is about to veer completely off track.

He watches impotently as his undercover agent steps off the sidewalk and into the path of an oncoming truck. It’s not so much the unexpected death or even the loss of important tactical information—though vital—that begins to nag and fester in Rourke’s mind. It’s the woman. Standing like a beacon directly behind his agent, just before he marched to his death. What did she say? And why is Rourke so positive that she’s connected to the death?

Rourke felt the tiniest link with this mysterious woman and can’t let go. He’s a seasoned investigator, he knows when to follow a hunch, and while it’s just a minuscule thread, sometimes it all takes is a small piece unraveling to turn curiosity into obsession. Rourke is very good at what he does, but it rapidly unfolds that she is, too. As Rourke follows his instincts, his present begins to collide with his past and the shades of gray that he tried to run from—in his previous course as a profiler—are flooding back. Is this mysterious woman killing for a cause? What does she see in her victims? Are they really victims?

Sometimes you’re only as good as your supporting cast and Sokoloff—with a background in screenwriting—never lets the secondary characters sit back on their laurels. In fact, she doesn’t let anything fall to the wayside. The intensity of her main characters is equally matched by the strength of the multi-layered plot and if you’re unfamiliar with Sokoloff’s work, “Huntress Moon” is an ideal place to start. The next installment cannot release soon enough for me.

Reviewed by Shannon Raab for Suspense Magazine

THE SHIPKILLER

By Justin Scott

Originally published in 1978, “The Shipkiller” is the story of Peter Hardin, a physician, inventor, and skilled seaman, who sets out to destroy the largest ship in the world, a gigantic oil tanker named Leviathan. Hardin and his wife Carolyn were sailing in the Atlantic Ocean off the Azores when the Leviathan came out of a cloud bank and barreled into their ketch Siren, destroying it before they had a chance to maneuver out of its way. Carolyn died, and Peter Hardin washed up unconscious on the coast of Cornwall, England. The legal entanglements of ship ownership and the law of the sea and insurance regulations leave Hardin with no options for redressing the wrong done to him but revenge, and he sets out to accomplish this with a single-minded determination.

This novel is definitely one for readers who love the sea and sailing. The technical jargon used for both the Leviathan and Hardin’s small sailing vessels was a bit beyond my understanding. At the same time, since this book came out over thirty years ago, the advances in technology, especially in communications, make for some humorous situations. I especially enjoyed the scene where Hardin needs to make a phone call from his hospital bed in England to his lawyer in New York, and the nurse brings him a phone with an extra long cord to make the call.

Scott brings every tense scene to life, whether it is in a seedy bar outside a U.S. Army base in Germany, where Hardin goes to buy a weapon, or on the bridge of the Leviathan, where her captain rules his men with a ruthlessness matched only by his skill and knowledge of his ship and the sea. Along with the massiveness of the Leviathan, the characters in this novel are larger than life, and this story of a man’s fight against a man-made object more frightening than the sea itself make for great reading.

Reviewed by Kathleen Heady, author of “The Gate House” for Suspense Magazine

ARTIFACT

By Gigi Pandian

If Indiana Jones had a sister, it would definitely be historian Jaya Jones, the likeable—and very curious—protagonist in “Artifact,” the debut true hunt mystery by Gigi Pandian.

Jaya receives a mysterious package from her ex-lover, Rupert, sent the same day he died in a supposed accident in Scotland. The package contains a jewel-encrusted artifact from India, and a cryptic note asking Jaya to hide the artifact for him because she’s the only one he can trust. Delving deeper into the provenance of the artifact, Jaya discovers the piece is part of a long-lost Indian treasure, which may be hidden in the Scottish highlands from the days of the British Raj. Realizing that Rupert’s death was no accident, Jaya follows the trail of the treasure from San Francisco to London to an archeological dig in the Scottish highlands ... the same dig that Rupert was part of when he died.

The author is the daughter of two cultural anthropologists from New Mexico and the southern tip of India. She grew up all over the world, and the characters in the Jaya Jones Treasure Hunt mystery series—yes, it will be a series—come straight out of her own childhood adventures. Gigi was also awarded the prestigious Malice Domestic Grant for “Artifact.”

The first book in this series is loads of fun (a real roller coaster ride) and sprinkled with fascinating facts about the British presence in India. I can’t wait to see where Jaya goes next!

Reviewed by Susan Santangelo, author of “Marriage Can Be Murder” for Suspense Magazine

PLUMMET

By Michael Zarocostas

“Plummet,” is riveting suspense that redefines the legal thriller genre. It takes the reader on a supercharged ride through the Manhattan law firm of Sullivan & Adler, and its attorneys. The thrills and suspense brought to you through their professional lives is just an inkling of the chills and amazement you will receive from their personal lives.

The plot centers on the cold and callous senior partner, Gabriel Weiss and the new and naive associate, Micah Grayson. The beauty of Michael Zarocostas’ writing is how he weaves the present day with the happenings of the past year. You will not only delve into the minds of the characters but you will also begin to understand why they are who they are. Their lives intertwine not only at the firm, but more specifically in a case involving two brothers: Nick and Carlos Mavros. The first comes across as evil and greedy, while the other seems saintly and charitable. You will find out if the saying, “blood is thicker than water” is true or not.

In “Plummet,” Michael Zarocostas will take you on a ride of greed, love, lust, family, and passion. Passions, if I had to sum up the story in one word that would be it. A passion for money, a passion for success, a passion for family, a passion for life, a passion for what is right, and ultimately, a passion for one’s true self.

“Plummet” is a book that only someone who has been in the legal trenches could have written. Michael Zarocostas has staked his claim as one of the premier writers of the legal thriller. I give “Plummet” five stars. It would be a crime not to read it.

**BLACK LIST**  
By Brad Thor

I am in control. I know everything about you. What you buy, where you travel, what foods you eat. I know every email you send or receive. I know what sites you visit on the Internet. I even know how you think. I am in control and I want more power. If I don’t like what you think, say, or do, well, your name gets put on a special list…and I kill you. Scott Harvath is a counterterrorism agent. When he is attacked in Paris by the gunmen who killed his partner, he immediately goes on the run seeking to control. I know every body systems. All of this can look at you and register collected and stored. Cameras monitored and the information transaction you make can be used or in final development stage by the government and much of America’s technology. Who can tap into every piece of technology in existence. This is a scary book. Thor states right up front that the technology mentioned in the story is either currently in use or in final development stages by the government and its partners. Think about it. Everything: your phone, your GPS, your car, every transaction you make can be monitored and the information collected and stored. Cameras can look at you and register your body systems. All of this is happening today. Power corrupts and those with power are going to make sure they keep it. This is a story to make you think. Other than being an action thriller, this should make you take a different look at the world around you and realize your privacy and way of living may no longer be yours to control.

Reviewed by Stephen L. Brayton, author of “Beta” for Suspense Magazine

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**CROW’S LANDING**  
By Brad Smith

It is no surprise to begin a review of a Brad Smith novel by saying that this is—yet again—an excellent thriller.

As we begin, readers find themselves a few miles north of Athens—a small town located in New York State—with a man named Parson and his lady friend sailing on the Hudson River. While on the boat, Parson sees another craft headed directly for his and proceeds to go to a hiding place, remove a stainless steel box, and throw it overboard. Directly after this ‘odd’ moment occurs, Parson dives into the river and swims for shore. Although he hears men board his vessel and begin speaking to the woman left behind, Parson does not turn back, even when she calls out to him over and over again in the night.

Moving ahead seven years, readers meet up with Virgil Cain, a handyman of sorts who they’ve met once before. Going fishing in the Hudson, while pulling up anchor, Virgil receives a surprise in the form of a sealed steel box covered in seaweed and slime. Returning to the marina, he and his cohorts attempt to figure out what’s inside. However, when Virgil spots a man trying to steal his boat who identifies himself as an Albany policeman, things go from ‘odd’ to thrilling.

Add to this a ‘criminal’ who comes out of the woodwork and claims that he’s the owner of the box and proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that he’s more than a little crazy when he goes after Virgil with a vengeance, and readers have a book they will not put down.

Not only is this an incredible adventure, but it’s also an extremely emotional story. Being that this is the second Virgil Cain story, readers will sincerely hope that it’s not the last!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine

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**MURDER IN RIVER CITY**  
By Allison Brennan

The news hits the streets of a murder at Dooley’s Pub and Shauna Murphy comes running. Literally. Dooley is Shauna’s grandfather and she can’t wipe the gory imagery of his body lying cold on the floor as she speeds toward the blockade. Shauna is a spitfire and won’t take no for an answer when denied access. Her hair-trigger is only shadowed by her tenacity and she’s ready, willing, and able to do whatever is needed to get into that building—even threatening to speak to the press.

Relief overwhelms her as she walks in the door to find Dooley sitting safely inside. The victim is their longtime friend and bartender, Mack. At first glance, this looks like a robbery gone bad—especially with the missing autographed baseballs and empty cash drawer—but something about the scene is bothering Shauna and when she hits on it, she’s ignored. One baseball is still on the shelf. It’s a Babe Ruth and not many people realize it’s a fake. In fact, only the old-timers and employees know the truth. Which—to Shauna at least—means that this was an inside job.

As if she doesn’t have enough to do, between running her family’s construction company and spending more time at Dooley’s Pub to keep an eye on things, Shauna’s tossed head first into the investigation. To some extent, this is her own doing. Adding to her stress is the return of the man she’s loved since she was a budding teen. Detective Sam Garcia has come home and he’s ready to confront his feelings for his best friend’s kid sister.

Though shorter than her typical fare, Brennan doesn’t slow the pace or the angst in her latest release, “Murder in the River City.” If anything, I’d say she speeds things up a bit, adding significant details that build layers onto her characters and add that electric spark often only found when reading a pro. I can’t speak for her other fans, but I’d love to see more of Murphy and Garcia.

Reviewed by Shannon Raab for Suspense Magazine

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**GONE MISSING**  
By Linda Castillo

Chief Kate Burkholder is back! Castillo weaves another story centered on the Amish with taste and believability, which crackles with tension, suspense, and a bit of flourishing love.

Amish teenage girls are missing and Kate is called in to work with her lover and colleague John Tomasetti, an agent with the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI). She’s asked to be a consultant with the BCI because she knows about the Amish…lived as one herself before bending too many rules. Now she has to work every hour of every day with Tomasetti without letting their new relationship get in the way.

Someone is kidnapping and killing the young girls. Why? Who? Those are just a few of the questions Kate wants to answer. Castillo stymies the reader with possible suspects and potential reasons.

The revelation of the perpetrators will astound you as Kate finds out who is knee-deep in the serial kidnappings and murders. This thriller will have you racing to the finish to not only find out who is committing such atrocious crimes but also to read about Kate and Tomsetti’s adoration of one another and where it will lead.

Five out of five stars!

Reviewed by Starr Gardiner Reina, author of “One Major Mistake” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine
STRANGER IN THE ROOM
By Amanda Kyle Williams

This is the second book featuring Keye Street, an ex-cop living in Atlanta, Georgia who will remind many readers of a Kinsey Millhone ( Sue Grafton’s unforgettable detective).

Keye is a woman with determination and willpower. Raised by an adoptive family, Keye has her share of upsets when it comes to dealing with a difficult relationship with her mom. Keye has issues in her past that ejected her from the police force, so now she has her own PI business and is definitely the one you want to hire when things go bad. Her boyfriend, Aaron, is a police officer who is on the scale of ‘dreamy.’ There is also Nei, a co-worker who is technically brilliant but more than a little strange. Let’s just say that Keye’s main goal is to always see justice done… even if it kills her.

One evening, Keye’s cousin, Miki, heads home and witnesses a stranger in her house. The first thing that comes to mind is: stalker! But when a corpse is found inside the home, the story brings to light other killings, including a serial killer case that Keye works on as a consultant. If that isn’t enough, one of Keye’s private cases transforms from a small investigation into a hugely horrific case. Add Mother Nature to this very suspenseful plot—Atlanta is hit with a tremendous storm that just about takes everyone out—and readers are given a compelling murder mystery with characters that just won’t quit.

As a review, this one is difficult (not wanting to give anything away), but let’s just say this plot is fantastic! Keye is very laid back and has a great sense of humor, Neil is usually high but always brilliant, Aaron is a quiet force, and Miki is the frightened character who definitely has a right to be afraid. This author has the unique (and very rare gift) of being able to keep things light even when the darkness arrives. It will be very interesting to see what Keye does next!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine ■

BLOODLINE
By James Rollins

First let me say, that I am a huge fan of James Rollins. With each of his novels, my respect continues to grow. That being said, since he is so good, I always open each new book with a weariness that maybe, just maybe this will be the time where he ‘just mails it in’. NOT SO with “Bloodline.” It is his best yet!

In “Bloodline,” Rollins continues his SIGMA series (which I love), but he ups his game by bringing in new characters: Captain Tucker Wayne and his military dog, Kane. These two add a new dimension to SIGMA. The author also involves some of the characters from his stand-alone novels, such as “Deep Fathom”…brilliant!

What makes the storyline so good is that Rollins combines espionage with Somali pirates, the U.S. president, and his family, and intertwines genetic engineering into the mix. It asks the question: can we live forever? And what are the consequences of such thought? All of this leads back to Sigma Force’s archenemy, ‘The Guild’ and its leaders. Where it leads, you will never guess.

James Rollins and “Bloodline” will take you from D.C. to the Mid-east, and back again on a fast-paced rollercoaster ride that will make you dizzy with excitement. When it ends, the only question you will have is, when is his next novel being released? Five BIG stars for “Bloodline.”


A CUP FULL OF MIDNIGHT
By Jaden Terrell

Jaden Terrell has done it again. Her newest novel, “A Cup Full of Midnight,” picks up where “Racing the Devil” left off, with detective Jared McKean answering a desperate phone call from his niece Caitlin, whose teenage brother Josh is a suspect in a murder.

Josh has become involved with a Goth subculture group, whose leader, known as “Razor,” was brutally killed in what could be a ritualistic killing, or at least staged to look like one. McKean makes the clearing of Josh’s name his number one priority. But even as he searches for Razor’s killer, he must tread carefully with his brother Randall, Josh’s father, who struggles to come to terms with his son’s life choices. As McKean works through the maze of possible suspects, along with connections to his own family, he realizes that innocent people are in danger, and it is a race against time to catch the murderer before he (or she) strikes again.

As McKean travels deeper into the Goth world his nephew has embraced and more deaths occur, he moves closer to the truth and to a conclusion no one wants. And interspersed between his hours as an investigator, he must deal with the problems of his long-time friend and roommate Jay, whose former lover is dying of AIDS.

With vampires (so they say), vengeful killers, and the unremitting sadness of parents who have lost a child, Terrell still steers a true course of a story where people are what they are, trying to do their best. She doesn’t stint in her use of the vivid language that these brutal situations require, but Jared McKean comes across as a person who will grow as this series continues.

Author Terrell does not just tell a story, she plays with language to permit the story to take on its own life as you read. And her characters never lose their humanity, even as they struggle with pain that is almost more than an individual can bear.

Reviewed by Kathleen Heady, author of “The Gate House” for Suspense Magazine ■

CLIFF WALK
By Bruce DeSilva

While perusing some new mysteries I discovered a diamond in the mud. This book is a throwback to the hard-boiled stories of Hammett and Chandler with dialog right out of a forties film noir movie. The story introduces us to Mulligan, a cynical, beaten down reporter with instincts that would have been in high demand during the 30s and 40s but now marooned in a small Rhode Island newspaper covering a charity ball. Mulligan would rather be working on a story about where the corrupt Governor’s campaign contributions are coming from. Thinking it a waste of time until he spots the Governor in the company of Salvatore Maniella, a notorious pornographer, who also runs a string of legal prostitution clubs in Rhode Island. On the way home from the ball, Mulligan is called to a local pig farm where the body parts of a butchered child have turned up.

Later, a man thought to be Sal Maniella is found dead at the bottom of the Cliff Walk, a local landmark. Mulligan smells a story beyond what everyone else is seeing and goes on the hunt with a wide and diverse cast of characters ranging from the state homicide captain to Attila the Nun, the picturesque and quirky Attorney General, to a number of informants from porn stars to prostitutes. As more bodies of children turn up, makers of Kiddie Porn and pedophiles start turning up dead as well, leading Mulligan to the biggest story of his life…

As a reader and writer, I gotta give this on 5 out of 5 stars for bringing in a new voice and character that is a throwback to movies like The Front Page and books like the “Maltese Falcon!”

Reviewed by Bill Craig, author of “Paradise Lost: A Joe Collins Mystery” for Suspense Magazine ■
OLD HAUNTS
By E. J. Copperman

A haunting beach read. “Old Haunts”—the newest installment in A Haunted Guesthouse Mystery series—finds Alison Kerby dragged into not only a dangerous murder case but an odd missing person’s case, both related to her house ghosts Paul and Maxie. All while trying to meet the growing expectations of her house guests of the Senior Plus Tours seeking paranormal happenings during their stay, and an unexpected visit from her ex-husband, The Swine.

The same moment Alison’s ex arrives back in her life, Maxie and Paul both rove Alison into helping them with events from their lives before they died. The case investigating the murder of Big Bob, Maxie’s ex-husband, brings Alison into the dangerous world of bikers. To top it off, Paul’s request to locate his girlfriend leads to nothing but dead ends.

Determined to help the ghosts find answers while trying to keep her own life from spiraling out of control, Alison finds herself battling attitude from the living and the dead. Her ex-husband is up to something—she just knows it—and now she is getting threatening texts to stop looking into the death of Big Bob.

A light-humored detective story with help from the other side keeps the storyline moving. Never knowing what will pop up next or who will turn out to be the killer keeps the pages turning. Copperman easily intertwines humor and mystery in this quick reading novel perfectly fitting for a day at the beach or a night on the couch during a good storm.

Reviewed by Cassandra McNeil for Suspense Magazine

AN UNMARKED GRAVE
By Charles Todd

Bess Crawford is a nurse working in a field hospital in the middle of the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918. Working around the clock with little time for sleep and sustenance, she and her team of doctors and nurses are also overwhelmed by an influx of wounded from the raging war. Taken into the confidence of a soldier, Bess finds the body of a Lieutenant hidden amongst the bodies of influenza victims. The dead Lieutenant is someone Bess knows well and the circumstances of his death seem suspect.

Bess becomes the next afflicted with the flu and slips into unconsciousness before she can bring the suspicious death to the attention of the Matron. When she awakes in her family home in England, she learns the Lieutenant has been buried along with proof of any wrongdoing. When another body turns up with questionable details Bess is determined to uncover the killer at all costs, much to the chagrin of her protective family.

With the help of enamored suitors, family members, and her father’s military connections, Tess follows the leads and narrows down the suspects, all the while becoming a target of the killer herself. It’s a race against the clock before the killer can strike even closer to home.

The third book in Charles Todd’s Bess Crawford series provides an entertaining read. The mother and son writing team are well versed in the mystery genre with the Ian Rutledge Mystery series being published as well. Written as a historic mystery, “An Unmarked Grave” is on point with the time period as the characters are well portrayed within the roles associated to their position in society. The depth is brought from the description of conditions in the field hospitals, and the families of soldiers who have died from the flu epidemic or injuries sustained in battle.

Whether you are an enthusiast of war history or historic mysteries, you will definitely enjoy this book. It is a great read.

Reviewed by Jodi Ann Hanson, chaptersandchats.com, for Suspense Magazine

LULLABY
By Ace Atkins

Robert Parker’s Spenser is as close to a modern version of a knight errant in an Italianate romance of centuries back as can be imagined. He aids damsels in distress, slays dragons and believes in fighting for truth, justice, and the Arthurian Way. Only Spenser lives in modern Boston and in this story the damsel in distress is a streetwise fourteen-year-old girl named Mattie, the dragons are drug dealers and mobsters, and truth and justice have not been on speaking terms for years.

Mattie Sullivan saw her mother, Julie, snatched off the street four years ago, her battered, lifeless body discovered only hours later. Mattie recognized the two men who took her, but since when do the cops pay attention to a ten-year-old? Instead, they arrested Mickey Green, Julies’ drug mate and sent him up the river for her murder. Now Mattie wants the men who killed her mother caught and Mickey released from prison, and she’s come to Spenser for help.

South Boston is a wasteland of(decaying streets, cheap bars, public housing projects, young turks, and old mob bosses. It’s cold, it’s wet, and darkness comes quickly as the afternoon wanes and it lingers after the pale dawn arrives. It’s under the cover of that pervasive darkness that dire and dismal deeds are done. And it’s into that darkness that Spenser dons his armor and descends to do battle for Mattie.

Faithful readers of Parker’s Spenser novels will find themselves at home with this first attempt by Ace Atkins to continue the storytelling. Susan is still a major part of Spenser’s world and reason for existence. Hawk, grim and glowing ever as gladly assists in meting out death and destruction as the occasion requires. And through it all, a familiar parade of Spenser’s friends, informants, and adversaries populate the pages of this fast moving story where stakeouts last for hours and violence comes quickly.

Reviewed by Andrew MacRae, author of “Murder Misdirected” for Suspense Magazine

THE OTHER WOMAN
By Hank Phillippi Ryan

Reporter, Jane Ryland, knows she’s right about her story, but when she refuses to reveal a source, she’s “cut loose” by the TV. station and finds herself all alone. Being extremely tough, Jane refuses to give up and takes a job with a newspaper writing little, boring stories that pay the rent but don’t really measure up to her intelligence.

Soon hired by The Boston Register—only because the city editor wants her to identify the source she wouldn’t identify in court—Jane has to once again stick to her guns. But when another story comes across her desk and Jane is sent into the offices of an ex-governor now running for the Senate, a new problem arises. The wannabe senator’s wife ends up offering Jane a juicy tidbit regarding her husband having an affair. Because Jane has already been blacklisted for running a bogus story, she needs to confirm these facts and ends up opening the door to more than she bargained for. From campaign volunteers to Senate groupies to a rally being sabotaged, the waters become muddied.

Back in Boston, Detective Jake Brogan tangles with reporters who are convinced that the discovery of two corpses means a serial killer has come to the city. Even though the theory of “The Bridge Killer” hits the airwaves, Jake is adamant that the killings were done by different people. Oddly enough as the bodies start to pile up, Jane and Jake’s investigations begin to connect, and the reasons behind Jane’s career exploding begin to come to light.

There are many twists in this plot concerning the ex-governor and his admirers, not to mention his poor wife who seems to be clueless as to what’s going on, and the characters of Jane and Jake truly hold the reader’s interest. It is said that this is the start of a new series by Ryan, and after reading this riveting novel, there’s no doubt fans will flock to the bookstores when the next chapter arrives.

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine
SENTINEL: A SPYCATCHER NOVEL
By Matthew Dunn

In the world of Spymasters, this author has no equal. With this offering, number two in the Spycatcher series, Mr. Dunn takes the reader’s breath away with more suspense, action, mystery, and endless adventure that any one person can handle.

Our main character, MI-6 agent Will Cochrane, is back in action and asked to decode a partial message that was received at CIA headquarters in Virginia. The message is from a deep cover agent located in Russia and reads: He has betrayed us and wants to go to war…

The unfinished message is quickly passed up the chain of the MI-6/CIA Spartan Division, which is run jointly by Britain and the U.S. and is manned by the professionals who are most wanted to carry out the truly dangerous missions.

When Will finally tracks down the elusive agent who sent the message, the man is on his deathbed, but manages to tell Will that the ‘bad guy’ is none other than Russian Colonel Taras Khmelnytsky. Apparently the Colonel wants to start a war between Russia and America and…only Sentinel can stop him.

Barely getting away from the meeting with his life, Will is told by the men in charge that he will have to work with Sentinel—a high-powered spy who always works alone. But when the two get together, sparks fly as they find their egos are a little too much for both of them to handle. Managing to work together, this duo goes on the hunt, traveling from Washington to London to Moscow and beyond to find a vicious mastermind who always seems to be one step ahead.

With all the twists and turns that a suspense fan could possibly imagine (and some they couldn’t), the skillful writing and fantastic ending make this the most delicious novel of the year thus far. Hold on to your hats for this one-day read, ladies and gents, and have an absolute ball!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine ■

THE LAST TRADE
By James Conway

Strange as it may sound, this is a financial thriller. One might think finance couldn’t be all that thrilling, but one would have to think again. In Conway’s hands, it is.

The action starts in March of 2008 when a series of short trades starts an evil ball rolling. I’m not sure I understand what a short trade is, but that’s not necessary to appreciate what happens. If you do know what it is, I imagine your enjoyment will escalate as you read this account of what happens when a few greedy people manipulate a whole lot of rich investors. The mortgage crisis of 2008 wasn’t bad for everyone. A hedge fund called Rising Fund made a killing, thanks to Drew Havens.

Havens works as a ‘quant’ for Rising Fund. That means he quantifies market numbers, but more than that, he predicts with startling accuracy what the market will do. He’s a different sort of person, low on interpersonal skills, and one who sees the world in black and white. He’s the Spock of the financial world, concentrating only on his job, which has cost him, to his deep regret, his marriage. Havens took on a young protegé named Danny Weiss, who wants to know what makes the world go round: love or money. Weiss and Havens may be the only two honest employees at Rising Fund. That gets them into a lot of trouble. Danny uncovers a horrific plot and, paranoid about what he’s found, starts texting cryptic messages to Havens who, at first, ignores them. Later, he finds he shouldn’t have.

The plot goes global as traders start ending up dead. In six action-packed days, Havens must decipher what’s going on—and stop it. There are other interesting characters from around the world who work to help Havens stop the growing menace to the world economy, and more.

For a book about money and trading, this was, I must say, a thriller of a page-turner!

Reviewed by Kaye George, Author of “Smoke”, for Suspense Magazine ■

B IS FOR BURGLAR
By Sue Grafton

For many years, readers have enjoyed Ms. Grafton’s Alphabet Series and have looked forward to every new letter with excitement. In fact, Ms. Grafton has just released “V is for Vengeance,” which will allow Kinsey Millhone—beloved P.I.—to look forward to only four more adventures.

“B is for Burglar” arrived on the scene back in 1985, the second investigation for Kinsey who is an ex-police woman and now runs her own private investigation firm. Kinsey finds herself hired by Beverly Danziger to locate her missing sister. Elaine Boldt is the sister; however, there is something far odder going on than just the fact that Elaine was seen leaving on a flight to Boca Raton just as happy as she could be.

Danziger to locate her missing sister. Elaine Boldt is the sister; however, there is something far odder going on than just the fact that Elaine was seen leaving on a flight to Boca Raton just as happy as she could be. The reason behind Beverly’s urgent request is that she needs Elaine to sign off on a document so that an ex-policewoman and now runs her own private investigation firm. Kinsey finds herself hired by Beverly

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine ■

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO GETTING YOUR BOOK PUBLISHED
By Arielle Ekshtut & David Henry Sterry

They’ve done it again. Talk about taking the mystery out of getting your book in front of a publisher. This is the bible every author should read while thinking of writing, editing, and every aspect of post-writing that involves your book.

This is the step-by-step whodunit of how to write, sell, and successfully market your book. In a fun upbeat fashion this husband and wife team, literature agent and writer, explain everything you have ever wanted to know about what to do next. Turning over every stone along the way, they leave no clue uncovered to help you get what you have written in the hands of the publisher.

Interspersing humorous and realistic examples and lessons on what to do, or not do, and supplying sample proposals and query letters, there is nothing left to chance. This is an updated version of a prior self-help tome, “How to Turn Your Passion Into Print,” their last joint venture that has been updated for the 21st Century with details on social networking and e-publishing.

Need to find an agent, use an editor, understand your contract, or write an elevator pitch? The answer to everything you could possibly need to know is here—and a lot more besides. This is the book that demystifies every step of the publishing process and should be in your reference library.

Reviewed by Mark P. Sadler, author of “Blood on his Hands” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine ■
THE DEMANDS
By Mark Billingham

The tenth novel in the Tom Thorne series, “The Demands” is a fast-paced crime thriller that will have Mark Billingham’s readers once again drawn into the fray as Thorne pursues his next criminal.

When a crazed shop owner in London, England takes two people hostage at gunpoint, police must act quickly to calm the captor down and resolve the standoff before the hostages are harmed. One of the hostages is female police detective Helen Weeks, mother of a young child, who agrees to be the go-between for the captor in helping to negotiate his demands to the police; Detective Tom Thorne to be exact.

The hostage taker, and immigrant from India, lost his son six months earlier while the boy was in a prison infirmary. The authorities ruled the boy’s death a suicide by overdose, but he knows his son would never take his own life and wants Thorne to prove he is right. The kicker, Thorne must provide proof before the man will release his hostages.

Thorne’s investigation proves to be an eye-opening experience into the lives of those the penal system has failed, and the lives of those who use it for their benefit. The answers Thorne finds may send the hostage taker over the edge, but that’s a chance he will have to take.

Billingham takes his readers on a wild ride. His characters, especially the captor, ring true with in-depth views into what makes them tick; often causing the reader to both empathize and cast judgment on each of them. This book in my opinion, is a five star read. It is a book that will have you reading into the wee hours of the morning to see what happens next.

Reviewed by Jodi Ann Hanson, advertsandchats.com for Suspense Magazine ■

GOTU
By Mike McNeff

Guardians of the Universe (GOTU) makes this book sound like some graphic novel starring Captain America and his ilk when it is nothing more than a superb smash-and-grab police procedural starring protagonist Robin Marlette, a true blood and guts super hero.

McNeff, a forty-year veteran of law enforcement draws upon his intimate knowledge of how to combat drug smuggling on the Arizona/Mexico border. He introduces us to a squad of DPS officers that is reminiscent of The Dirty Dozen, the washed up, down-and-out degenerates that are about to be frog-marched out of law enforcement only to be salvaged by a great leader and turned into an elite unit.

When Marlette and his men round a smuggling ring, seizing millions of dollars and killing the drug cartel boss’ little brother, the retaliation is fast and furious. The cartel strikes at Marlette personally; not only by sending soldiers to shoot up his house and family but to kidnap his eldest daughter, too.

With his daughter in the hands of the bad guys south of the border, Marlette does what any father would, he violates every known international law to rescue his child. With all his men recklessly following his lead, he charges into danger, guns blazing, consequences be damned.

Full of hard-hitting details and realistic action scenes, McNeff leads us into the middle of a no-rules fight where the hard-charging victors wear a white hat and experience wins out every time.

Reviewed by Mark P. Sadler, author of “Blood on his Hands” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine ■

BONES ARE FOREVER
By Kathy Reichs

“Bones are Forever” is Reichs’ fifteenth novel featuring forensic anthropologist Temperence Brennan. A strange incident of a missing patient at a Montreal hospital leads to the discovery of the hidden remains of three newborns in an apartment, requiring Brennan's expertise. This sets in motion an extensive search for the still-missing mother, who uses a variety of aliases. From Montreal the long trail leads west across Canada to Edmonton, then into the barren reaches of the Northwest Territories in the town of Yellowknife. Although everyone seems to know everyone else in the small diamond-mining town, no one admits to knowing where the missing, and possibly murderous, mother is.

The plot takes many interesting twists and turns. To begin with, the investigation is complicated by the triangle of investigators themselves: circumstances bring together Brennan, her old boyfriend Andrew Ryan, and Royal Mountie Ollie Hasty, a felling she’d rather forget. The two men quickly take a dislike to one another, putting Brennan in a stressful position while trying to get to the heart of a particularly disturbing case.

As the investigation digs deeper, things get messier. Prostitution, drugs, and even grudges over protecting caribou habitat come into play. The case pushes some emotional buttons for Brennan, and she worries about her daughter, Katy, whom she’s having trouble contacting. As the two men butt heads over procedure, Brennan, as she often does, goes off on her own, creating more trouble even as she discovers new leads that point in a completely different direction.

As any good series entry does, “Bones are Forever” does a fine job of developing the current mystery while also playing off the backstory and setting up new situations in the characters’ lives. Reichs fully exploits the remote setting for atmosphere and creates quirky supporting characters who are interesting and generally believable—although one woman’s odd genetic condition and the flashback it inspires seem awkwardly tacked onto one scene.

Although the complicated plot requires a tiny bit too much explanation in the closing pages of the book, this is an engaging story that should please any fan of the series.

Reviewed by Scott Pearson, author of “Star Trek: Honor in the Night,” for Suspense Magazine ■

KILL YOU TWICE
By Chelsea Cain

How do you kill someone twice? Intriguing indeed. The title captured my attention, but the contents within had me racing to the finish.

Archie Sheridan is plagued with horrors from the past, tortured by his recollection of what ex-lover and serial killer Gretchen Lowell did to him. He is lucky to be alive. But it’s not over with Lowell, not by a long shot. Lowell may be locked up in an insane asylum, but it doesn’t make her any less of a threat as Sheridan races to find out if there is a copycat mimicking Lowell or a new serial killer all of his or her own.

Meanwhile, ex-journalist and friend of Sheridan, Susan Ward, becomes entwined in Sheridan's present case and their mutual history with Lowell. Ward tries to protect a teenager who both she and Sheridan dealt with in the past. It’s all—at least most of it—tied in with Lowell. But how? It’s a question Susan and Sheridan both want an answer to.

I haven’t read the previous books in the series and frankly, this was a bit of a hindrance. In my opinion, the characters’ interaction and affiliation with each other could have been explained a bit more for the reader such as myself who jumped in the middle. But it didn’t stop me from enjoying the story. On the contrary. Now I want to go back and read all I missed before this book.

Reviewed by Starr Gardinier Reina, author of “One Major Mistake” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine ■
HELPLESS
By Daniel Palmer

Daniel Palmer’s novel "Helpless" is a roller coaster thrill ride that loops the loop, whips you through a corkscrew, and runs you through turns with the same G-force as a jet fighter.

Former Navy SEAL Tom Hawkins has endured a bitter divorce from his wife Kelly. She’s also done her best to poison his relationship with his daughter, Jill. Tom has hung on, taking a job as a guidance counselor at Jill’s high school in Shiloh, New Hampshire and coaching the girls’ soccer team to a state record for consecutive wins. Now Jill is on the team, and Tom hopes for a rapprochement. Then Kelly is found dead under suspicious circumstances. The local police sergeant, who has a history with Tom, believes he’s guilty. Tom though, thinks Kelly was killed by a former acquaintance from her military days and it’s tied to a secret that he has kept throughout Jill’s life.

Tom soon finds himself the object of a ruthless and effective campaign of character assassination. An anonymous post on Facebook accuses him of having an affair with one of the girls on the team, and child pornography is found on his laptop at the school, including sexting pictures of several girls at the school. Fired from his job, shunned by the community, and facing decades in prison, Tom must find out who framed him and—more importantly—why.

FBI agent Lorraine “Rainy” Miles has come to Shiloh seeking the girls in the sexting pictures as part of another investigation. At first she is convinced Tom is guilty, but then she discovers evidence that makes her question the whole investigation. Tom must use every skill he learned as a SEAL not just to clear his name but to protect Jill from the predator that killed her mother.

Palmer has crafted an immensely satisfying and topical thriller. The story races along to the climax and you’ll find yourself hanging on for dear life as you read, though you won’t want to put the book down.

Reviewed by David Ingram for Suspense Magazine ■

EXTENDED FAMILY
By Patrick Kendrick

The prologue of this book is definitely an attention-getter, and from then on, this is one plotline that readers will truly find unique!

An extremely handsome gentleman is first seen sauntering into the ‘Future-Gen’ establishment (a sperm bank) in order to make a donation. Tall, dark, handsome, and brilliant, Dr. Harmon Gettys is what you would call the perfect man. He is also the perfect catch for women who would like to birth offspring that are charming right from the start.

Unfortunately, this perfect specimen is also using his donations in order to create someone just like him; a person who has the skill and talent to follow in Daddy’s footsteps and become a gruesome murderer.

A generation later, readers meet West Palm Beach Fire Marshal Grey Gift, who has been called out yet again on an arson murder investigation. Horrific, burn-related murders are nothing new to Grey, but the escalating number of them has become more than a bit frightening.

With the help of the FBI crime lab, Grey is able to match some of the arson victims to a list of deceased offspring that came from Dr. Gettys’ donations. The authorities believe that the slew of murders could never be committed by only one perpetrator, especially when the grisly crimes begin spreading out of Florida and into other states.

Partnering up with FBI Agent Rose Cleary, she and Grey try to stop the horrible crimes from growing in number, but soon they find out that uncovering the truth may be the wrong way to go when they come to the attention of the real killer.

This is a story that is beyond detailed, and readers with a stomach need only apply. The book is so powerful (think "Silence of the Lambs"), that it doesn’t sugarcoat the graphic murders or the horrible people who commit them. Very fast-paced, the outcome is extremely well written and readers with strong constitutions will be pleased!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine ■

IMPLICATED
By Peter Michael Rosenberg

“Implicated” is an entertaining police drama with a fresh look at an old storyline and the best novel about crime scene clean up since Charlie Huston’s “The Mystic Arts of Erasing all Signs of Death.” It is also the first book I ever read with a Cypriot as a protagonist.

Erdogan and his partner Emilio stumble into a nightmare, as if cleaning up crime scenes of the human offal wasn’t bad enough, when they unwittingly step into a conspiracy involving cops-for-hire as assassins.

Southern California suddenly is not so warm after all, and when Emilio is shot by these rogue cops right in front of him, Erdogan has to go into hiding—not so easy for a man running from his past anyway. Not even the peaceful Ojai in Ventura County can shelter him as Azerbaijani mobsters and cops battle it out. In a gritty drama with forensic details galore, Erdogan turns for help to the widow of a slain reporter, another victim of the bad-cop hit squad. They make an unlikely pair of detectives, but fueled with righteous indignation and a little luck, they begin to put the pieces together.

Rosenberg, a film writer as well as novelist tends to insert his own heavy-handed viewpoint on Erdogan’s character, but if you can shake them off and ignore them, then the body of the novel stands on its own as a well-written suspenseful mystery with plenty of twists and turns, leaving you second-guessing yourself until the final pages.

Reviewed by Mark P. Sadler, author of “Blood on his Hands” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine ■

THE BELLWETHER REVIVALS
By Benjamin Wood

In this brilliant debut novel, Wood keeps readers spellbound with its sophisticated level of psychological suspense.

Twenty-year-old Oscar Lowe works as a care assistant at Cedarbrook, a nursing home in Cambridge, England. King’s College is nearby and is where the privileged students roam, play, and study. One evening Oscar happens by the college chapel where he hears some strange, haunting organ music. Entriced by it, he joins the service and observes a blonde woman who appears bored, except when the choir is singing.

Later, he meets her, Iris Bellwether, and her brilliant but emotionally-troubled brother Eden, the organist. Iris is a rich, beautiful, quirky medical student, and Oscar soon finds himself in love with her. He also learns that Eden believes he can heal people with his gifted organ music. As Oscar becomes entangled with Eden’s weird obsessions, he quickly realizes that the man will stop at nothing to prove himself right.

Later, as Oscar and Iris devise a plan to determine the extent of Eden’s daring to see just how dangerous he really is, they soon discover it may be too late for them to stop his next treacherous move.

It isn’t long before Oscar and Iris learn just how psychologically disturbed Eden really is.

Wood’s genius is extraordinary and delves deeply into the emotional aspects of psychology as well as the outrages of criminal possibilities. Thought-provoking yet disturbing, “The Bellwether Revivals” is an exceptional masterpiece that will haunt the reader long after the book has been finished. I give it five stars.

Reviewed by Lynne Levandowski for Suspense Magazine ■

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PORT VILA BLUES
By Garry Disher

Set in Australia, "Port Vila Blues" is the fifth in Garry Disher’s series featuring a chief named Wyatt, who is as skilled at his chosen career as any legitimate professional. He uses his considerable intelligence to scientifically plan his "jobs." He trusts no one, not even his long-time partner, Jardine, but he nearly succumbs to the charms of a "fence" who is interested in a piece he steals from the empty home of Cassandra Wintergreen, a member of the Australian parliament...

Jardine however, has suffered an injury that resulted in minor brain damage, impairing his thinking and memory, so Wyatt must depend on himself. When he discovers that the Tiffany brooch he stole from MP Wintergreen had been previously stolen in a bank robbery by an elusive gang, Wyatt becomes ensnared in a situation that threatens to spiral out of control, as it involves police on the take and even a judge who uses his position to amass a fortune in stolen treasures...

Even though few of the characters are likeable, they are real, and Disher maintains the pace of the story. It never lets up as it moves from Australia to Vanuatu and back again. Every character in the novel seems to have a double life, and you never know who the "good guy" and who the "bad guy" are, if there is such a thing. The Australian slang adds a fun element to the story for American readers, but the story could be anywhere. It is a roller coaster ride where you aren't sure which thieves to root for. "Port Vila Blues" is a great "cops and robbers" story that will keep you turning the pages.

Reviewed by Kathleen Heady, author of “The Gate House” for Suspense Magazine

ISLAND OF SILENCE
By Lisa McMann

In the second volume of this incredible dystopian young adult series, we find the story picking up right where the first ended. Airtime has defeated the Quillens and the two tribes are struggling through an unsteady truce. Since the Quillens placed these Unwanteds in Airtime thinking they were condemning them to death, it takes a little adjustment to realize that not only are they alive but are great at magic spells, and just defeated them in battle.

Airtime is run by mage Mr. Today as leader of Quill. Now his young prodigy, Unwanted Alex Stowe, has to face a similar destiny. His Wanted twin brother Aaron has devised a way to recruit a team of those unhappy with the turn of events. Managing to use magic on those that conjured it up in the first place, he has found a way to weave his dastardly deeds on the unsuspecting inhabitants of Airtime.

Spies abound on both sides, the high priest has been taken prisoner, but these are all unknown to Mr. Today, who decided he should take a few days of vacation and leave Alex in charge. While in charge, three of Alex’s best friends sail to a neighboring isle and are taken captive, the whole of Airtime mysteriously disappears with all the buildings and magically created creatures disintegrating, and Mr. Today appears to be dead. It just couldn’t get any worse, or could it?

Alex has to turn to two shipwrecked creatures from the island where his friends are being held for help and McMann leaves us twisting in the wind as a new spell left for Alex by Mr. Today is discovered. Hope shines its smiley face on the troubled times in Airtime. I have it on good authority—the author herself—that book number three is in the editing process as we speak, which is a good thing as I can’t live without finding out how our heroes get out of this one. They do, don’t they? Hey Lisa!

Reviewed by Mark P. Sadler, author of “Blood on his Hands” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine

RAYLAN
By Elmore Leonard

Raylan Givens, the US Marshal who’s closer to Marshal Dillon with his cowboy hat and fast draw, has become a star on the FX Network series Justified. Elmore Leonard created Raylan in 1993’s “Pronto” and he later appeared in “Riding the Rap” and short stories. Now Marshal Givens is back in novel form in Leonard’s new book “Raylan.”

The book is made up of three cases, each featuring a femme fatale, though some are more fatale than others. When Raylan arrives at a shabby motel to arrest marijuana dealer Angel Arenas, he finds the man in an ice water bath missing his kidneys. Raylan believes a couple of backwoods dope dealers had stumbled onto a new way to make money, but he doesn’t count on Layla, the cool transplant nurse behind the scheme. Will Raylan realize her involvement before he ends up in his own icy bath?

Carol Conlan grew up in a coal-mining family and worked her way to the top job at M-T Mining. She’s not above shooting a man in cold blood when he complains about the company’s tactics. She claims Raylan’s friendly foe, Boyd Crowder, killed the man while defending her. Conlan requests Raylan as her bodyguard when she addresses a meeting of people adversely affected by the mining operation. She’s used to having her way, but she is definitely not used to Raylan.

College student Jackie Nevada is a card shark extraordinaire, but a run of bad luck has left her in debt to her loan shark father. Even worse, she’s been linked to a series of bank robberies pulled off by three women. Raylan is hunting for her while she prepares for a high stakes game in Kentucky. At the same time, he’s tracking down the women who’ve been robbing the banks and the man exploiting them.

Leonard has a wonderful ear for coalfield Kentucky dialogue, and his characters are consistently fascinating. “Raylan” will help satisfy those who love the series in between the seasons, as well as longtime Leonard readers.

Reviewed by David Ingram for Suspense Magazine

LETHAL LEGACY
By Irene Hannon

If you’re looking for a keeper, this is it! Being the third installment in this author’s Guardians of Justice series, fans will note that each novel seems to be better than the last. The stories surround the Taylor family: Cole, the former military man, who is now a Detective in St Louis; his brother Jake, who has recently married and is a U.S. Marshall; and their sister Alison, who is now engaged to a policeman who works very closely with Cole.

As the story begins, readers are offered a glimpse at Vincentio Rossi, a man who has just gotten out of prison after twenty-eight years and is planning to seek revenge on the people who wronged him in the past.

Cole takes the ‘Taylor’ lead in this book, when a very lovely young lady by the name of Kelly Warren visits the police department to see if the ‘case’ of her father’s suicide can be reopened. She truly believes he was murdered and has new evidence to bring to light. Even though Cole wasn’t the original officer of record, he looks into it and can see nothing that would prove her father was killed by someone else’s hand. He won’t quit however, especially seeing that Cole is quite taken with Kelly, and when he digs deeper into the evidence, he soon finds secret information that links her family to a crime that happened years before. Add in a character that wants nothing more than for Kelly to drop her investigation, and you have an extremely fast-paced plot.

The way this series is written, the Taylor characters truly jump off the page. The family, the extended family, the romance, the intrigue, and even the back-handed way the author brings in characters who readers will have no idea whether they’re bad or good. Everything about the Guardians of Justice series offers a true thrill. And let’s be honest, any female reader will wish to high heaven they were a member of this incredibly handsome family!

Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine

SuspenseMagazine.com
DREAD ON ARRIVAL
By Claudia Bishop

Hemlock Falls is a small town with its share of interesting characters and issues. When Your Ancestor’s Attic, a television antique show comes to town, things get interesting. The show’s competitor, Pawn-O-Rama shows up as well! The two hosts decide to settle their rivalry with a cooking contest that will be taped by both shows.

As the competition gets underway, one of the hosts dies! The obvious suspect is his rival host but he is far from the only suspect! The Quillian sisters that run Hemlock Falls Inn are skilled at solving mysteries.

Their investigation takes some interesting twists and turns with some having no answers. The big question they struggle to answer is ‘who done it?’

The quirky characters make this one a good cozy mystery to snuggle up with!

THE UNINVITED
By Heather Graham

Allison Leigh, historian, works at the Tarleton-Danbridge House in Philadelphia, dressed in Revolutionary War garb. She gives tours while doling out information to those interested in the history.

Julian Michell, tour guide/wanna-be rock star is found dead in Angus Tarlton’s study, dressed in his tour uniform with a bayonet through the underside of his chin. Allison finds him and is immediately shaken.

Enter the FBI’s Krewe of modern day ghost busters. Tyler Montague—former Texas Ranger and one of the Krewe members, holds a certain fascination for Allison that grows considerably throughout the investigation. The team also includes a forensic artist, medical pathologist, former U.S. Marshall, a computer and camera expert, and a few others. Their job…prove what really happened in the study the night Julian was discovered dead.

The board of the Tarlton-Danbridge House has only one concern: that nothing gets harmed in the house while the Krewe does its job.

Two paintings of the same man, Lord Brian “Beast” Bradley seem to hold some significance. The Dixon family came to the house on a tour only to have Mr. Dixon fall into a coma the day after their visit. Their son Todd—who is inexplicably drawn to Allison—is convinced the “ghost” followed them home and is to blame.

As Allison comes to terms with seeing dead people, one of the board members, Sarah Vining is murdered. Now Allison sees Julian, who insists they figure out who killed him; Sarah, who is telling Allison she’s not afraid to be dead; and Lucy Tarlton, the one Allison dresses up as on the tour and who is looking to tell Allison something she feels she needs to know.

Without exaggeration, this book is filled with phenomenal moments of wit, charm, laughter, and just plain fantastic writing! Graham transitions from one scene to the next seamlessly. This is my first Graham book, but it will not be my last. Amazing!
Reviewed by Terri Ann Armstrong, author of “How to Plant a Body” published by Suspense Publishing, an imprint of Suspense Magazine

THE MYSTERY WRITERS
Edited by Jean Henry Mead

It is so nice in this age of celebrity ‘tell-alls’ that the world is finally sitting down and taking a look at writers; fantastic writers, in fact. From wannabe authors out there who are struggling to follow in the path of their heroes and heroines, to die-hard fans who would absolutely love to know how these amazing authors began their bestselling careers—this is the book for you!

Edited by an award-winning journalist (and writer in her own right), Ms. Mead has gathered this collection of interviews and advice from sixty mystery writers. To name just a few, offered are interviews with Sue Grafton, Lawrence Block, Vicki Hinze, James Scott Bell, J.A. Jance, Vincent Zandri, Julie Garfield, Ann Parker, Bruce DeSilva, Leighton Gage, and a slew of other bestselling and award-winning writers who cover all genres, including: suspense, crime, police procedurals, thrillers, P.I.’s, and traditional mysteries, along with historical, contemporary, western, humor, and the latest favorite, ‘cozies.’

Full of everything from personal tales and habits to writing advice, each page offers something new and intriguing about the writers you love to read. Fans will find out exactly where the character of Mathew Scudder came from in Lawrence Block’s incredible mind. You will also learn about Geraldine Evans’ life growing up in the London Council Estate and how that world affected her future writing career.

Sue Grafton talks about her favorite ‘alphabet’ and leads us from “A is for Alibi,” which appeared in 1982, to her latest “V” is for Vengeance, and offers a quick peek at how Kinsey Millhone will end when “Z” comes along. Mark Troy, whose recent title is a collection of stories featuring his detective Val Lyon, offers insight into what he does and where he researches in order to support his writing ‘habit.’ While Julie Garwood talks eloquently and personally about growing up in a large Irish family and becoming a bestselling, not to mention offering a look into “The Ideal Man.”

The information, thrills, articles, and personal data goes on and on, allowing readers to delve into how these incredible authors got their start in this very tough industry! Enjoy!
Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine

TATTOOED
By Pamela Callow

This is the third book in Callow’s series featuring lawyer, Kate Lange. Readers first met her in the titles: “Damaged” and “Indefensible,” but if you have not read these previous novels, this will perhaps hinder you even though the story is amazingly suspenseful and will definitely hold your interest until the very last page.

On the outskirts of Halifax, Nova Scotia, a murder victim is discovered in a bog. Because it is extremely difficult to come up with an actual identity for the corpse, the law turns to other identifiers, including an odd tattoo that is found on the dead woman’s skin. It is this piece of information that leads police to local tattoo artist, Kenzie Sloane, where they find an even bigger surprise. Not only does the artist remember the victim, but they also share the exact same tattoo…not to mention a very dark secret.

Kate Lange does have a history with the tattoo artist. In fact, she was a former friend of Kate’s now deceased sister, Imogen. So it is no surprise that Kenzie turns to Kate for help when she ends up arrested for the murder of the young woman. Willing to help Kenzie with her situation, Kate also finds herself stuck in a very strange situation. You see, Kate is still searching for clues as to why and who murdered her own sister. And it does seem strange that Kenzie is now facing a murder charge only a short time after Imogen met with death.

Someone is out there in Halifax who knows all about the past and the very tantalizing story of the matching tattoos. Not only is this ‘someone’ watching very carefully to see what Kenzie will reveal, but they are also truly obsessed with the tattoo artist who will soon be fighting for her life.

This is a very well written book, but it certainly would be a good idea for all readers to delve into the first two in order to have all the facts that are not given in this particular novel. Enjoy!
Reviewed by Amy Lignor, author of “Tallent & Lowery - 13” for Suspense Magazine
The Scarecrow Press, publisher of Santa Monica's author Amnon Kabatchnik ("Blood on the Stage," "Sherlock Holmes on the Stage"), congratulates No Limits and tonight’s honorees.
THE EXPENDABLES 2
2012
Genre – Action (R)

Ex-action star and ex-Californian Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s character, Trench, fills the screen, and utters the words, “I’m back.” And, yes they are people. Hollywood action stars don’t retire any more, they just get parts in ‘The Expendables’ where they can lampoon their previous career, have a laugh, and remind cinemagoers who they once were.

This time the team of wrinkly but surprisingly buff action heroes of Lee Christmas (Jason Statham), Gunner (Dolph Lundgren), Hale Caesar (Terry Crews), Toll Road (Randy Couture) is joined by newcomers, Billy the Kid (Liam Hemsworth), an ex-army sniper and Maggie (Nan Yu), a combat proficient computer whiz. Church (Bruce Willis), whom we are uncertain is a good or a bad guy, sends Barney Ross (Sylvester Stallone) and the gang to recover a package from a crashed plane in Bulgaria.

There they encounter the very nasty, Jean Vilain, (Jean-Claude Van Damme). During this meeting, amidst much chest beating, something goes wrong (I can’t say what or it will ruin the surprise) which turns the retrieval of the package from Vilain into a very personal vendetta for the group.

Along the way, you will join your fellow film patrons in solid laughter as each new action hero arrives on the scene, their characters written so that you will find yourself muttering the titles of eighties films and wrecking your brain to remember which character had once said THAT line.

As expected, The Expendables 2 delivers much knuckle crunching fights, machine gun shooting, and kick-boxing action and if you don’t find yourself laughing, then it will only be because you are too young to take this trip down memory lane. You will lose count of the dead bodies and the myriad ways they die.

Stallone reflects on the film, “Maybe it’s the end of an era. One thing is for sure, we’ll never see this again. To get all of us together at one time is a miracle. It will never happen again.”

The Expendables 2 provides enough tongue-in-cheek fun, action, and nostalgia to score another box office hit and I seriously doubt The Expendables, “will never happen again.” I imagine there is a script already sitting in Sly’s out-tray and a few emails to buddies beginning with, “I’m back. If you’re not busy.”

Reviewed by Susan May

HIW AND RUN
2012
Genre – Comedy/Action (R)

The actors were clearly having a good time. The audience was laughing around me and I had the occasional giggle, so if you are looking for a bit of light fun with attractive leads, you won’t be disappointed with Hit and Run.

The film is written, co-produced, and co-directed by the lead, Dax Shepard. He does a great job playing the laid-back Charlie Bronson, hiding away in witness protection living idyllically with his soul mate Annie (Kristen Bell). These two have a real chemistry on screen and it is not surprising as they are a real life couple.

Shepherd appears to have a penchant for rounding up mates and making films and it was whilst doing press for Brother’s Justice (a mockumentary film with many of this same cast) that the idea for Hit and Run was launched. “We kept getting asked what we were going to do next, and we just started saying we were going to do a car chase movie,” Shepard recalls. “We had no script or premise, we just knew we loved car chase movies. And because we had said it, we knew we would have to deliver.”

In Hit and Run, Charlie Bronson (Dax Shepard), a get-away driver for a bank robber gang is in witness protection. He places his life at risk when his girlfriend, Annie is offered an interview for her dream job in LA. He decides rather than losing her, he will drive her to LA despite his case worker Marshall Randy Anderson (Tom Arnold) forbidding him to leave. There is an ongoing joke involving Randy’s inability to control his gun and his car, which work very well throughout the movie.

Unfortunately, Gil (Michael Rosenbaum) the jealous ex-boyfriend alerts Charlie’s old gang leader, Alex Dmitri (Bradley Cooper) and the rest is a car pursuit that evokes shades of the classic 1977 Burt Reynolds Smokey and the Bandit but in our current era’s ribald style humor.

Whilst Hit and Run, isn’t going to drive away with any awards, as my companion commented, “it’s good fun, good laughs and at the end you feel good.” And if I think back to my first viewing of Smokey and the Bandit, I think I felt much the same way.

Reviewed by Susan May

Movies
Lainie was born in Kansas City, Missouri as one of six children (four girls and two boys) to two very loving parents. Lainie always had an artistic side even as a youngster, starting with crayons and moving on to painting and sketches. Her siblings have always been great supporters of her work, especially her younger sister Alanna, whom she’s very close to.

Her family moved to Florida when Lainie was ten years old because of her father’s health. When that happened, she sort of fell out of doing her art.

When she was just fourteen, she became pregnant and dropped out of the seventh grade to have her son. Her parents were a constant source of support for her during that time and helped her raise him. He’s now twenty-nine years old with four children (two boys and two girls). She has no regrets about her choices.

About fifteen years ago, she discovered the computer. She joined some online groups and noticed a lot of people were using the beautiful artwork as signature tags. Immediately she felt an urgent need to learn how to do it. So, she obtained Paint Shop Pro and started to work trying to copy what she saw others doing.

Lainie was quite successful at making signature tags and soon surpassed what she saw everyone else creating. Gaining confidence, she eventually decided to join DeviantArt. During the next four years, she taught herself to create art she never would have been able to doing signature tags alone.
Her experience in the employment world includes twenty years of cleaning condominiums, after which she became a preschool teacher. She taught the three-year-olds and was utterly rewarded by it. In January 2010, she contracted pneumonia and after several tests on her lungs, she was diagnosed with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. She was subsequently hospitalized six more times, after which she was forced into leaving the most rewarding job she’s ever had in December 2010.

Her father passed away in 1996 from leukemia. Her sister Janice also had cancer and passed away three years ago.

For Lainie, her art is an emotional outlet. In 1997, she was happily married, but has since divorced. Not long after losing everything: health, job, husband, and the home they’d built together, Lainie was diagnosed with clinical depression and bipolar disorder. However, even through all of this, Lainie has met a wonderful man named Kevin Schultz who loves her art and encourages her even during her worst days of depression, telling her how talented he thinks she is and to stick with it no matter what. Her talent has become an escape and it says what Lainie herself cannot find the words to say.

_Suspense Magazine_ is honored to bring you the interview and artwork of this talented woman. Enjoy!

_Suspense Magazine_ (S. MAG.): You’ve had an artistic side from very early on. Does your mother still have some of your early pieces?

Lainie Chivers (LC): Yes, my mother no doubt has some of my early artwork, though probably not much since she had six kids and saved a bit from each of us.

S. MAG.: When we’re children, we dream of what we want to be when we grow up. Did you dream of being a famous artist?

LC: Actually, when I was a child I wanted to be a teacher, and that dream came true for me though it was only for a short while due to my illness.

S. MAG.: Six children. Time in the bathroom must have been tough to come by.

LC: LOL! Time in the bathroom was definitely hard to come by with only one bathroom and eight people!

S. MAG.: You discovered the computer and online groups. Then you discovered what others were doing that you felt you had to learn. Do you think that was the diving board over your newly discovered talent that you’ve been honing?

LC: It was definitely the diving board…when I saw what could be done on the computer I fell in love with the idea of someday being good enough to stop making signature tags and becoming a
S. MAG.: Being self-taught, do you think it made your climb harder to the level you're at now, or do you think it gave you an advantage not having anyone else's input as to what you should be doing?

LC: I think it gave me an advantage, once I started playing around with Paint Shop Pro it just came naturally to me. I never did tutorials; I would see something and learn to copy it, usually in a better way than what I'd seen.

S. MAG.: What do you think are your three best qualities? Worst?

LC: Three best qualities: I'm loyal, honest, and very compassionate. My worst qualities: number one would be procrastination, low self-esteem, and I can't really think of a third unless you consider road rage a worst quality, LOL!

S. MAG.: If you could write a message to future aspiring artists and place it in a time capsule for them to read years from now, what would you write?
LC: I would write to never give up their dream and to follow their hearts and path chosen by them, and to do it for the pure love of art. Art comes from the heart, and that should be visible in the work done by them.

S. MAG.: What one piece of advice or encouragement have you received over the years that you not only feel helped you in some way, but you continue to go back to when you need that push to keep going?

LC: Practice, practice, practice makes perfect! I can remember my older sister telling me that as I would sit next to her trying to copy a sketch she'd done, or learning from her how to crochet at the young age of seven, and being pretty good at it!

S. MAG.: When did you know that the world of art chose you?

LC: I knew when I was small, maybe as far back as kindergarten. My projects always got awards or were displayed on the special art wall, in the first grade I was helping the teachers put up and paint their bulletin boards!

S. MAG.: Do you have any plans or even dreams to show your work in a gallery or museum?

LC: I do, I plan on starting small, in Edgewater, Florida where I live. They often have art shows at local parks and right now my dream is to be able to have my own booth to display my art and see where that goes.

Suspense Magazine is honored to have had this opportunity to bring Lainie Chivers to your attention. She is quite talented and has a great heart. If you want to learn more about Lainie and her work, check her out on DeviantArt at [http://nightt-angell.deviantart.com/](http://nightt-angell.deviantart.com/).
When friend and author, Andy Peterson emailed us with exciting news about the exclusive e-book release of "Option to Kill" by Thomas & Mercer (Amazon imprint), we didn't think twice about wanting to share with our fans. But, we didn't want to just place a notice somewhere within the pages that may be overlooked, so when Andy and Garrett Valdiva offered to share a recent interview, we jumped at the chance. We hope you enjoy as much as we did!

Garrett Valdiva (GV): Welcome Andy! Before we begin, I just want to introduce you as an author. I've been very excited to see you experience some recent success, especially your new three-book deal with Thomas & Mercer, Amazon's mystery and thriller imprint. It seems like every time I talk to you, another amazing thing is on your plate. How did you get started writing, particularly on the Nathan McBride Series, and what are you facing right now, in your career?

Andrew Peterson (AP): Garrett, thanks for having me and I really appreciate your interest in my career. It's been quite a roller coaster ride. I began writing about twenty years ago. I'd been an avid reader and thought: why not write a book of my own? Of course, it's a lot easier said than done. After writing four complete books—two horror novels and two sci-fi novels—I had a huge stack of rejection letters from agents. My writing career was going nowhere.

On advice from a friend, I attended my first writing conference in San Diego where I felt inspired to change genres and write thrillers. After all, that's what I enjoyed reading the most. Inspired by the folks I met in San Diego, I attended a second conference in Maui where I met Ridley Pearson. After reading a sample of my work, he referred me to his freelance editor, Ed Stackler, for what Ridley called "an honest and fair read." Ed told me I had a good voice as an author, but my story had fatal structural problems. He suggested that I either rewrite it or if I had a sequel in mind, he'd work with me on it. So I shelved my fifth book and wrote "First to Kill." Ed thought it was good enough for an agent he knew, and before I knew it, I was being represented by Jake Elwell, of Harold Ober Associates.

About a month later, Jake sold "First to Kill" to Dorchester and it launched in August 2008. Several months later, the audio rights were sold to Audible.com and Dick Hill—the voice of Jack Reacher—narrated the story. In July 2011, the dramatic rights were sold.
to two Hollywood producers with their offices in the Paramount lot. Not many optioned books go on to become movies or television series, but it’s encouraging to know “First to Kill” is being developed for film. I like the producers a lot. They’re great guys.

After Jake sold “First to Kill,” I wrote a second Nathan McBride novel: “Forced to Kill.” Audible.com made a preemptive offer and FORCED launched as exclusive audiobook. We were in new territory. The first edition of FORCED came out in audio format!

Garrett, being an author is a whirlwind adventure of ups and downs. Right now, I feel like I can’t run fast enough. Most of my work days consist of sitting at my computer either proofreading, editing, or writing new manuscript. I still attend conferences, but I’ve had to cut back to three or four a year. Writing is a solitary existence. Staying motivated hasn’t been a problem, it’s just the workload. It can feel overwhelming at times. I need to learn better time management skills. If anyone has any suggestions for me, I’m always open to new ideas.

GV: In a nutshell, who is Nathan McBride, for our readers who are not already familiar with him?

AP: Nathan is a trained Marine sniper and former CIA operations officer. I use the word “trained” with “Marine” because there are no “former Marines.” He’s currently a partner in a security company based in San Diego.

Nathan’s been described as a “tough guy with a heart.” He’s an honorable man who possesses an acute sense of right and wrong. He hates bullies and helps people with no expectation of reward. True heroism is selfless. No one knows that better than Nathan. Surprisingly, he’s got a strong appeal to female readers. As with all heroes, Nathan has some baggage. After a botched mission, he fell into the hands of a sadistic interrogator and endured three weeks of pure hell before being rescued. As a result, he’s got an inner darkness that he struggles to control. Nathan can be difficult character to write at times. He’s definitely a challenge.

GV: What is the new book about, and what is the big story hook that you feel is going to thrill readers?

AP: “First to Kill” is the third Nathan McBride book. In OPTION, Nathan teams up with an unlikely ally. After he receives a text message from someone named “Lauren” who claims she’s been kidnapped, it triggers a deadly chain of events that has the potential to haunt him for the rest of his life. What makes the story interesting is that Lauren’s just twelve-years-old. Nathan doesn’t have any children so he’s in for a turbulent ride.

Each of the three books are “standalones,” so you don’t have to read them in order. If you do however, you’ll get a progressive experience getting to know Nathan. OPTION is a departure for me because the characters from the first two books play minor roles in this story. The reader will discover another side of Nathan they haven’t seen before. It’s been fun to write, but I have to say, this is the most difficult manuscript I’ve ever written. I’ll share a secret: Like Nathan, I don’t have any children either!

GV: So Nathan really steps in it this time, doesn’t he? How is he handling it?

AP: Yes, he does indeed. This story is fast-paced and takes place over thirty-six lightning-quick hours. Nathan handles the situation with sheer determination—he has nothing else to draw upon. As he unravels Lauren’s story, he faces a lot of questions with no discernable answers. All he knows is that Lauren needs his help and he’s going “all in” to save her. He’ll not only have to protect her in a physical way, but also emotionally.

GV: How do others around you help or harm your ability to write? Do you have a special “writing place”?

AP: My writing studio is upstairs in my home. My wife and I live in a remote part of southern Monterey County, California. When I look out my windows, I’m surrounded by rolling hills dotted with mature oaks and pines. Basically, what most people might envision as a nature preserve. I’m blessed to have a quiet place to work. All I hear during the day are wind and birds and at night: crickets and frogs. Because there are no cities nearby, we have an incredibly beautiful night sky.

I usually have classical music playing in the background when I write. My biggest distraction is the occasional barking of my giant schnauzers. All other distractions are my own making. I think what hinders my writing the most is the marketing side of this business—and it is a business. In addition to writing a commercial story, an author needs be actively engaged with promotion. It definitely takes a toll on my writing time. Metaphorically, it’s a double-edged sword. Creativity and promotion are interlinked. I can’t quite consider them symbiotic in the purest sense, but they’re close.

GV: Do you have future plans for Nathan? Anything you can share with us?

AP: I have at least six to eight more books with Nathan. Contrary to what most people probably think, I don’t want his character to evolve. Nathan “is what he is” and I think that’s part of his appeal. People know what they’re getting with Nathan and I plan to keep delivering the goods.

About Andrew Peterson: Andrew’s debut novel, “First to Kill,” has recently been optioned for a major motion picture. The first in a series, it features Nathan McBride, a trained Marine sniper and CIA operations officer. Andrew’s third book, “Option to Kill,” will launch as an exclusive e-book with Amazon Publishing’s Thomas & Mercer imprint in early September. All three Nathan McBride books will be available in trade paperback in winter 2012. For information on Andrew, please visit www.andrewpeterson.com.
Many people know John Edward as a medium whose skills have been displayed on many TV shows and some books. Now John has written another book, only this one is different from the rest. “Fallen Masters” could be described with a question: “What do you get if you combine William Young’s “The Shack” with Dan Brown’s “Angels and Demons”?”

John is already a New York Times bestselling author and international psychic medium, John’s latest book is more of a science fiction/suspense book, taking the reader through a cosmic battle of good and evil both here on earth and on the “other side.”

While most of us only know John from his work on TV and what we read and/or hear, John is a much more complex person. He was one of the first to bring a fresh, honest attitude to the world of psychic medium, a world that many of us will never understand. “Crossing Over With John Edward” is arguably his most famous book to date. With the release of “Fallen Masters,” John is reaching out to suspense fans, again trying to bring a new fresh approach to a subject matter that is more complex than just the normal thriller chase.

We are pleased to be able to talk with John on his exciting journey with an exclusive interview below.
Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): Let’s start with a big question: Do you believe in heaven and hell?

John Edward (JE): I don’t believe in heaven and hell in the way that my good, Catholic upbringing taught it. I believe the “other side” is made up of many dimensions… and some of those dimensions might house the lower vibrational energies that would also be defined as “hell” and the more advanced beings of light, or “heaven.” But I think it is vast and far beyond two places of up and down.

S. MAG.: Communicate, Appreciate, Validate. Where did that personal mantra come from?

JE: Joan Rivers. I went to an event that she did in the eighties after her husband’s passing, and she was amazingly hysterical. After two encores, she came out to the theater with the lights still on. She told everyone to go home and tell the people you loved that you loved them—because she never got that chance. I was so moved by the gesture; it is the driving force behind “why” people sit in my office. They want that assurance and validation that their loved ones “love” them. Those three words are a tribute to her loss and inspired by it. For the last three decades, I have used them on TV, books, radio, internationally, etc. I briefly told her once backstage at a show, but I don’t think she knows the impact her one statement at the end of her show made on millions of people through “my” audience internationally; it has helped a lot of people.

S. MAG.: When did you realize you had this “pull” to the other side? Did it frighten you?

JE: I was fifteen-years-old and I had a reading by Lydia Clar, a psychic who was from New Jersey. She told me I had a psychic ability. She predicted in 1985 everything that has come to pass regarding my work. She is amazing! It did not frighten me, as I approached it with skepticism and not enthusiasm. I explored it and kind of feel like I “remembered” I was psychic.

S. MAG.: “Fallen Masters” is so different from “One Last Time.” What prompted you to write a fictional novel as opposed to speaking about your ‘gift’?

JE: I prefer writing fiction. This is officially my fourth fictional endeavor, with my first novel, “What if God Were the Sun,” being turned into a movie for Lifetime TV. My third is a (serial) online novel on JohnEdward.net called “Above and Beyond,” which is released to members of my online community monthly and will conclude at the end of this year. “One Last Time” and my other non-fictional writings are more teaching through real life experiences and I have to honor them as they happen. With fiction, I get a chance to meld experiences and thematically teach more on a global, spiritual level. This book deals with the choices that people make about embracing positive over negative with an ‘end
of days’ back story.

S. MAG.: Are you able to communicate with your own loved ones who have passed on? Can you actually call on them to come to you or do you have to wait on them?

JE: I have an amazing belief system that allows me to know that my family and friends are with me, heightened by my abilities, clearly. I experience them, I don’t wait or call. I know that they are there connected to me, just like friends on Facebook. We are tethered energetically and by love.

S. MAG.: Have you ever encountered a spirit who scared you? Perhaps an evil one?

JE: YES!!!!!! But they were not dead; they were still living.

S. MAG.: The spirits you speak to, do you feel they are “stuck” in limbo—which is why you can speak with them—or do you feel they can communicate whenever their loved ones are looking for them?

JE: I believe that the energies that are coming through have transitioned in some capacity. They are evolving still in their journeys on the other side and want their loved ones to know they are okay.

S. MAG.: Has there ever been a time where you were given a warning—good or bad—for those left here from the spirit? i.e. Go to the doctor, you are ill.

JE: MORE TIMES THAN I CAN RECOUNT. Part of the process.

S. MAG.: In “Fallen Masters,” the ten-year-old Charlene St. John knew immediately that her daddy was dead and she seemed to be sad, but without fear of her certainty. Is that how it was for you—no fear? Or did you try to ignore it hoping it would just go away?

JE: Pretty much. With the character of Charlene, I wanted to capture the essence of what young children react to. They are so psychic and intuitive and accepting of what they see, feel, and hear. It was like that for me in a way in hindsight.

S. MAG.: Does anyone else in your family have the same ability as you do?

JE: I think my children both have a genetic predisposition for this, and have come out with some pretty amazing revelations when I least expected it. Whether it’s a message from one of my family members they never knew or something factual that I know they were not told. They keep me on my psychic toes as well.

We would like to thank John so much for taking the time out of his very busy schedule to spend a few minutes with us and you. To find out much more about “Fallen Masters” and everything in the John Edward library, go to www.johnedward.net.
There is a mountain in Eastern Turkey known as Mount Ararat. It's a beautiful mountain, well over 16,854 feet above sea level, and 11,847 feet tall. It is also believed to be a special mountain when it comes to the legacy of mankind. For as long as man has known how to write, it has been written that Mount Ararat is the resting place of Noah's Ark. In this article, we will take a look at the many facts, people, and history surrounding the quest to find this holy icon. Did it really exist?

When one thinks of the biblical story of Noah, they must first tackle one of the most difficult words in the human language: faith.

Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike have come to revere this ancient story of a humble man, ordered by God, to turn his back upon the world, perform the impossible, and to do the bidding of his Creator.

The story of Noah is told within the Holy Bible (Genesis chapters 6-9) and within the pages of the Quran (Surah Hud 11:27-51). Within both books the story is remarkably the same.

God felt a sense of disappointment with the world he created, citing man as his greatest regret. The world in Noah's day was a violent one, and life was considered cheap. So, God sought to correct the problem. In planning to do so, he discovered the soul of a man named Noah. According to the Bible, Noah was the only man whose heart walked with God. The Creator was so taken aback by this wonderful discovery, that he saw it within His own kindness to spare Noah and his family from what lay ahead.

In short, Noah was ordered to save what he could so that survival afterwards would be possible.

Like the resurrection of Jesus Christ, one could argue the reality of the Great Flood until they were blue in the face. The same could be said about the Ark, how it was built, what material it was composed of, and the remarkable miracle of gathering up all the animals. There can also be made a case for the combination of at least two traditional Hebrew stories to make up the well-known saga. At least twice in the telling of the story, God tells the reader why He is angered at the world: there are two reasons. In another part of the story, the numbers of how many animals brought on board are different: One says two-by-two, the other seven pairs of “the clean animals.” One story of the Flood states forty days of rain, the other states the breaking out of underwater pools, and that general flooding lasted one hundred fifty days. So, if the telling of Noah is history, he should be angry—he had a terrible editor!

All of the above mentioned are cardinals of faith. Faith, simply put, cannot be measured.

This article is about mankind's obsession with finding the actual "Ark." Those who risked their lives searching for it, hoping, upon discovery, to prove science wrong and the Bible as history.

From the ancient days of Eusebius (c. 275-339 AD) to the present day, people have dedicated themselves to discovering pieces of the ancient vessel, who have traveled from the ends of the earth to see if faith can be made fact. Noah's Ark has held
According to the Holy Scriptures, the Ark came to rest “on the mountains of Ararat.” (Genesis 8:4). This statement has been backed up by such distinguished historians and recorders as Berossus, Hieronymus the Egyptian, Mnaseas, and Nicolaus of Damascus. “The mountains of Ararat,” is the geographical location known as Armenia, roughly corresponding to Eastern Anatolia.

Mount Ararat isn’t the only location. Local traditions of Syria and Armenia have the Ark landing at Mount Judi. This last seems to be back and recorded by Josephus, who wrote that ruins from the boat could still be seen in the First Century. Later historical accounts claim that Josephus had his mountains “mixed up” and that he had been writing about Ararat all along. In some parts of Turkey, Ararat is known as the “Place of Decent,” and that Noah’s vessel was a hundred kilometers to the southeast of the peak, in what today is Northern Iraq.

The famous traveler Marco Polo (1254-1324) wrote about the Holy Ark in his journals once. He said:

In the heart of the Armenian mountain range, the mountains peak is shaped like a cube (or cup), on which Noah’s Ark is said to have rested, whence it is called the Mountain of Noah’s Ark. It is so broad and long that it takes more than two days to go around it. On the summit the snow lies so deep all the year round that no one can ever climb it; this snow never entirely melts, but new snow is forever falling on the old, so that the level rises.

Sir Walter Raleigh, while writing his masterpiece “History of the World,” stated that the biblical term “mountains of Ararat” originally explained all the adjoining ranges of Asia, and that the Ark must have landed in the Orient because Armenia was not east of the plain of Shinar (or Mesopotamia), but more northwest.

The Bible was quite evasive about the landing. However, there was something about Mount Ararat that kept people from all races, creeds, and beliefs coming. The search never tired.

The Nineteenth Century proved to be the “golden age” of Ark research.

Dr. Fredrick Parrot wrote in his book, “Journey to Ararat,” in 1829, that “all the Armenians are firmly persuaded that Noah’s Ark remains to this very day on the top of Ararat, and that, in order to preserve it, no human being is allowed to approach it.”

Could that be a possibility? That, like the Ark of the Covenant, God has used His powers to keep man away from His legacy, until the day he becomes worthy enough to appreciate it?

Scientists would simply cry out “tourist trap!”

In 1876, James Bryce, historian, statesman, diplomat, explorer, and Professor of Civil Law at Oxford, shocked the world by climbing above the known tree lines of Mount Ararat and came across a piece of hand-hewn wood, five inches thick and over four feet long. Scientists giggled, lightly, when he identified it as that of Noah’s Ark. Years later, after a huge avalanche, Turkish officials reported the sighting of “a huge wooden vessel” sticking out of the ice, in about the same area.

What makes scientific institutes skeptical about most of these discoveries is that they are mainly funded by evangelical or “millenarian” churches. Faith-based magazines also seem to cause confusion on the subject by publishing any and all claims in the sightings of the Ark. Occasional television specials, videos, and the Internet also help those who would profit from fraud, by publishing first and asking questions later.

Still, there are those in the world of science that believe, men and women of great accomplishment, who have risked their lives to help prove, at least, the validity of the Book of Genesis.

Astronaut James Irwin led two expeditions to the mountain, was kidnapped once, and failed to find even a small piece of proof leading to Noah. “I’ve done all I possibly can,” he said, “but the Ark continues to elude us.”

The circle of “Ark Experts” was later put on its ear when, in the 1980s, an adventurer and former nurse named Ron Wyatt claimed that Noah’s Ark was nowhere near Mount Ararat, but located near a mountain known as Mount Cudi (or Judi). At the now-famous Durupinar site, there is an indentation of a “boat-shaped” footprint in the earth that Wyatt claims to be the fossil remains of Noah’s Ark. The ship itself has long since rotted away, leaving its imprint as the only evidence of existence. However, geologists have studied the area, and have labeled it a natural formation—just one of those “weird” coincidences.

Some wealthy individuals have gone to great lengths to prove the existence of Noah’s Ark. In 2004, a Honolulu-based businessman offered a $900,000 chance to explore the “Ararat anomaly.” He had been known to purchase satellite pictures of the mountain, and investigations led by him produced several interesting artifacts. However, after much fanfare, the Turkish Government refused his permit, claiming that the man he put in charge was well known as a “faker” of photographs of the Ark.

The stories of false claims cloud up the legend of Noah, more so than the original storm that created the flood.
There were stories of ancient monks who climbed to the top of Ararat, at great risk of both life and limb, just to carve tar off of the Ark for later use as religious amulets. Of historians and explorers visiting monasteries, where the priests displayed personal objects once owned by Noah and his family, and of an ornate cross said to be made from wood taken from the Ark. All this would later be destroyed in a disastrous earthquake.

Others religious organizations claim that the Ark rests in the nation of Iran. They wait, patiently, for an opportunity to investigate their beliefs. World politics being what they are, they should check the temperature of Hell, first. The government of Iran is not well known for helping anyone from the West.

Czar Nicholas II of Russia was said to have commissioned an expedition to Mount Ararat in 1918 to investigate the Ark. The Russian Air Force was reported to have sent over one hundred and fifty men up the mountain to explore a large object said to be as long as a city block. Legend also states that Nicholas' daughters prized a small crucifix that had been carved from a piece of wood taken from the Ark. Historians state that if this claim were true, it would have taken place around March 1917, right when the Czar abdicated during the February Revolution. No records of this expedition have ever been found.

The most celebrated Ark exploration occurred in 1955, with French explorer Fernand Navarra. He discovered a five-foot wooden beam on the mountain, some forty feet under the Parrot Glacier on the northwest slope. The Ministry of Agriculture in Spain certified the wood to be about five thousand years old. Controversy still follows the find, as Navarra's guide claimed the Frenchman bought the wood from a nearby village and carried it up the mountain.

Those from "my" generation who have any interest in the Ark may have learned about it while watching the 1977 (1977) motion picture In Search of Noah's Ark. This documentary was aired in theatres and on several television stations, claiming that the Ark had been found on Mount Ararat. There was also a picture shown, that the producers claimed was "the Ark of Noah." Later expeditions into the same area showed that the "Ark" was nothing more than a giant rock. The motion picture was based upon the book of the same title by David Balsiger and Charles Sellier, Jr. published in 1976.

In 1993, CBS aired a television special entitled The Incredible Discovery of Noah's Ark, hosted by Darren McGavin. A man named George Jammal was featured on the show, and produced a piece of wood he claimed to have taken from Noah's Ark. With tear-filled eyes, and a conviction that would have softened the heart of any skeptic, he told the story of the Ark's discovery, the death of a dear friend, and the final voyage down the mountain with his incredible find. The producers of the documentary, the writers, and CBS fell for it hook, line, and sinker.

Jammal's story was an outright hoax.

Jammal was a hired actor employed by those who felt slighted by the producers of the original In Search of Noah's Ark motion picture. Their viewpoints on the subject were left out of the original print, and made to look like they supported the Ark stories, which they did not. So, this time around, they decided to get even.

Patiently waiting until after the 1993 broadcast, Jammal came forward and confessed his betrayal. He also revealed that his "scarred wood" was actually broken railroad tracks, taken from Long Beach, California and hardened by cooking with various sauces in an oven. He even stated for the record, "All the producers had to do was smell the wood, and they would have known that I was a liar!"

All this aside, can one actually prove that there's an ancient wooden vessel at the top of Mount Ararat, according to the text of the Holy Bible?

As for the sightings? Two thoughts and one opinion.

One: these people are actually seeing what history has called "the Ark of Noah." Part of me wishes for this to be true, because it would reinforce a sense of wonder back into the world—an element we sorely miss in this day and age.

Two: these sightings are for profit making and entertainment purposes only.

Opinion: what we in the modern age seem to dismiss, is that ancient man was more clever than we give him credit. Perhaps, just perhaps, the sightings are indeed of an "ark." This vessel could have been built on the top of Mount Ararat by ancient monks, as a means to honor Noah and his biblical accomplishment. Perhaps, Noah's Ark is nothing more than a forgotten monument, or church?

In the end however, the existence of the Ark is not important.

Faith cannot be proven.

The real miracle of Noah was not his Ark, nor the gathering of the animals, or the survival of the Great Flood. The miracle of this story was Noah, himself. In the world entire, filled with evil and corruption, he managed to keep his heart.

A lesson we can all learn from.

To learn more about this author and his work go to: www.donaldallenkirch.com. To send suggestions or remarks about "Stranger than Fiction" go to: Storywriter1967@yahoo.com.
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Critically acclaimed author Steven James has written more than thirty books, including his award-winning and bestselling Patrick Bowers series.

James has penned books spanning the genres of psychological thrillers, prayer collections, dramas, and monologues. He also has written a nine-book series on creative storytelling, YA fantasy novels, and inspirational nonfiction. He has received wide critical acclaim for his work, including four Storytelling World Honor awards, two Publishers Weekly starred reviews, and 2009, 2011, and 2012 Christy Awards for best suspense.

He is a much-sought-after speaker for writing conferences and seminars around the world, has earned a Master’s Degree in Storytelling from East Tennessee State University in 1997, and is an active member of International Thriller Writers, the Authors Guild, Mystery Writers of America, and International Association of Crime Writers. He is a contributing editor to Writer’s Digest, and has taught writing and storytelling principles on three continents.

“Opening Moves,” James’ latest installment of The Bowers Files, hits the shelves on Sept. 4. In the introduction, James writes, “I had nightmares writing this book.” Fans of the series will revel in this riveting tale of murder and atrocity, as James takes readers back to the thrilling but terrifying beginnings of FBI Special Agent Patrick Bowers.

In 1997, in the wake of infamous cannibal Jeffrey Dahmer’s crimes, a series of gruesome kidnappings and mutilations begin to terrorize Milwaukee. When a woman's body is found with the lungs removed, police suspect a copycat. Homicide detective Patrick Bowers is assigned to the case.

Bowers is the kind of man who “notices things,” and while his fellow investigators may disagree, he has a hunch that this crime spree is more than just a tribute to Dahmer. The killer has a plan, and as Bowers knows, there are reasons for every crime,
reasons that rarely make sense to the rest of the world. “Opening Moves” delves deep into the psychology of sanity, and readers will discover that the line between sane and insane is thinner than they’d like to believe. What does it mean to be sane? And what would it take to cross that line?

James lives in the foothills of the Smoky Mountains of Tennessee with his wife and three daughters. When he’s not writing or speaking, he’s rock-climbing, playing disc golf, or getting in a matinee.

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): Why did you feel it important to go back in time with Patrick Bowers?

Steven James (SJ): As I wrote my first five books exploring who FBI Special Agent Patrick Bowers is today, I became fascinated about his origins—how did he first get into geospatial investigation? What drew him to the FBI? How did he first track down his nemesis Richard Basque? And why in the heck is he such a coffee snob, anyway? For new readers this is a great book to start the series with; for people who already enjoy the books, it’s a thoughtful journey into Patrick’s somewhat troubled past.

S. MAG.: Was your plan all along when you started the Bowers series, to write a book like “Opening Moves?”

SJ: No, I only recently decided to write a prequel to the series. Originally, I just planned to go through the chess pieces—“The Pawn,” “The Rook,” “The Knight,” “The Bishop,” “The Queen,” and “The King”—and then end the series with “Checkmate.” However (and I know this will sound weird to some people), over the course of the last year or two I just kept hearing Patrick bugging me to tell the first chapter of his story, the one that shaped, more than anything else, who he is. I finally decided to give him what he wanted just to get the guy off my back.

S. MAG.: With five books already under belt in the Bowers series, did you find it difficult having to go back in time and simply remember everything to write “Opening Moves?”

SJ: Wow, good question. I ended up having to page through all five previous books to make sure all the details, dates, and descriptions jived with the new one. I did find one mistake I made a couple years ago that no reader has pointed out to me yet—Patrick’s mentor appears in one book as seventy-two years old and then becomes younger in the next book. Boy, it’d be nice if things worked out like that in real life.

S. MAG.: You’ve mentioned that you have two books left in the series: “The King” and “Checkmate,” how are you feeling now that the series is almost over?

SJ: Honestly, I don’t want it to end, but I want to stop while I’m still intrigued with the characters—even though stopping the series might happen before some fans want me to. I’ve been working through the first draft of “The King” and gathering ideas for “Checkmate” and I can tell you, I’m still fascinated with this cast of characters. Who knows, I may start a new series featuring Patrick’s daughter Tessa as she enters the FBI Academy and Pat would inevitably end up making a few cameo appearances, just so that I don’t have to say goodbye to him forever.

S. MAG.: Patrick Bowers is sitting in your living room. What would you ask him?
S: I don't want to give a plot spoiler away for “Opening Moves,” but Pat makes a choice at a crime scene in a landfill that surprised me when I wrote it. I would have done the same thing, but I would ask him how that choice has affected his life over the years. That, and what's the deal with always using the metric system? I mean, come on. We live in America, not France.

S. MAG.: You've also just penned “Placebo,” which is not part of the Bowers series. Can you give us a sneak peak inside?

S: This launches a news series featuring Jevin Banks, one of the world's most renowned escape artists. After his wife drives off a pier with his twin boys in the backseat, Jevin's life is shattered and he gives up performing. More than a year later, while filming a show debunking psychic research, he stumbles onto a sweeping pharmaceutical firm conspiracy and has to use every trick in his book to stop an impending assassination attempt. It's not a police procedural or as much of a crime novel as the Bowers books, but more of a mainline, straight-up conspiracy thriller. Jevin is his own person, I'm intrigued with him as a character, and I'm already working on the next offering in the series, “Singularity.”

S. MAG.: For people new to the Bowers series, is “Opening Moves” the perfect place to start?

S: Yes. It will give you the genesis for what follows and it was a way for me to reboot the series and give background information about Bowers' life that you just can't get anywhere else, even by reading the other five books.

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

S: That's like asking me which of my daughters is my favorite! Let's see, I love the word “enigma.” It sort of captures the central theme of all of my novels, plus it just sounds cool. I hate the word “actually” which is way overused in our society these days and is a non-word, adding nothing to the meaning of the sentence. Whenever I hear it said (especially by me!), I cringe.

S. MAG.: What is on your DVR right now?

S: Okay, you caught me. I'm a big The Walking Dead fan. I love films but don't end up watching too much television, so that's the only series that's on my have-to-watch-it radar screen these days.

S. MAG.: Finish this sentence, “If I stopped writing tomorrow I would__________”

S: …end up self-destructing.” It's one of the only things that keeps me sane. So please, please, please, do not take away my keyboard.

Suspense Magazine was honored to have had this opportunity to speak with Steven and we know his work will continue to be some of the most sought after in the business. If you'd like to learn more about him and his work, go to his website at http://stevenjames.net.
ARTHUR COLBY’S SATURDAY MORNING WOULD BE SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT TODAY. He knew it and was not sure of just how he felt about it. Time would tell. Here was a man that his wife called “a damn robot” several times during their marriage of almost eight years. Okay, maybe more than several times. He actually kept count of that number. She did not. And that was pretty much the reason that she left him two days ago. For good. Never to return again. Not a chance in hell. So instead of Arthur getting up at exactly 8:35 to shave, shower, dress, and make breakfast for his wife…he got up at exactly 8:35 to shave, shower, dress, and not make breakfast for his wife.

It was always the same breakfast that he made for her. No variation. Coffee. Two pieces of toast. Butter only. No jam. A banana. And a glass of orange juice. Oh, she tried many, many times to have her robotic husband alter her breakfast menu. Just for a change! But that was what he was going to serve himself. So that was what she was having, too.

Did Arthur have any other strict daily routines? You can bet that his wife was telling her friends, family, and co-workers right now about how he functioned like a “damn robot.” He liked routine. He did not like change. He did not like surprises. Some people fight boredom. Arthur Colby fought change. He thought that he was winning the fight. Who could tell?

So after finishing breakfast and washing and drying the dirty dishes, which took less time now because of less dirty dishes, Arthur set off out the front door as he whistled a tune to perform his planned events for the day. With or without his wife, he had been planning for weeks to buy a brand new car today. A brand new 1967 car! The color, the make, the model, and exactly just how much money he wanted…and was going to pay for his new car was all worked out in advance. Heaven help the car salesman that tried to change his stubborn mind.

After doing much research at the public library, the dealership called Larry’s Awesome Autos was Arthur’s projected destination. He arrived there within eight seconds of when he thought he might arrive. Eight seconds in his favor. That brought a smile to his face. He parked his old blue 1959 car in front by the main entrance and was pounced on by one of the salesmen as he walked into the showroom.

“Welcome, sir! Beautiful day today, isn't it?” asked a young man in a loud suit and tie. His name tag indicated to Arthur that he was Chip. His bold cologne indicated that this young man could swim in large amounts of the stuff.

“Yes, Chip. Today is indeed a beautiful day. For you see…I am looking to buy a new car from your dealership today. Not a 1966 model. No. A 1967 model is what I am wanting today.” Arthur handed Chip a piece of 8 ½” x 11” paper. It included
the color, the make, and amount of money that he intended to pay for his new car today.

The salesman’s smile got bigger, then increased even more and then subsided to a frown.

“Well, sir. Yes, we have that make and color…all ready for you, but the price is kind of low, isn’t it? I would be practically giving the car away to you for that price. My boss would call me Dummy instead of Chip.”

Before Arthur could say anything in return, Chip continued.

“But hey. Let’s worry about the price later. We’ve got your make and color right over here. C’mon. Follow me.”

Arthur did just that and was happy to see his future new car parked right before his eyes. Shining with that new car shine. The new car smell almost overpowered Chip’s cologne when he opened up the front driver’s side door. The new car smell was heaven to his nose.

“A beaut, isn’t it, sir?”

Chip went on and on about how great the car was and how it was worth much more money than Arthur had indicated he wanted to pay. Arthur soon found himself detesting this smelly aggressive man. He expected to spend no more than thirty-five minutes in the purchasing of his new blue car. Here it was, almost an hour since he had arrived, and still no papers saying that Arthur Colby was the proud owner of his new car.

He did not like this one bit. If the car salesman would shut up for one second, Arthur could let him know it. That was not happening, though.

“C’mon, sir. We won’t actually take this one for a test drive…not that you really need to test it out. I can see this baby is what you want, isn’t it? Huh? Isn’t it? We have a green one and a grey one out back. Same model and make. We use those ones for test drives.”

Arthur followed the smell of cologne into the back parking lot to see a green-colored version of his new car. The grey one had to be around here somewhere.

Chip almost pushed Arthur into the green car’s driver side seat.

He then jangled the car keys into his hands, “Here. You drive this baby around the block and I’ll sit in the passenger side and watch another happy Larry’s Awesome Autos customer smile as he drives and thanks God that he chose Larry’s Awesome Autos. Hey. I think the sun is even brighter now that you’re sitting there behind the wheel. Quite an awesome coincidence, isn’t it, sir?”

Arthur said nothing and started up the green version of his new car. He strapped on his seat belt and adjusted the mirrors. Rolling down the window to get some fresh non-cologned air, he noticed that Chip was not wearing his seat belt. When he told him to put it on, a five-minute argument was eventually lost by Arthur. Losing arguments was not something he did very often. It seemed that Chip never ever wore a seat belt. He trusted Arthur’s driving.

Arthur’s closing remarks were, “Chip, you are a dummy if you do not wear a seat belt.”

Chip never heard Arthur’s comment because he was too busy rambling on and on with, “If I don’t trust a customer’s driving like yours, sir then what kind of a salesman am I? Turn left up here to get onto the highway. You can floor this baby to see what kind of awesome guts she has.”

Arthur followed orders again. He was fuming mad, though. So much so that he almost did not hear Chip’s entire non-stop sales pitch. And when he added in a certain car salesman’s impressive number of cars sold this month…and so far this year…and how his gorgeous wife was very, very pleased about those sales…and the nice commissions that helped her wear fur coats and diamonds—Arthur had enough of the car salesman named Chip.

Arthur found a side road off of the highway. Slowing down somewhat, he spotted a large elm tree and drove the green car towards it. At a fairly fast speed.

“Hey. You’re going to cra…HEY!”

Chip was right again. They were going to crash into the tree. Arthur did not care. It was not his car. He had his seat belt on. So when the crash happened, Arthur felt a slight jolt. Chip felt more than a slight jolt as his head slammed into the windshield.

“Dummy,” was all that Arthur said to the limp, bleeding unconscious person to his right.

Arthur calmly undid his seat belt and got out of the car. He estimated that it would take him about thirty-nine minutes to walk back to Larry’s Awesome Autos to pick up his old car and then drive home. But as Chip had said, it was indeed a beautiful day. A little exercise would not kill Arthur.

Chip did not hear Arthur whistling a tune as he walked in the direction of the car dealership.
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Linwood Barclay was born in the United States, but just as he was turning four, his parents moved to Canada, settling in a Toronto suburb. Linwood’s father, Everett—a commercial artist whose illustrations of automobiles appeared in *Life*, *Look*, and *The Saturday Evening Post*—had accepted an advertising position north of the border.

As the major car accounts switched more to photography for their magazine advertising instead of illustrations, Linwood’s parents bought a cottage resort and trailer park in the Kawartha Lakes region of Ontario. But when Linwood was sixteen, his father died, and he essentially took over running the family business (an experience he wrote about in his memoir, “Last Resort”).

At the age of twenty-two, Linwood left the resort and got his first newspaper job at *The Peterborough Examiner*. In 1981, he joined the *Toronto Star*, Canada’s largest-circulation newspaper. For twelve years he held a variety of editing positions, and then became the paper’s humor columnist in 1993. A few thousand columns later, he retired from the paper in 2008 to write books full-time.

After writing four comic thrillers featuring the character Zack Walker, Linwood turned to darker, standalone novels, starting with “No Time for Goodbye,” which became an international hit. The novel has been translated into nearly forty languages, was the single bestselling novel in the UK in 2008, and has been optioned for film by Eric McCormack. Since then, all of Linwood’s novels have appeared on bestseller lists, and more of his books have been
Linwood Barclay has landed at the top of bestseller lists around the world, making Barclay a #1 bestselling author in countries like the UK and Canada. This fall, with the publication of his latest novel “Trust Your Eyes,” fans will get a new taste of Barclay’s talent.

If you have yet to read one of Linwood Barclay’s sharp and gripping thrillers, try “Trust Your Eyes.”

In “Trust Your Eyes,” Thomas Kilbride is a map-obsessed schizophrenic who rarely leaves his bedroom. But with a computer program called Whirl360.com (much like Google Street View), he travels the world from his room, memorizing the streets around the globe in anticipation of a terrorist virus he’s convinced will bring technology to a halt.

Thomas’ brother Ray, a political cartoonist who has returned home to care for him after their father’s accidental death, takes his brother’s paranoid theories with a grain of salt. Until Thomas shows Ray an image from Whirl360—an image from a New York City apartment window that looks like a woman being murdered. Skeptical at first, Ray soon realizes he and his brother have stumbled onto a deadly conspiracy with powerful people at its helm—people who will do anything to keep from being exposed. As the mystery deepens and the body count rises, the brothers find themselves in the crosshairs.

Linwood studied English Literature at Trent University. He was fortunate to have some very fine mentors; in particular, the celebrated Canadian author Margaret Laurence, whom Linwood first met while she was serving as writer-in-residence at Trent, and Kenneth Millar, who under the name Ross Macdonald, wrote the acclaimed series of mystery novels featuring the private eye Lew Archer.

It was at Trent where he met his wife Neetha. They have been married more than thirty years, and have two children, Spencer and Paige.

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): Losing your father at such a young age must have made you grow up pretty quickly.

Linwood Barclay (LB): It was the event that most defined who I am. It wasn’t just that I lost my father, with whom I was very close, but I effectively, at the age of sixteen, was running the family business. I was taking care of my mother and brother. A mountain of responsibility was dropped on me. Looking back, I don’t know how I did it. But at the time, it was simply what you had to do. As a result, I never had those kinds of wild, late teenage years. I was too busy.

S. MAG.: What prompted you to decide to become a full-time author?

LB: I actually wanted to be one right from the start. I had dreams of being a novelist in my early twenties. I had written a couple by the time I was twenty-two or so. The only problem was, no one wanted to publish them, and we can all be grateful for that. They just weren’t good enough. So, at twenty-two, I went to work for a newspaper. I figured, why not get a job where you get paid to write every single day, even if it’s not always about things that particularly interest you. (I wrote a lot about a cow disease called brucellosis. I wrote so much about it, I was almost certain I had the disease. The chief symptom was an inability to produce milk).

I started writing three columns a week for the Toronto Star in 1993, and that eventually led me back into writing novels. The first came out in 2004. When the books started doing well enough that I could quit the newspaper, I did. So I was back to where I wanted to be when I was twenty-two.

S. MAG.: In “Trust Your Eyes,” Thomas Kilbride is a map-obsessed schizophrenic. Where did he come from?

LB: He’s very much a product of my imagination. I don’t know anyone with that particular obsession, but I’ve spent a lot of time on the Internet virtually wandering cities, and was able to imagine what it might be like to be too consumed by it. But someone close to me does have schizophrenia, and I think my experiences in this regard helped me in creating some of Thomas’ idiosyncrasies.
S. MAG.: Michael Connelly, Lisa Gardner, Tess Gerritsen, Robert Crais, Joseph Finder, and the impeccable Stephen King have all touted you as a great writer. What is that like? Does it make you nervous? Like you have to write better each time to stay up on top?

LB: Having authors of that caliber praise your work is pretty mind-blowing. I was thrilled to find out Lisa enjoyed my work. And when I learned that Stephen King was a fan, I was insufferable for days. It makes you realize you’re going to have to write a lot more books before you can just mail it in. Not that I would ever contemplate such a thing. My agent would never let me.

S. MAG.: When “No Time for Goodbye” became an international hit, what was your reaction? How did it feel to be so well received?

LB: I was overwhelmed, or as the Brits say, “gobsmacked.” A most appropriate word, given that it was in England where the book really hit it big, finishing out 2008 as the single bestselling novel of the year in the UK. But the book had already been a bestseller in Germany. Its success continued to spread across Europe, then across the ocean to the U.S. and Canada. I still wonder sometimes if it all really happened.

S. MAG.: What profession, other than yours, would you like to attempt?

LB: I wish I could play the piano. I love Diana Krall, and the late Oscar Peterson, the greatest jazz pianist ever. But I have zero talent in this regard. I’m a car nut. Testing cars would be a fun way to make a living.

S. MAG.: What is your idea of fun? If given a choice to skip work for a day, how would you spend the entire day?

LB: Grab my wife and hit a good movie, go for dinner at an Italian restaurant, or maybe even hunker down at home and watch several episodes of Breaking Bad or Justified.

S. MAG.: Will there be a sequel to “Trust Your Eyes”?

LB: I’d never say never, but I don’t think so. I am however, planning to write a sequel to “No Time for Goodbye” that will most likely come out in 2014.

S. MAG.: Finish this sentence: If I had to stop writing tomorrow, I would__________.

LB: …not know what to do with myself.

S. MAG.: Do Neetha, Spencer, and Paige get to read your work before it goes out to the publisher or do you make them wait?

LB: My wife Neetha always waits for the advance copy, the one that gets sent out to reviewers. Our son Spencer makes all my book trailers, so there’s a good chance I’ll e-mail him an early version so he can start picking scenes that will work well on screen. And our daughter Paige, if she’s helping with the trailer, gets a sneak peek. Otherwise, she’ll wait for an advance copy.

Few people know the horror of being an author’s spouse, sitting there, reading, knowing the author is watching you, waiting for every reaction. “Did you like that page? Did you like that one?” It’s a special kind of hell.

Suspense Magazine was completely honored to have had this time with Mr. Barclay. A fascinating man and a great author. To learn more about him, check out his website at, http://linwoodbarclay.com/home/.

SuspenseMagazine.com
Emmitt Speaks stooped to duck under the yellow and black plastic tape strung between the oaks at the edge of the playground. Knee-high grass made for slow progress. By the time he reached the steep bank overlooking the creek, his shirt stuck to his back, and he felt like he was gargling rather than breathing the August air.

Phoebe Sorenson shaded her eyes with a hand as she looked up from the creek bed. Tendrils of hair that escaped from her ponytail curled around her sweat-soaked face. The homicide detective greeted Emmitt with a sympathetic look and a nod in the direction of the body lying face-up in the shallow stream.

“Rierson said he was another one of yours.”

Emmitt had more than twenty-five years on the job, most of them in the Winston-Salem Police Department’s Juvenile Section. He liked the young homicide detective: she was sharp, meticulous, and a team player. He couldn’t say the same for Rierson. The man was arrogant, abrasive, and in Emmitt’s experience, generally uncooperative. It was a good thing Phoebe was primary on the case; Rierson wouldn’t have bothered to notify him.

“I appreciate the call,” Emmitt said. He stared down at the body of a young black male, barely into his teens. “Deshawn Reeves. What can you tell me, Phoebe?”

“Not much, so far. A Reynolds High School student spotted the body about eight when he was cutting through the park on his way to school. Ran up to the school to get help. The principal and the resource officer,” she consulted her notebook, “John Tate, came down to have a look, and Tate called it in.”

“Who ID’d him?”

“Tate did. Said the boy was a CCS kid: trouble with a capital ‘T’.”

Emmitt worked with the Center for Community Safety, a group that had been organized to help turn around repeat juvenile offenders. Most of the kids referred to the Center had spent time in Forsyth County Youth Services, and some in state detention, more than a few for violent offenses.

“How did he die?”

“Gunshot to the back of the head. Still waiting on the M.E. I’m keeping the area clear for him and the crime scene guys. Tate and the principal already tracked up the stream bed pretty good when they came down to check on him. I don’t want anyone else down here.”

“What’s taking so long? I thought you said he was found around eight.”

“Big wreck on fifty-two, three or four cars and more than one casualty. M.E.’s got his hands full this morning.”

She shifted her gaze to body. “What can you tell me about the kid?”

“The last I heard,” Emmitt said, “Deshawn was accepted into a program run by a church out in the county and was doing well: off drugs, attending school, and staying out of trouble. Guess the report was overly optimistic.”

“Any connection you know of to Juan Ramirez?”

Emmitt shook his head.

“Other than both having contact with CCS, I can’t think of any. I doubt they ran in the same circles.”

Juan had been two years older and barely spoke English when he entered the system. The first time he was arrested for breaking and entering, he had only been in the country a few weeks. His third arrest earned him six months in the Stonewall Jackson Youth Development Center in Concord. Three months after his release, his body had been dumped in a shopping center parking lot on the east side of town. Cause of death, a bullet to the back of the head. Rierson was the primary on Juan’s homicide investigation. It had been five or six weeks, and Emmitt hadn’t heard of any progress on the case.

“Rierson said Juan was dealing and using cocaine,” Phoebe said. “What about Deshawn?”

“He was using marijuana and...
cocaíne and doing neighborhood B & Es to buy drugs when he was arrested," Emmitt said. “We never had any evidence he was selling. Like I said, the last I heard, he was off drugs and doing well. Riersen thinks Juan's death was drug-related?”

“That's the current theory.”

Emmitt stared down at the dead boy. Drugs and violence often went hand-in-hand, but these kids were younger than the usual victims. It was hard to imagine them as a threat to anyone. “If you want help with the notification, I’ll go with you. I know Deshawn's grandmother. She's going to take this hard.” The woman was a member of Emmitt's church, and he had known her for more than twenty years. She asked Emmitt for help when the boy had been arrested.

Phoebe gave him a grateful look. “Thanks, Emmitt. I really appreciate it. I'll give you a call when I finish here.”

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On a Saturday afternoon a couple of months later, Phoebe called again. Emmitt was mowing the grass. The weather was unseasonably warm, and recent rains had encouraged a growth spurt that had the lawn looking scraggly. He took the phone from his wife in one hand and the glass of iced tea she held out to him in the other and smiled his thanks.

“What can I do for you, Phoebe?”

“Emmitt, I hate to bother you on the weekend, but there's been another shooting.”

“Another kid?”

“Yeah, I'm afraid so. He was dumped in the Coliseum lot last night or early this morning, over near the Education Building. A worker coming in to set up fair exhibits spotted the body. No ID. I was hoping you could have a look, see if you recognize him.”

“You think it's tied in with the other two?”

“Too soon to say, but he's about the same age, and the shooting looks similar.”

Emmitt drank down the last of the tea in two long swallows and set the glass in the sink.

“What's going on here, Phoebe?”

“I don't know, and I could use some help. We haven't made any progress on the other two kids. Working a possible drug connection hasn't produced any leads. Everywhere we've looked has been a dead end.”

“I'll be there as soon as I can,” he said.

“Another boy's been shot?” his wife asked when he hung up the phone.

Emmitt looked into eyes that mirrored his distress. “Phoebe wants me to have a look. See if I know him.”

He showered and dressed in record time and gave his wife a brief hug on the way out the door.

“I don't know how long I'll be, but I'll give you a call if it looks like I'll be late for dinner.”

“Someone's out there killing kids,” she said, her eyes on their two youngest sons who were shooting baskets on the driveway, “dinner can wait.”

When Emmitt pulled into the parking lot, he didn't have to guess where to go. A fire truck, an EMS van, and a half dozen police cruisers blocked access to the area near the Education Building. He added his car to the mix and threaded his way to the tape. Phoebe spotted him and waved him in.

“Thanks for coming, Emmitt.” Her welcoming look almost made up for the scowl Riersen gave him when he stepped closer to the body.

“What are you doing here?” Riersen asked.

“I called him,” Phoebe said. Her expression told Emmitt she was embarrassed by her partner's surliness. “I thought Emmitt might help us make an ID.”

Emmitt was struck by the similarity to the scene in the park two months earlier. The kid was in his early teens, sprawled face-up on the damp, oily surface of the lot. This time a white boy, and Emmitt knew him. "Bryan Mabe," he said.

Another juvenile delinquent,” Riersen shook his head in disgust.

“He was only thirteen or fourteen,” Emmitt said, glaring at Riersen. “He's been in trouble, but nothing to earn him something like this.”

“I didn't say he had. Just that none of these kids were angels. They ran in rough circles and it got them killed.” Riersen stalked off before Emmitt had a chance to reply.

“Sorry, Emmitt,” Phoebe said. “He's frustrated and taking it out on everyone in reach. What do you know about Bryan?”

“His mother contacted CCS for help about a year ago when he was arrested with a bunch of kids who were vandalizing cars in West End. He'd been skipping school and hanging with gang members. She wanted to get him into a program, get him turned around before something more serious happened. The last I heard, he was doing better.” Emmitt turned to Phoebe. “If I remember right, he was referred to the same church group as Deshawn Reeves.”

“Then they might have known one another,” Phoebe said. “We were never able to find any connection between Ramirez and Reeves. The Ramirez family left town as soon as the M.E. released the boy's body. We couldn't locate them after Reeves was shot.”

“Did you talk to anybody at the church about Deshawn?”

“Riersen did. The pastor told him Deshawn quit the program a couple of months before his death. Just stopped coming.”

Emmitt thought back to the conversations he'd had with Deshawn's grandmother after the boy's death. She'd been distraught and insistent that Deshawn was doing well, staying out of trouble. At the time he suspected it was wishful thinking on her part; this news pretty much confirmed it.

“It'd be worth checking to see if Bryan ever attended the program,” Emmitt said. “We might get a lead that links these kids.” The first two deaths had been connected by police suspicions and, apparently, not much else. This third shooting made it clear… someone was out there killing kids. “I want to be in on this, Phoebe.”

“There's going to be a taskforce. We can use all the help we can get.”

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A month passed, and they were no closer to catching whoever had shot three teenage boys and dumped their bodies in public places around a city that had never imagined itself the home of a serial killer. The SBI and FBI consultants were stumped. There was no sign of a sexual angle, which made their profiles useless. Emmitt had interviewed family members and friends of the victims, to no avail. No one was able to provide a clue as to why the boys had been killed or who was responsible.

Working for weeks through contacts in the Hispanic community, Emmitt finally spoke with the Ramirez family by telephone. In the country illegally, they returned to Mexico after their son’s death and were reluctant to talk to the police. From them, he heard the same refrain as he had from the other families: their son was off drugs, going to school, on the right track. Those people at the church were miracle workers. The family had no idea who wanted Juan dead or why.

Emmitt finished the call and thanked the young woman who graciously agreed to translate for her help. When he returned from escorting her out of the maze of cubicles occupied by the Criminal Investigation Division, he sank into his chair with a sigh. To hear the families and friends tell it, the boys—while not exactly model citizens—were living the straight and narrow at the time of their deaths. For weeks, he chalked it up to no one wanting to speak ill of the dead; now he was beginning to wonder.

He paged Phoebe. It had been a few days since they’d spoken, neither wanting to discuss the lack of progress. When his phone rang, he was still trying to decide how to convince her to see things his way. The whole investigation proceeded on the premise that the boys were involved in something that had gotten them killed. That they had seen something or known something that made them a danger to the drug or gang community. So far, nobody had been able to come up with anything that linked the boys to illegal activity at the time of their death, or to each other.

Emmitt picked up on the second ring. “Phoebe, just wanted to let you know I finally got through to the Ramirez family. They insist they don’t have a clue who killed their son or why, but the parents are convinced that Juan was getting his act together. Claim he was off drugs and going to school when he was killed. And apparently, he was part of the same church youth group as Deshawn and Bryan.”

“Well, they were right about the school attendance and the drugs. The school records confirm that all three boys attended regularly, only a few excused absences among them during the six months prior to their deaths. Their drug screens were all negative, too.”

In spite of being a member of the taskforce, Emmitt wasn’t privy to all of the information Homicide accumulated on the cases. He cursed himself for not asking sooner. “So, it looks like the drug angle is off base. If they were dealing, they would’ve been using.”

“Rierson still thinks it’s a possibility.”

“You know that’s unlikely. And there were no stashes of cash found at any of the homes.”

“I know,” Phoebe said, “but at this point, we don’t have anything else to go on.”

Emmitt could hear the frustration in her voice, “All of the families said the boys were attending that church program when they were killed.”

“Rierson talked to the pastor about Bryan. The guy told him the same story he had about Deshawn. Both boys quit the program a couple of months before their deaths. We didn’t know about Juan.”

“Well, that doesn’t fit with what the families are saying. They insist the boys were off drugs, in school, and participating in the church program. Now you’re telling me that you have confirmation of the first two. We need to look at the church. It’s the only link we’ve come up with so far. Has anyone talked with the other kids in the program?”

“Rierson took care of that angle,” Phoebe said. “I’m sure he must have interviewed everyone who had any contact with the boys.”

Her words were belied by the hint of doubt in her tone.

“We need to do it again, push harder,” Emmitt said. “The kids may be afraid they’ll get into trouble if they talk to the police. They may know something they’re too scared to admit.”

Before he hung up, Emmitt had Phoebe’s agreement they would re-interview the kids in the church youth group. Phoebe would find out when the kids met next and get back with him. He was relieved he hadn’t had to suggest leaving Rierson out of it; she hadn’t mentioned asking her partner along.

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There was a chill in the air and not a cloud in sight. The hardwoods sported a brilliant display of color that made Emmitt glad he’d escaped from the cramped cubicle that passed for an office. He drove while Phoebe navigated, calling out the turns as they wound their way deeper into the countryside. The final turn led them down a dirt road with still no sign of the church.

“This place is out in the middle of nowhere,” Emmitt said. “I didn’t know we had spots this remote in the county.”

“You need to get out of town more often.” Phoebe smiled at him. “This area near the river is still pretty undeveloped, and I hope it stays that way.”

“Is a deputy meeting us out here?” Emmitt asked. They were well outside Winston-Salem city limits. Technically, the sheriff’s office had jurisdiction.

Phoebe shook her head. “They’re leaving it to us. They’re part of the taskforce, but I get the feeling they’re happy to let us take the heat for the lack of progress on the case.”

Emmitt was pleased they were on their own. His experience with teens taught him it was usually better to talk to kids without a show of force. Phoebe’s petite size and youthful appearance made her naturally less threatening than him. Over the years, he learned how to put kids at ease in spite of his
They rounded the next curve and got their first view of the church. It looked like hundreds of other scattered throughout the South: a white clapboard rectangle with double front doors, a small steeple rising from the roof in front, and rows of windows down the side. No stained glass. A gray, one-story cinder-block building met the back end of the church at a right angle, but didn't appear to be connected to the older, wooden building. The gravel parking lot held a battered pickup, a late-model sedan, and an old school bus that had been painted blue and emblazoned down the side with HOLY CHURCH OF REDEMPTION in black letters.

Emmitt pulled into the lot and parked the unmarked police car beside the bus. When he and Phoebe climbed from the car, a man emerged from a door at the end of the cinder-block building and walked briskly across the gravel toward them. Slim, medium height, light-brown hair cut short, he had the look and carriage of a former military man.

“Detective Sorenson, I'm Reverend Michaels,” he said as he extended his hand to Phoebe. “We’re glad to have you on the phone, we’re here to talk to you about Juan, Deshawn, and Bryan were part of the youth program out here, so you must have known them. Anything you can remember about them might help us find out who killed them.” Emmitt addressed his remarks to the whole table, searching faces to gauge the response. No one looked up.

“They quit the program.” Again, the lanky kid. This time he met Emmitt’s gaze with a cool, appraising look. “We don’t know nothing about what they into. We already told that other detective.”

“That's part of what we'd like to find out,” Emmitt said, “when and why they quit.”

His statement was met with silence. Eyes stayed firmly glued to the Bibles, but the boys’ anxiety was palpable. Fingers gripped pages too tightly. Several of the kids were sweating in spite of the cool breeze blowing through a partially opened window. Emmitt made a mental note of which of the boys appeared the most frightened. He would start the interviews with them.

Two hours later, Emmitt and Phoebe went in search of Reverend Michaels. They found the man in a small office at the far end of the Education Hall from the classroom where the boys were sitting. He looked up when they stopped at the open doorway.

“Finished with the boys? I hope you got what you needed.”

Emmitt smiled, pretending an optimism he didn't feel. “Thanks for letting us come out to talk to them. Easier to have them all in one place.”

The detectives said their goodbyes and returned to the car. The sun dipped almost to the horizon, and the bite in the breeze rattling the leaves of the trees surrounding the parking lot had Emmitt wishing he brought a heavier coat. He switched on the heater as they pulled onto the dirt road.

“They all said the same thing,” Phoebe said, “practically the same words.”

“I thought we were going to get something out of a couple of them once
we had them alone,” Emmitt said, “but they stuck to the party line. Those kids know something they’re not telling, and they’re scared. They’re in over their heads and don’t know how to climb out.”

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The voice kept fading in and out, making it difficult for Emmitt to hear all the words, but the fear came through loud and clear. “You gotta help me. I’m gonna be next.” Young, probably black, and most likely male, although terror raised the voice’s pitch to a near squeak.

Cradling the receiver against his shoulder, Emmitt reached for a pad on his desk. “Where are you son?”

“In the woods down by the river. He got a dog with him.”

Emmitt had given his card to each of the boys after he and Phoebe questioned them at the church. It listed his direct office line and his cell phone. He’d figured the kids had discarded them as soon as he was out of sight.

“How close to the church?”

“I don’t know.” The kid cleared a gurgle from his throat. “I’ve been running a while.”

The Yadkin River ran north-south about a mile west of the church property.

“You heading north or south?” His question was met with silence. “Are you moving with the river on your right or left?”

“Right.” The voice sounded slightly stronger.

“What’s your number?” Emmitt wrote it down. “You have my card?”

“Yeah.”

“Call me back on my cell. Keep moving in the same direction, and keep the river in sight. We’re on the way.”

Emmitt fretted through the time it took to get patrol on the road and notify the sheriff’s office, hoping they had someone closer to the area than the WSPD. He sprinted to his car after already parked in the church lot when Emmitt skidded to a stop, spitting gravel from beneath the car’s wheels. One of the sheriff’s deputies stood beside his cruiser, microphone in hand.

Emmitt jogged over, “Have they located Michaels?”

The man shook his head, “There’s a lot of woods to search. Dogs are on the way. We’ve got a team working its way up the river from the south. Hope to catch him in-between.”

“The kid says the Reverend has a dog of his own.”

This information was relayed to the officers and deputies in the woods. Emmitt took his cell phone from Phoebe.

“Find a place you can hide and stay put,” he told the kid. “Sheriff’s deputies are on the way up the river toward you, and a team is coming from the direction of the church.”

Time crept past. Emmitt stared into the woods, as if by concentrating very hard he could manage to see what was happening a mile away. The sharp crack of gunfire broke the tense silence. Two shots echoed through the still, afternoon air. Emmitt gripped the phone, his words coming close to a shout. “Are you okay? Talk to me kid.”

“What was that?” The young voice was a shaky whisper, but the boy sounded unharmed.

Emmitt listened to the garbled voice from the car radio, “They’ve got him. Just stay where you are until you see the deputies coming up the river. They’ll bring you in.”

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The three of them sat in Emmitt’s car, Emmitt and the kid in back and Phoebe up front in the passenger seat. The kid was wrapped in a gray thermal blanket one of the deputies provided and was sipping on a cup of hot chocolate Phoebe scrounged from the church kitchen. The boy refused to set foot in the building.

“I wanted to tell you when you were here the other day, but Lamont wouldn’t let me.” Emmitt’s suspicion that the lanky kid was the group’s leader was confirmed. “He said we’d all be okay if we just kept our heads down and our mouths shut.”

“Juan, Dershawn, and Bryan were still part of the group when they died?” Emmitt asked.

The kid stared into the cup clinched in his hands, “At first we just thought it was some kind of strange happening. Reverend Michaels said Juan been backsliding, doing drugs on the sly, disissing the Lord. But Juan hadn’t let on to any of us, and we was pretty close, you know.”

He looked up to meet Emmitt’s gaze. “When Dershawn died, Reverend Michaels said the police was coming out to talk to us. We should tell them we hadn’t seen Dershawn in over a month. That he dropped out of the program. He said if we didn’t, they’d shut the program down and we’d all be going to Youth Development on account of how the program was part of our probation. We was scared. None of us wanted to go away again. We did what he said.”

“And after Bryan was killed?” Emmitt prompted.

“Reverend Michaels said the police told him Bryan was into bad stuff that got him killed. Staying in the program and keeping to the ways of the Lord was the best way to stay safe.” The kid turned to stare out the car window toward the church. “We should’ve told what we knew. Maybe Bryan still be alive.”

He glanced back at Emmitt as if for confirmation.

“Any idea why Michaels did it?” Emmitt spoke softly, holding the kid’s gaze.

“He say the Lord pulls out bad weeds so good crops can grow.” For the first time, Emmitt could see a glint of tears in the boy’s eyes. “I guess he figured some of us just too bad to grow.”

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A simple missing-persons case: Find Frederick Walther’s beautiful young daughter, who disappeared after a love affair turned sour. Simple, that is, until Leslie Walther’s lover turns up dead in a fishy place—the seal pool at the Woods Hole aquarium. Part-time fisherman—part-time private eye “Soc” Socarides finds the highly loathsome Tom Drake had a number of acquaintances, business rivals, ex-lovers, and an ex-wife—all with reason to want him dead.

Soc’s investigation turns up so many knotted threads he could make a fishnet: a long-lost German U-boat, a cutting-edge underwater vehicle, corporate espionage, a shady munitions dealer, and a CIA spook from Soc’s distant past. Soc hopes the net will snare a murderer. But if he makes one wrong move, it could drag him down to a cold, wet, silent grave.
Elizabeth George was born Susan Elizabeth George in Warren, Ohio. A graduate of University of California in Riverside, she also attended California State University at Fullerton. While there, she was awarded a master's degree in Counseling/Psychology and an honorary doctorate of humane letters.

She started out as a teacher. At Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, she and ten other teachers tried to employ organized labor and were fired for their union activity.

She moved on to El Toro High School in El Toro, California where she remained for the rest of her career as a high school English teacher. While employed there, she was selected Orange County Teacher of the Year, in part to the work she'd done with remedial students for nearly a decade. She left education after more than thirteen years when she sold her first novel, "A Great Deliverance," to her longtime publisher Bantam Books.

George is known for her British crime novels featuring Thomas Lynley. Entertainment Weekly refers to George as "the queen of the mystery genre," while The New York Times says she is "a master of the English mystery." Most of her novels have been filmed by the BBC and broadcast on PBS Mystery.


In "Believing the Lie," Inspector Thomas Lynley is mystified when he's sent undercover to investigate the death of Ian Cresswell at the request of the man's uncle, the wealthy and influential Bernard Fairclough. The death has been ruled an accidental drowning, and nothing on the surface proves otherwise. But when Lynley enlists the help of his friends Simon and Deborah St. James, the trio's digging soon reveals...
that the Fairclough clan is awash in secrets, lies, and motives.

On Sept. 4, George's young adult novel, “The Edge of Nowhere”—the first novel in a four book series set on Washington's remote Whidbey Island—will be out.

“The Edge of Nowhere” is a distinctive coming-of-age story that follows a young woman who hears “whispers”—other people's thoughts—and the dangerous game she must play after escaping her threatening stepfather and taking on a new identity. When Becca King comes to Whidbey Island, she anticipates a short visit with her mother's old friend, as her mother finds them a new home far from her stepfather. When Becca finds herself virtually abandoned on the island, she must find a way to survive there with the help of many already on the island. However, a terrible accident—which may or may not have been an attempted murder—impacts everyone on the island, especially Becca.

George has won the Anthony Award, the Agatha Award, and France's Le Grand Prix de Literature Policiere for “A Great Deliverance” for which she was also nominated for the Edgar and the Macavity Awards. She has also been awarded Germany's MIMI for her novel “Well-Schooled in Murder.”

Elizabeth George has so much to her credit and definitely a literary force to be reckoned with. Take a moment to enjoy Suspense Magazine's exclusive interview with Elizabeth George.

Suspense Magazine (S. MAG.): What was the bridge that brought you from schoolteacher to author?

Elizabeth George (EG): There wasn't a bridge, actually. I have written since I was seven-years-old, crafting my first “novels” when I was in seventh grade. While I was a high school teacher, I continued to write. I wrote my first published novel, “A Great Deliverance,” in the summer between school years.
this, but I’m really pleased with the result, so I guess it was worth the hours, day, weeks, and months of effort.

S. MAG.: Born in Ohio, yet you have a penchant for British crime novels. How did that happen?

EG: I have a longtime interest in Great Britain. There’s a lot of information about this on my website ElizabethGeorgeOnline.com.

S. MAG.: Where did Becca King come from? Did she have her “gift” from the beginning when you conceived her, or did the story dictate she would have it?

EG: She is—like all my characters—a product of my imagination and someone I created in advance of writing the novel. Her “gift” was part of her character as created.

S. MAG.: Becca can hear “whispers.” Does her ability have anything to do with her stepfather being threatening? What little tidbit can you share with our readers?

EG: No it doesn’t. This is something that she inherited from the maternal grandmother who died before Becca was able to learn how to control it. Part of her journey in the series will be to learn how to control it and how to develop the other gifts she has, which she is not yet aware of.

S. MAG.: How do you feel about the new e-book phase? Do you see it as something that’s going to be here for the long haul? What about paperbacks? Where do you see their future?

EG: Gosh, I have no opinion on this. I can barely use a cell phone.

S. MAG.: Where did “Believing the Lie” get its start?

EG: All of my British novels get their start in place, in setting. In this case, I wanted to write a book that took place in Cumbria.

S. MAG.: From all your Lynley novels, you branched out to YA with “The Edge of Nowhere.” What can we expect next?

EG: More of the same. I have finished the rough draft of the eighteenth Lynley novel and I have finished the second draft of the next Becca novel.

S. MAG.: Finish this statement: if I had to stop writing tomorrow I would__________.

EG: …not be very happy.

Suspense Magazine thanks Elizabeth for her time and giving us a little more insight into the author and her work. If you’d like to learn more about Elizabeth, please feel free to visit her website at www.ElizabethGeorgeOnline.com.
CONTRIBUTOR’S CORNER

A Father’s Influence Gives Legs to a Dream

An Interview with Lynne Levandowski

Interview by Suspense Magazine

Raised in upstate New York, Lynne spent the first fifty years of her life in the Brockport area, a college town west of Rochester. The middle child of two brothers, she spent most of her life as a tomboy who enjoyed playing baseball, softball, and kickball with the neighborhood boys, since girls were in short supply. Lynne attributes her love for reading, writing, and the paranormal to her father, who directly influenced and supported her in these areas. However, she believes all of her skills come from God.

“Without Jesus in my life,” she claims, “it would be nothing.”

She has been writing poetry and stories since she was nine-years-old, even taking second place in a poetry contest in sixth grade for her poem, *Arrows*. While growing up, it seemed everything she wrote creatively in school was soon confiscated by the teachers who liked what she wrote for class assignments.

In 1980, she began writing her first book. It has since grown into a series of five paranormal romance books that are still awaiting a home in the publishing world. Prior submissions of her book were rejected and her ideas were stolen by a publisher. Two other stories were rejected and stolen by the same publisher, which makes her wary of the publishing world as a whole.

While working as a legal secretary, Lynne became friends with the editor of the local newspaper, *The Brockport Post*, who encouraged her to submit her work. So her first story to see print was titled *The Parrot’s Handiwork*, the story of a pick-pocketing parrot owned by a homeless woman.

She also holds a B.S. in Health Science from SUNY Brockport, as well as a Master’s degree in public administration (MPA). It was after her layoff from Eastman Kodak that she earned her master’s degree. But unable to find a job in her field, she found survival work at Burger King and Lifetime Assistance, working in five different group homes.

Eventually, the opportunity to leave New York presented itself, so she relocated to Wellington, Kansas, to get more involved in ministry work. Instead, a prior back injury forced Lynne onto disability. So, to stay sane, she immersed herself in her writing, soon becoming the *Wichita Biblical Perspective Examiner* for [www.Examiner.com](http://www.Examiner.com).


Later, having left [www.Examiner.com](http://www.Examiner.com) she tried her hand at writing book reviews, something she has always wanted to do. Lynne finds herself writing reviews for several sites, including [http://loveromancesandmore.blogspot.com](http://loveromancesandmore.blogspot.com) and *Suspense Magazine*. Recently, Lynne was contacted by another group, SpeakEasy, and asked to review Christian books. So, after applying, she now reviews for SpeakEasy as well. In between all of this, she writes nonfiction articles for her website and works on her fiction, still hoping that the alien series she has poured heart and soul into will someday see publication.

So without further ado, we give you *Suspense Magazine*’s featured contributor for this month, Lynne Levandowski.
S. MAG.: You've had your work stolen. What would you say to aspiring, wide-eyed authors who want to submit their work all over to see what happens?

LL: I would tell them to be cautious as to whom they submit their work to. Just because someone has a flashy, colorful website and lots of books to their credit, does not mean that publisher is reputable. It is easy to be taken in.

Aspiring authors should begin networking with other writers and get their advice on whom to submit their work to. Any problems an author has had will probably come out because most writers I know are more than willing to help other writers fulfill their dreams of getting published. They would not steer them wrong, although I cannot say that about some who may not want someone else competing with them.

Just be careful, is the best advice I can give to an aspiring author.

S. MAG.: What made you chose to write paranormal? Do you ever consider trying to write in another genre?

LL: My first story idea was a paranormal. My father was always fascinated by UFOs, ghost stories, psychics, and that sort of thing. We shared a passion for books and reading and all things paranormal and often had interesting discussions on these topics. My father, I believe, could have been a writer and a poet yet never pursued these things since he was busy working all the time. Sometimes, on my birthday, he would enclose a little poem in my card. It usually rhymed and, although short, his rhyming verses always brought a smile to my face. It was a sad day when my father lost his eyesight due to diabetes, which he had since he was eighteen. Losing his ability to read anything was a definite blow to him.

Yes, I have considered writing in other genres. I have, in fact, two or three inspirational books on the back burner. A writing pal of mine suggested I write novels of suspense, so I have begun brainstorming some ideas for that as well. I am a person of many ideas, but I get easily sidetracked and do not want to start twenty different things and never finish anything. Which is why I am focusing on rewriting and completing the initial series I had my heart set on. Everything else is just gravy on the potatoes. Since I am already fifty-five-years-old, I do not kid myself that I will have time enough for everything I want to write. It is important to me to focus on one thing for now, finish that, then move on to the next thing.

S. MAG.: What does reviewing give you? What is your favorite part about the whole experience?

LL: Well, I certainly like receiving free books, especially those that aren't even out on the market yet. But what I truly enjoy about reviewing is the chance to find something positive about a writer's work and share that with others. So often, I read nasty, even negative reviews about a person's book. They are not always by a professional but perhaps a dissatisfied reader. Regardless, I know how much words can hurt people, written or otherwise, and I also know how much work a writer puts into a story. Most people write for the sheer joy of it.
despite the difficulties associated with it. Pouring one’s heart and soul into a story is what most writers seem to do, and to have someone rip their story to shreds, after that labor of love, seems exceptionally cruel to me. That is not to say I may not have something negative to share. Many times one has to be honest if there are weak areas in the book, but I try and share them in a way that, hopefully, will help build up the person and not tear her down. The writer’s reaction to your review may not be what you expect, but at least you have done your best to be honest and kind in your consideration of the book.

Sales, of course, are an important part of being a published writer, but it is important to let a writer know just how good her/his published work is. Perhaps a really wonderful book isn’t getting the sales volume or attention it deserves. If no one is aware of a particular book (there are so many good ones out there), a positive review may help draw people to it. If a reviewer happens upon someone browsing through a bookstore or a library, it is in the writer’s interest for that reviewer to share their thoughts—hopefully positive ones—on the book the person is considering. Word of mouth is a powerful way to make others aware of someone’s book and, hopefully, increase sales.

My favorite part about reviewing books is the feeling of satisfaction I get when I finish reading the book and after, having written the review. I try to highlight the best of what the book has to offer and hope others will read the review, be intrigued, and then read the story for themselves.

S. MAG.: What do you think has stayed the same about you throughout your life?

LL: That’s easy. My passion for books and reading and writing. Books open doors to so many new things, so many new worlds. I became a literacy volunteer both while in New York and in Kansas so I can share that passion with those who haven’t yet experienced it. As the saying goes, a mind is a terrible thing to waste. And I would hate for anyone not to experience the joy and pleasure of reading for oneself.

Now a divorced, single mother as well as a grandmother, Lynne lives alone—allowing her time to do her favorites, reading and writing—with her pet, Rock, a long-haired, black domestic cat. She also has two grown children, who now have families of their own and live in different parts of the country.

We want to thank Lynne for her time and allowing us a small glimpse into her life. To see Lynne’s writing, check out www.myspace.com/karladawson for her inspirational writing www.myspace.com/waterfallsinternational & http://theendt.me/ and Angie’s Diary at, http://angiesdiary.com/author/lynnne777/
THE LAST DEGREE

Special Preview from

Dina Rae

PROLOGUE

“I am sending you a master craftsman named Hiram-abi, who is extremely talented. His mother is from the tribe of Dan in Israel, and his father is from Tyre. He is skillful at making things from gold, silver, bronze, and iron, and he also works with stone and wood.”

2 Chronicles 2:13-14

The mystery of Hiram Abif originates from the Biblical passage above. Secret societies have given him credit for constructing Solomon’s temple. According to legend, Hiram used talented craftsman and secrecy, such as passwords for orchestrating its construction.

Solomon didn’t like Hiram’s growing power, along with the attraction the Queen of Sheba had for him. Some scholars imply he may have had something to do with his death. Hiram remains the primary protagonist and martyr in modern day Masonic circles.

CHAPTER 1

Chicago, 2000

It was a rainy, dark fall day in Wrigleyville, an upscale north-side neighborhood. The rain violently splattered onto the concrete of Waveland Avenue. Although a big city, in this neighborhood crime generally amounted to alcohol related offenses such as DUls, bar room brawls, and public intoxication which was usually festive Cub fans oblivious to the limits of celebrating. This day was different.

“911? There’s a body in my alleyway, behind a dumpster. I’m behind Waveland Avenue, 1269 West. I think he’s dead! He looks like my neighbor...don’t know his name. I’m checking for his pulse right now, but nothing,” reported an elderly resident who was walking her dog.

At 10:02 a.m. an ambulance appeared on the scene, minutes after the initial phone call. The paramedics confirmed no pulse, and then called the coroner for an official ruling of death. The scene was then turned over to Lead Detectives Ann Wilson and Rich Stephanski. By 11:00 a.m., the 1200 block of Waveland was declared a crime scene. The detectives yellow-taped the area while uniformed officers coned off the street.

Due to the relentless rain, both detectives wore raincoats and carried traditional black umbrellas. They hurriedly moved in to investigate, fearing the rain might wash away the evidence. The victim appeared to be a young white male without identification, dressed in a gray wool cable-knit sweater and blue jeans. He was clean shaven with dirty blonde hair.

Ann took several pictures of the surrounding area and body with her Olympus digital camera. Her partner lifted the shoulders of the body to have a better look at the victim’s face. Rigamortis began to set.

“Ann, check this out. His throat has been slit. This sweater is soaked with blood. The wool acts like a sponge. Maybe we’ll find some blood in there that isn’t his,” Rich said.

“Let’s move the body into the meat wagon,” insisted Ann as she motioned for assistance from two uniformed cops.

“Looky what I’ve found,” yelled Detective Dan O’Leary from across the alleyway. “Is this a human tongue?”

The detectives surrounded him for a closer look.

“Good work, Dan,” praised Ann. “It’s definitely a tongue. The tendons are hanging off of the thicker end, like it was ripped out of the vic’s mouth. Look at the tip. It was intentionally split.”

Detective Wilson crawled into the back of the ‘meat wagon’ and unzipped the body bag. She took her pen and pried the victim’s mouth open. “What do you know...We have what looks like a tongue and a victim that’s missing a
tongue.” Ann glanced back. “Coincidence?” She had a hard
time seeing through her soaked grayish brown hair that was
pressed against her small face. She had to keep putting her
umbrella down in order to take more photographs of the
scene.

Detective Stephanski took the bag and held it towards
what little light the day provided and replied, “Yeah, the tip
is definitely cut. Think this guy could have had a big mouth?
Maybe his death is a message?”

Thinking along the same lines, she nodded her head at
the possibility. Rich and Ann had been partners for three
years. With exception to an occasional spat, both worked
well together.

“Could this be Mafia? Colombian cartels slit throats.
Plain old serial murder?” Ann offered.

Rich shook his handsome blonde head. “It could be,
but something about this doesn’t add up. This guy looks like
someone from this neighborhood, not a godfather. What a
strange way to die. Can I have the camera? I want to see if
anyone in the crowd might recognize him.”

“Good idea,” Ann responded as she passed him the
camera.

Despite the heavy downpour, concerned neighbors
steadily filled the sidewalk. Rich approached the growing
crowd on the other side of Waveland.

“Listen up,” Rich yelled. “A man was killed over there,
in the alley. I’m hoping one of you can identify him. On my
camera screen, there are a few pictures of him dead with his
throat slit. Do not be alarmed. We need your help. Step up
one at a time, and I’ll show you the pics.”

Rich stood on the sidewalk and asked a uniformed cop
to hold his umbrella while he fidgeted with the camera. After
showing the same five pictures over and over to at least thirty
people, a young and attractive woman approached. She was
brought to tears upon viewing the dead man’s photos.

“I think that’s my boyfriend...he didn’t come home...
Rory...Rory Schanck,” sobbed the woman.

At forty-eight years old, Ann had much more experience
at playing the sympathetic cop than her brusque partner. Upon
hearing the woman’s outcry, she stopped what she
was doing and ran across the street before Rich could make
matters worse.

“Rich, do you mind? Miss, could you step across the
street with me for a moment. I know this has to be difficult,”
Ann asked, putting an arm around her shoulder and an
umbrella over both of their heads. Ann could see the relief
pressed against her small face. She had to keep putting her
umbrella down in order to take more photographs of the
scene.

Ann took the woman across the street and into the back
of an empty ambulance to escape the rain. She found a towel
on a shelf. “Here. I’m Detective Ann Wilson. And over
there, that’s my partner, Detective Rich Stephanski. So you
know the victim? Rory? Right? Sorry that we had to meet
under these circumstances. Your name is...?”

“Rita. Rita Spencer. My boyfriend...Rory...and I, we live...we lived...right there...1265 West
Waveland, on the third level...next to the townhome
with the baseball banner in the window.”

While they sat in the dry ambulance, Ann motioned
for one of the detectives to come by. She handed him a piece
of paper with Rory’s name and address on it then told him to
run it through the computer.

“Rita, may I call you Rita? Who on earth would do this
to your boyfriend? This is not your typical mugging gone
bad. What did he do for a living? Who were his friends?
Family? I know this is difficult, but we need something to go
on,” Ann pleaded.

Rita sat shivering and crying. She shrugged her shoulders
and tried to catch her breath as her sobbing escalated into
hysteria. Ann quickly deduced that she was a college student
by the DePaul sweatshirt she was wearing.

“Rory works or...worked at the stock exchange. He
liked to occasionally go out with friends. His family lives in
Wisconsin. He has a mom, dad, and a sister. Oh God! You got
to call them! Not sure of their number...it was programmed
in his cell phone. Schanck from Madison, Wisconsin,” she
whispered, unable to hold back the tears.

“Where did Rory go yesterday? When was the last time
you saw him?” Ann asked, still faced with virtually nothing
to go on.

“Yesterday. Let me think. He went to work yesterday
morning, Thursday, and then called me around lunchtime.
He said he was going out with some co-workers for dinner
and drinks. I awoke by 5:00 a.m. and he still wasn’t home.
I left an hour later for De Paul. I’m a Grad Assistant. I was
worried, so I called him early this morning and left a voice
message.”

“Has he done this before?” Ann asked.

“Uh...Here’s his work number and cell number. And no,
it is not his normal routine. We’ve lived together for seven
months. This is the first time he never came home.” More
tears well up in Rita’s dark brown eyes.

“Were you fighting? Did he seem to have a lot on his
mind? Anything unusual?” Ann inquired.

“No. Nothing. We were happy,” Rita replied.

Dina Rae is a new author here to stay. As a former teacher, she
brings an academic element to her work. Her two novels, "Halo
of the Damned" and "The Last Degree," weave research and
suspense throughout the plots. Her short story, Be Paranoid Be
Prepared, is a prequel of sorts to “The Last Degree,” focusing on
the James Martin character. Dina also freelances for various
entertainment blogs.

Dina lives with her husband, two daughters, and two dogs
outside of Chicago. She is a Christian, an avid tennis player,
movie buff, and self-proclaimed expert on several conspiracy
theories. When she is not writing, she is reading novels from
her favorite authors Dan Brown, Anne Rice, Stephen King,
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STARR GARDINIER REINA

Despite having brought down two major crime families, Pavel's life is still filled with problems. The two bright things in his world: Teresa Mancini, his fiancée, who, on a good day, has the ability to bring him to his knees and his daughter Rita Grace, a result of a whirlwind affair before he fell in love with Teresa.

Once again, murder is the prime evil propelling Pavel into his latest case. After the murder of his partner and friend Nick Haxton’s ex-wife Brenda, Pavel leads a team to dethrone Guillermo Diaz, the leader of a drug gang believed to be responsible for Brenda’s death. Agent Danni Stone joins the local agency. Stone knows Diaz on the most intimate of levels, and Pavel views this as suspicious.

As if Pavel can take anymore, Teresa receives a substantially large check from an anonymous benefactor and insists that Pavel deal with it while she decides how to spend it. But not before she uses her iron-willed determination to find out who the benefactor is even if it means breaking into her attorney’s office looking for answers. Being thrown in jail would stop any ordinary woman, but apparently not Teresa.

“Starr Gardinier Reina as always, gives us a rip-roaring thriller. “One Major Mistake” is packed with excitement and heart-stopping adventure.”

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