



THE NOOSELETTER

CROAK & DAGGER

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER – SISTERS in CRIME

Volume XVI, Number 5 — September / October 2020

†The President's Corner†

Hi, Siblings in Crime,

Have you ever had a bad idea and ran with it anyway? Yours truly has done this more often than she cares to tell. Probably a defective gene slipped in somewhere. Considering Darwin's survival of the fittest, it's a wonder I'm still here.

My latest bad idea hit me this last April and has continued through these summer months. I'm slinging all the blame at this blasted Covid-19 virus. With my living 50 miles from Albuquerque, social distancing feels natural.

You're probably thinking *physical* social distancing. Me too, until in April I found myself *emotionally* social distancing. Not from people, just from the emotional stuff I don't like to do: specifically, promotion.

Last March, every time I erased another bookstore event, book club engagement, and panel discussion from my calendar, I slipped deeper into my non-promoting comfort zone.

We all know immediate gratification doesn't bring us long-term satisfaction, so kudos to you who kept at it: Joseph Badal, Kari Bovee, Patricia Wood, Janet Greger, Linda Triegel, Ann Zeigler, Anne Hillerman, Donnell Bell, Robert Kidera, Gloria Casale, and more. I'm tickled when I read a Facebook post, or get an email, or see a new announcement about your successes. This doesn't happen without effort.

Please, all of you, and those I forgot to list, let *The Nooseletter* know about your time in the spotlight. If you've submitted your news for this issue, then YAY for you! Brag. After all, we are your siblings. On page 5, you'll see another opportunity for you to claim fame by writing a 6-word mystery. I'm through slacking and have thought of three. Join the fun.

On alert for good news, I found some today. I visited with people-who-know at our new meeting place, Sandia Presbyterian Church (where we've not yet met). Our membership chair, Pat Wood, arranged this beautiful venue for us eight months ago. The good news: They have Croak & Dagger on their calendar for every fourth Tuesday for months into the future.

Here's the expected news: The church has started returning to normal. Their pre-school opens tomorrow. Church services are open at 40% attendance. Here's the unknown: They hope they can fully open sometime soon. I've subscribed to their newsletter where their progress toward this goal will be announced. If we meet before the end of the year (we never meet in December) I will keep you informed. If not, we'll see what surprises we're handed in 2021.

Remember, if you obey today's rules and smile, we won't notice it behind that mask. Hence, be overtly kind to everyone.

—Charlene Dietz, President

You are invited!

Sisters in Crime Desert Sleuths chapter presents our annual [WriteNow! 2020 Conference](#). This year we are virtual and FREE and everyone is welcome to attend.

The conference takes place September 11-12 and features best-selling, critically acclaimed authors **Michael Connelly, Matt Coyle, and Naomi Hirahara**, plus top-tier developmental editor **Jessica Page Morrell** and Literary Agent **Kirby Kim**.

As a bonus, you can pitch your latest opus to Literary Agent **Chip MacGregor** (MacGregor and Luedeke) and Senior Acquisitions Editor **Terri Bischoff** (Crooked Lane Books). For more, go to: <https://desertsleuths.com/write-now/conference/>.



Sisters in Crime Guppies

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

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

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



Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986.

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

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

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

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

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



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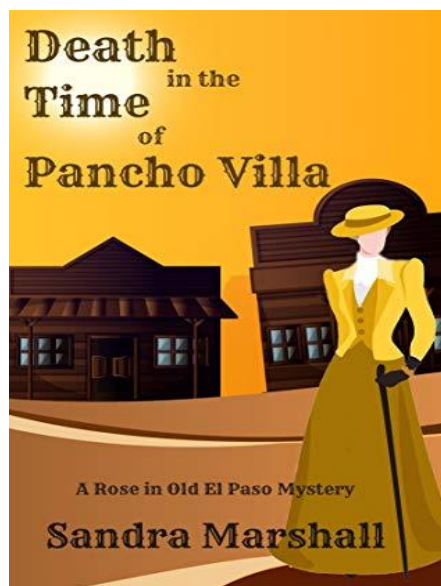
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Noose News

New Historical Mystery

C&D member Sandra Marshall's new mystery, *Death in the Time of Pancho Villa*, was released August 25 from Level Best Books. In the story, Rose Westmoreland boards a train alone, bound for the far edge of the country (El Paso) in search of her missing husband. It's 1911, on the eve of a decisive battle of the Mexican Revolution....



Time to Vote (yes, already!)

Pat Wood reports that (unbeknownst to her!) she has been nominated as a finalist in the *Alibi*'s annual "Best of Burque" poll (John Hoffsis spilled the beans!) in the Arts category as Best Author. "I can't imagine how I got in the mix to be considered," Pat says, "but I'm excited to be there." To vote for Pat, go to: https://alibi.com/index.php?scn=bob_vote

Phew! Made the Cut

Nooseletter editor Linda Triegel has just been notified that she has placed third in the Arizona Mystery Writers annual contest with her short story, "Frontier Justice." She is also a finalist in the Southwest Writers 2020 contest in two categories: historical fiction and mystery fiction. All three stories have a Southwest setting. SWW winners will be announced at the October 3 meeting.

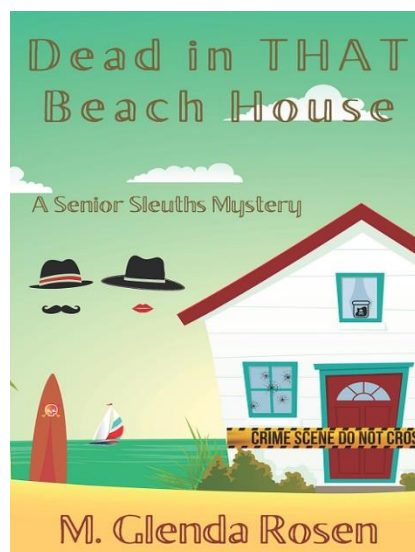
More Thrills

Two of Joseph Badal's thrillers have received Finalist honors in the International Book Awards contest: *Obsessed* (The Curtis Chronicles #2) in the Fiction: Thriller/ Adventure category (<https://amzn.to/3cM5ZiN>) and *Natural Causes* (Lassiter/Martinez Case Files #3) in the Fiction: Mystery/Suspense category (<https://amzn.to/2D2bOir>).

Also, *Obsessed* and *Dark Angel* are finalists in the Military Writers Society of America contest. AND Joe interviewed author Sheldon Siegel for a profile in the Summer issue of *Suspense* magazine.

Beach (House) Reading

Marcia Rosen's *Dead in THAT Beach House* is out in August. This is the third in her Senior Sleuths mystery series, written as M. Glenda Rosen.



What? You're Going Where?

C&Ders who took part in last year's tour of the Albuquerque Journal's headquarters at the Journal Center, including its impressive printing press, will be interested to learn that the Journal plans to move that part of its operation to Santa Fe in October, where it will share printing facilities with the Santa Fe New Mexican. An article by Kent Watz in the August 16 edition recaps the history of the Journal and reasons for the move.

Left Coast Crime News: August 26, 2020

Hot off the press: Left Coast Crime 2021 Rescheduled to 2022

Due to the uncertainty of holding large gatherings in the spring of 2021, the Left Coast Crime 2021 convention in Albuquerque, New Mexico, has been rescheduled for April 7–10, 2022 – same place, same week in April, just a year later.

The Left Coast Crime national committee is making this decision now because we cannot count on having favorable government policies and the hotel's ability to provide necessary services by next spring, as well as the willingness of our Left Coast Crime community to travel with confidence. We've been in continual conversations with hotel personnel and sought assurances from the State of New Mexico, but no one can say when conventions can resume, even in 2021.

Left Coast Crime 2022 — Southwest Sleuths — will feature the same incredible convention guests: Guests of Honor Mick Herron & Catriona McPherson, Fan Guest of Honor Kristopher Zgorski, Toastmaster Kellye Garrett, and Ghost of Honor Tony Hillerman.



2021 Lefty Awards: The Unconvention

Because of the current extraordinary circumstances, Left Coast Crime will be handling the 2021 Lefty Awards virtually to celebrate books published in 2020. Registrants for the Left Coast Crime Conventions in San Diego and Albuquerque will be able to nominate three titles in each category. Nomination forms will be emailed to all eligible LCC registrants by January 1, 2021. The Lefty Award categories are: Best Mystery Novel, Best Debut Mystery Novel, Best Humorous Mystery Novel, Best Historical Mystery Novel (The Bruce Alexander Memorial).

[More information about the Lefty Awards](#)





4th Annual RMMWA Six-Word Mystery Contest

Using only six words, write a mystery that fits one of five categories:
Cozy, Hard-Boiled/Noir, Police Procedural, Romance/Lust, and Thriller

\$6.00 to enter one category, or submit to all five for \$10

An esteemed panel of judges will select the top five entries in each category, and the RMMWA membership will vote for the winners.

Judges

Anne Hillerman, NYT Bestselling Author
Linda Landrigan, Editor at Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine
Manuel Ramos, Award-Winning Author and Social Justice Activist
Nicole Sullivan, owner of Book Bar Denver
Terrie Wolf, Literary Agent and owner of AKA Literary Management

Prizes

Winners of each category will earn a \$25 gift certificate
Overall winner will be awarded \$100 in cold, hard cash
Winners and finalists will be published in Alfred Hitchcock Mystery Magazine

Last Year's Winners

Overall Winner & Noir: 36D, 44 magnum, 20 to life. –Jeffrey Lockwood
Cozy: Prize pumpkin grower found in patch. – Jonathan Owen
Police Procedural: This ain't my first rodeo clown. – John Stith
Romance/Lust: She claimed his heart, and collected. – Nick Wilkes
Thriller: Brown eyes stay lovely in formaldehyde. – Margaret Mizushima

Dates for Submission

September 15, 2020 to October 31, 2020 at midnight. Beginning September 15, find a full list of rules and a submission form on our website: www.rmmwa.org

One mystery. Six words. Good luck!

Sisters In Crime Announces Winner of 2020 Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award

*The award benefits an emerging writer of color in the crime fiction genre
New this year: Five runners-up receive funded Sisters in Crime memberships.*

The 2020 winner of the annual Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award, presented by Sisters in Crime (SinC), is Yasmin McClinton of Columbia, SC. The winning novel-in-progress was selected by judges Rachel Howzell-Hall, Alex Segura and the 2019 winner, Jessica Martinez.

The award, which honors the memory of pioneering African-American crime fiction author Eleanor Taylor Bland with a \$2,000 grant to an emerging writer of color, was created in 2014 to support SinC's vision to serve as the voice for excellence and diversity in crime writing. The grant is intended to help the recipient complete a debut or early-career work of crime fiction. The winner may use the grant for any purpose, including developmental opportunities such as workshops, conferences and retreats; online courses; or research activities and travel. Past recipients include Maria Keelson (2014), Vera H-C Chan (2015), Stephane Dunn (2016), Jessica Ellis Laine (2017), Mia P. Manansala (2018) and Jessica Martinez (2019).



“Authors like Ms. Bland show me that women of color—writers of color—can be authors in any genre they want and really bridge gaps,” said McClinton. “I shared with my daughters that I won this award. My daughters have been with me through the hardest times of my life. And I wanted to show them that their overly protective, annoying mom has dreams from her childhood coming true, even today. And, she can be chosen for prestigious awards like the Sisters in Crime Eleanor Taylor Bland award. So, Girls, no giving up. Ever!”

For 2020, Sisters in Crime expanded the Eleanor Taylor Award to also provide funded memberships to the organization for five runners-up. These are Christina Dotson (Nashville, TN), Tony Hernandez (Phoenix, AZ), Robert Justice (Denver, CO), Raquel V. Reyes (Miami, FL) and Manju Soni (Mystic, CT).

“The Eleanor Taylor Bland Award was expanded to provide assistance to more than the single winner, so that more writers of color could benefit from the community support Sisters in Crime can give a beginning writer,” said national Sisters in Crime president Lori Rader-Day. “Because of our commitment to inclusion, we heard from some of our current members who wanted to help us make a difference.”

Scholarships for SinC membership were funded in part by generous member authors Lisa Regan and Jess Lourey. Additional gifts from Alexia Gordon and Cathy Wiley will be granted later.

Eleanor Taylor Bland (1944-2010) paved the way for fresh voices in crime fiction by showcasing complex characters that had previously been peripheral to or simply missing from the genre. *Dead Time* (1992), the first in her series of novels, introduced African-American police detective Marti MacAlister, an enduring and beloved heroine who overturned stereotypes that had been perpetuated in much of American popular culture. Bland also published several works of short crime fiction and edited the 2004 collection, *Shades of Black: Crime and Mystery Stories by African-American Authors*.

The Eleanor Taylor Bland Award was administered by Sisters in Crime national board member Stephanie Gayle.

Don't Come Any Closer

What Our Contagion Fables Are Really About

excerpted from The New Yorker; for the entire article, go to:

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/03/30/what-our-contagion-fables-are-really-about>

by Jill Lepore

When the plague came to London in 1665, Londoners lost their wits. They consulted astrologers, quacks, the Bible. They searched their bodies for signs, tokens of the disease: lumps, blisters, black spots. They begged for prophecies; they paid for predictions; they prayed; they yowled. They closed their eyes; they covered their ears. They wept in the street.

They read alarming almanacs: "Certain it is, books frightened them terribly." The government, keen to contain the panic, attempted "to suppress the Printing of such Books as terrify'd the People," according to Daniel Defoe, in *A Journal of the Plague Year*, a history that he wrote in tandem with an advice manual called *Due Preparations for the Plague*, in 1722. Defoe hoped that his books would be useful "both to us and to posterity, though we should be spared from that portion of this bitter cup." That bitter cup has come out of its cupboard.

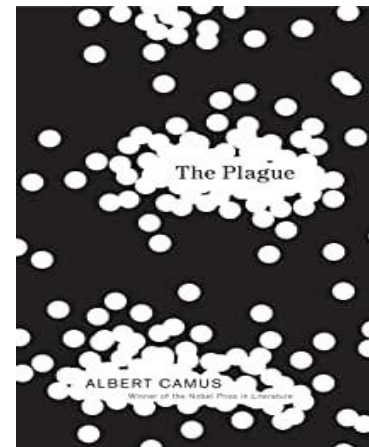
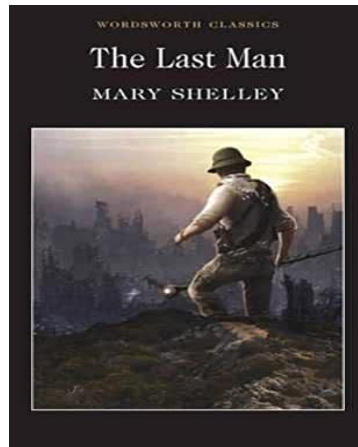
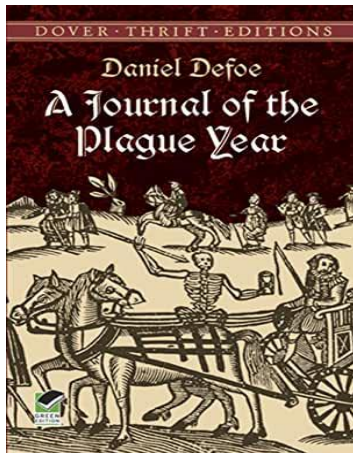
In 1665, the skittish fled to the country, and alike the wise, and those who tarried had reason for remorse: by the time they decided to leave, "there was hardly a Horse to be bought or hired in the whole City," Defoe recounted. Everyone behaved badly, though the rich behaved the worst: having failed to heed warnings to provision, they sent their poor servants out for supplies. "This Necessity of going out of our Houses to buy Provisions, was in a great Measure the Ruin of the whole City," Defoe wrote. One in five Londoners died, notwithstanding the precautions taken by merchants. The butcher refused to hand the cook a cut of meat; she had to take it off the hook herself. And he wouldn't touch her money; she had to drop her coins into a bucket of vinegar. Bear that in mind when you run out of Purell.

Reading is an infection, a burrowing into the brain: books contaminate, metaphorically, and even microbiologically. In the eighteenth century, ships' captains arriving at port pledged that they had disinfected their ships by swearing on Bibles that had been dipped in seawater. During tuberculosis scares, public libraries fumigated books by sealing them in steel vats filled with formaldehyde gas. These days, you can find out how to disinfect books on a librarians' thread on Reddit. Your best bet appears to be either denatured-alcohol swipes or kitchen disinfectant in a mist-spray bottle, although if you stick books in a little oven and heat them to a hundred and sixty degrees Fahrenheit there's a bonus: you also kill bedbugs.

The literature of contagion is vile. A plague is like a lobotomy. It cuts away the higher realms, the loftiest capacities of humanity, and leaves only the animal. "Farewell to the giant powers of man," Mary Shelley wrote in *Frankenstein*, in 1826, after a disease has ravaged the world. "Farewell to the arts,—to eloquence." Every story of epidemic is a story of illiteracy, language made powerless, man made brute. Stories about plagues run the gamut from *Oedipus Rex* to *Angels in America*. "You are the plague," a blind man tells Oedipus. "It's 1986 and there's a plague, friends younger than me are dead, and I'm only thirty," a Tony Kushner character says.

The Last Man, set in the twenty-first century, is the first major novel to imagine the extinction of the human race by way of a global pandemic. Mary Shelley published it at the age of 29, after nearly everyone she loved had died, leaving her, as she put it, "the last relic of a beloved race, my companions, extinct before me." The book's narrator begins as a poor and uneducated English shepherd. Cultivated by a nobleman and awakened to learning, he is elevated by the Enlightenment and becomes a scholar, a defender of liberty, and a citizen of the world.

Then, in the year 2092, the plague arrives, ravaging first Constantinople. Year after year, the pestilence dies away every winter (“a general and never-failing physician”), and returns every spring, more virulent, more widespread. It reaches across mountains, it spreads over oceans. The sun rises, black: a sign of doom. The nature of the pestilence remains mysterious. “It was called an epidemic. But the grand question was still unsettled of how this epidemic was generated and increased.”



If, in *Frankenstein*, Shelley imagined the creation of a man by the stitching together of body parts, in *The Last Man* she imagined the dismemberment of civilization. Death by death, country by country, the human race descends, rung by rung, down a ladder it had once built, and climbed. As the pestilence lays waste to the planet, those few who survive are reduced to warring tribes, until only one man, our narrator, is left, shepherd once more. Wandering amid the ruins of Rome, he enters the home of a writer and finds a manuscript: “It contained a learned disquisition on the Italian language.” The last book is a study of language, humanity’s first adornment. And what does our narrator do, alone in the world? “I also will write a book, I cried—for whom to read?” He calls it “The History of the Last Man,” and dedicates it to the dead. It will have no readers. Except, of course, the readers of Shelley’s book.

The great dream of the Enlightenment was progress; the great dread of epidemic is regress. But in American literature such destruction often comes with a democratic twist: contagion is the last leveller. Edgar Allan Poe’s 1842 tale, “The Masque of the Red Death,” is set in a medieval world plagued by a contagious disease that kills nearly instantly. “There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleeding at the pores, with dissolution,” Poe wrote. A haughty prince and his noblemen and women retire “to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys,” where they live in depraved luxury until, one night, at a masked ball, a figure arrives wearing a mask “made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have difficulty in detecting the cheat.” The visitor is the Red Death itself. Everyone in the abbey dies that night. The nobility cannot escape what the poor must endure.

Poe’s red death becomes a pandemic in Jack London’s novel *The Scarlet Plague*, serialized in 1912. The plague had come in the year 2013, and wiped out nearly everyone, the high and the low, the powerful nations and the powerless, in all corners of the globe, and left the survivors equal in their wretchedness, and statelessness. One of the handful of survivors had been a scholar at the University of California, Berkeley, a professor of English literature. When the disease hit, he hid out in the chemistry building, and turned out to be immune to the virulence. For years, he lived alone in an old hotel at Yosemite, availing himself of its stores of canned food, until, emerging, he joined a tiny band—the Chauffeurs, led by a brute who had once been a chauffeur—and even found a wife.

When the novel opens, in the year 2073, the professor is a very old man, a shepherd, dressed in animal hide and living like an animal. He tells the story of the scarlet plague to his grandsons, boys who “spoke in monosyllables and short jerky sentences that was more a gibberish than a language,” but who are very handy with a bow and arrow. Their primitivism distresses the professor, who sighs, as he looks out across what was once San Francisco: “Where four million people disported themselves, the wild wolves roam to-day, and the savage progeny of our loins, with prehistoric weapons, defend themselves against the fanged despoilers. Think of it! And all because of the Scarlet Death.”

The Scarlet Plague, published right before the Great War, also contains a warning about the cost of world war, the cost, even, of living in a world. “Long and long and long ago, when there were only a few men in the world, there were few diseases,” the professor explains. “But as men increased and lived closely together in great cities and civilizations, new diseases arose, new kinds of germs entered their bodies. Thus were countless millions and billions of human beings killed. And the more thickly men packed together, the more terrible were the new diseases that came to be.”

The structure of the modern plague novel, all the way to Stephen King’s *The Stand* and beyond, is a series of variations on “A Journal of the Plague Year” (a story set within the walls of a quarantine) and “The Last Man” (a story set among a ragged band of survivors). Within those two structures, though, the scope for storytelling is vast, and so is the scope for moralism, historical argument, and philosophical reflection. Every plague novel is a parable.

Albert Camus once defined the novel as the place where the human being is abandoned to other human beings. The plague novel is the place where all human beings abandon all other human beings. Unlike other species of apocalyptic fiction, where the enemy can be chemicals or volcanoes or earthquakes or alien invaders, the enemy here is other humans: the touch of other humans, the breath of other humans, and, very often—in the competition for diminishing resources—the mere existence of other humans.

Camus, in his 1947 novel, “The Plague,” sets the story within the walls of a quarantined French-Algerian town during the Second World War (the year is given as “194-”). With all its omens, prophecies, and scapegoats, it might as well have been London in 1665. Dr. Bernard Rieux, along with everyone else, at first fails to read the signs. Rats come out from cellars and die on the streets, in heaps. And yet neither the doctor nor anyone else does anything at all, until after the first human death, of a concierge. Then remorse dawns: “Reviewing that first phase in the light of subsequent events, our townsfolk realized that they had never dreamed it possible that our little town should be chosen out for the scene of such grotesque happenings...”

The plague is, of course, the virus of Fascism. No one in the town gives much thought to the rats until it’s too late—even though the plague “rules out any future, cancels journeys, silences the exchange of views”—and few pay sufficient attention to the rats even after it’s too late. This is their folly: “They fancied themselves free, and no one will ever be free so long as there are pestilences.”

“The Plague” does not chronicle a pandemic, in the sense that the plague never escapes the town, and yet Camus’s plague is a plague without end. But Rieux learns, from reading history, that there really is only one plague, across all of human history, travelling from place to place, through the passage of time...” Next on the list? Auschwitz, Dachau, Buchenwald. The plague is man.

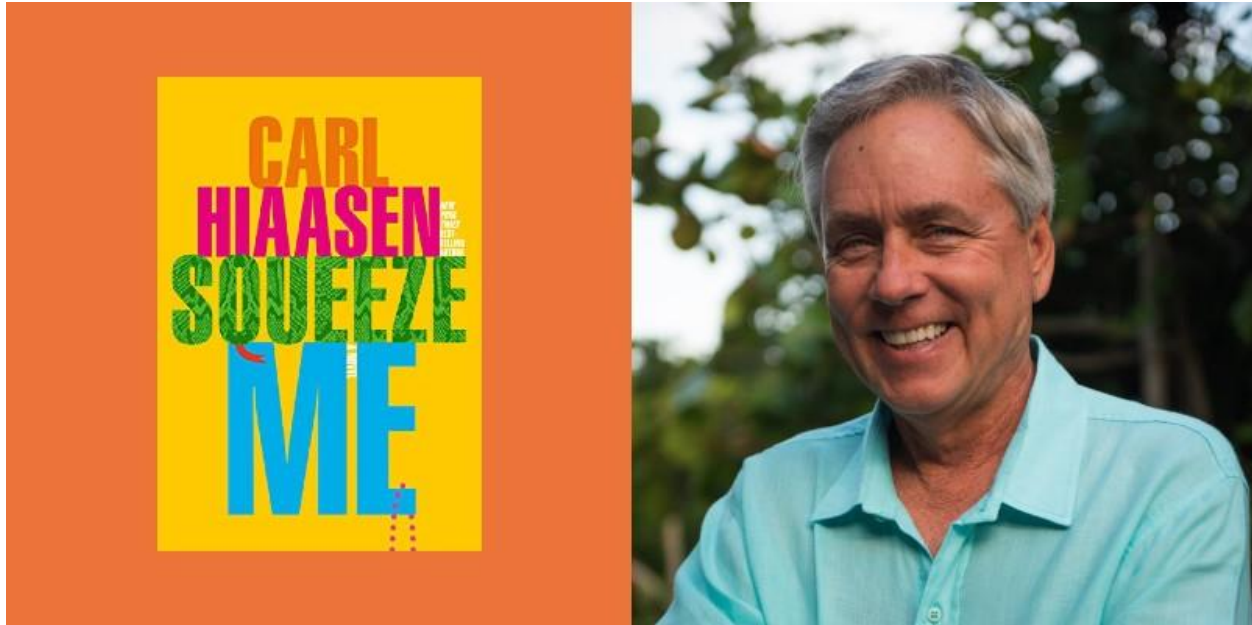
Jill Lepore is a staff writer at The New Yorker and a professor of history at Harvard University. Later this year, she will publish her fourteenth book, “If Then: How the Simulmatics Corporation Invented the Future.” [Ed note: a shorter version of the Simulmatics story appears in the New Yorker’s August 3 edition—fascinating!]

Carl Hiaasen on Palm Beach, Slithery Characters, and Florida Crime

by Dwyer Murphy

Excerpted from the Crime Reads website. For more, go to:

<https://crimereads.com/carl-hiaasen-on-palm-beach-slithery-characters-and-florida-crime-fiction/>



On reflection, it seems like Carl Hiaasen and the Palm Beach charity set have been circling one another for some time. Hiaasen is, after all, the crime fiction world’s foremost satirist, and Palm Beach, the uber-wealthy Florida enclave, has revealed itself in recent years as hopelessly, ridiculously corrupt, and that’s before you factor in the current President’s ties there.

So with all that in mind, *Squeeze Me* (Knopf, 2020), Hiaasen’s newest book, is something of an event. The novel begins, appropriately enough, with a charity ball, where one of the doyennes turns up dead. Meanwhile—this is a Hiaasen novel, there’s always a meanwhile—Palm Beach is on the cusp of a real invasion, this one from pythons, and they’re hungry. Anyone who’s has the pleasure of reading Hiaasen before knows that these disparate events will soon entangle in uproarious fashion, with a few dozen more or less dangerous and corrupt figures skewered along the way. I caught up with Hiaasen to discuss Florida corruption, the Palm Beach charity circuit, and finding a place for humor in dark times.

Dwyer Murphy: For those readers who may not be familiar, is there an anecdote you can share that captures the essence of the strange and highly particular world that is Palm Beach, Florida?

Carl Hiaasen: Palm Beach is one of the few places left in America where you can still drive around in a Rolls Royce convertible and not get laughed at. All you need to know about the utter weirdness of the island is that both Rush Limbaugh and Howard Stern have homes there. Also, Jeffrey Epstein moved into town and nobody asked where he got his money, or why he “invited” all those extremely young women to his parties.

Murphy: The current President figures into the novel pretty prominently. Did you find he was an easy character to fit into the Hiaasen rogues' gallery or was it a struggle to portray him properly?

Hiaasen: There's a character in the novel that, I've been told, somewhat resembles the current President, and an estate that, I've been told, resembles Mar-a-Lago. To use Donald Trump himself as a character would have been challenging because his real-life behavior transcends satire. Still, I admit it was impossible to resist writing some scenes that were inspired by Trump's own true words, deeds, and grooming habits. And let's not forget that creepy fake tan....

Murphy: So are invasive species a big problem in Florida? Where do they rank among the state's issues to tackle?

Hiaasen: Florida is crawling with invasive species, and the huge Burmese pythons featured in *Squeeze Me* are at the top of the most-dangerous list. Their abundance—and boundless appetite—are accurately depicted in the novel. I've gone on a couple of python hunts but had no luck finding them, though friends of mine have captured some monsters. The snakes are steadily moving north from the Everglades and, trust me, it's only a matter of time before some of them show up at Mar-a-Lago—which I would pay big money to see, by the way.

Murphy: Any trepidations wading into the political arena for this one? Was there any particular event that prompted you to do it?

Hiaasen: Anyone who reads my newspaper columns knows I wade with a machete into the political arena every week. Most of the novels I've written—even the kids' books—deal as a subtext with issues like crimes against the environment and political corruption. The big difference in *Squeeze Me* is the size (literally) and the unchained ego of this particular gasbag, who happens to be the sitting President with a mansion in Palm Beach. He's definitely not as good at spelling as the other politician-characters that have made appearances in my past novels.

Murphy: Have you spent much time in the charity ball circuit? It gets a pretty good skewering in *Squeeze Me*.

Hiaasen: Not surprisingly, I don't get invited to many fancy charity balls. Most journalists don't. Still, I've been to enough of these events to have absorbed the high points of the scene, and of the crowd. Years ago, I went to a fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago and accidentally met Trump. He was trying to hit on my then-wife. She and I laughed about it later, never imagining the guy would be in the White House some day. Don't get me wrong—these charity events do raise lots of money for very good causes, but they also cost a ridiculous fortune to stage.

Murphy: You've had an impressive career bringing humor into tales of corruption and crime. Any advice for readers struggling to maintain some levity in the given moment?

Hiaasen: For me, writing funny novels has always been a form of personal psychotherapy. I'm half-Norwegian and we're cursed with a certain inner gloom, even in the best of times. These days—under the grim weight of the pandemic and nationwide social unrest—I find myself almost frantically looking for something that will make me laugh, or even just smile. My hope is that this novel gives folks somewhere to turn for a laugh, in between Covid bulletins from the CDC.

Sharing the Web

Now that you C&Ders are social distancing, this may be the time to learn from others. The Nooseletter has been promoting books and authors you may not have heard of, but what about you writers? Now's the time to learn more about your craft! Here are two helpful websites, contributed by Charlene Dietz:

1. Career Authors is a great little group of agents and authors who write to inform about writing, publishing, and selling: <https://careerauthors.com/> All their blogs are great, but this one caught my attention: <https://careerauthors.com/get-better-answers/>

When I first came to work at *Writer's Digest*, as an editorial assistant fresh out of college, I had a boss who didn't mince words. I learned this right away when I asked a question in a staff meeting and she swiftly answered, "Look it up," and kept right on talking.

I was chagrined, of course... until I realized this reply was not reserved for me as the newcomer. My coworkers had all suffered their fair share of *look it ups* and, though the rebuke might seem a bit harsh in the moment, the more we heard it, the more we took it to heart. Because never once did she direct us to look up an answer that could not be easily found. When our meetings were reserved for necessary discussion, debate, and collaboration, everyone came more prepared, less time was wasted, and the outcomes were far more productive—and creative.

2. Writers Unboxed is another site I enjoy: <https://writerunboxed.com/about/>. Bet you will too. **Writer Unboxed** is dedicated to publishing empowering, positive, and provocative ideas about the craft and business of fiction. WU is known for its robust comment section, where the conversation further evolves with the input of community members. Here is the first part of a timely recent article that resonated with me:

As writers, one of our sacred tasks is to observe, to pay attention to what's happening around us. Some of us journal or keep diaries, but that's not the only way to observe. We can also just stay present, be here now.

Our now is not particularly pleasant. It's weird and uncomfortable and unpredictable. Are we nearly through this whole mess, or will it resurge in the fall? What's going to happen to us politically? Socially? As a country with a national identity?

A writer's sacred task is to observe:



Things Book Lovers Do

Read several books at one time...



©Adrienne Hedger

...while also having a stack of books to read next...



HedgerHumor.com

...and keeping a running list of even MORE books you want.



Feel happy when you remember you get to read your book later.



Feel sad and lost when you finish a great book.



Pause to appreciate a beautifully written sentence.



See the cover of an old book and be transported back to your youth.



Find joy and comfort in rereading a favorite book.



Walk into a library or bookstore and say...



2020 MEETING DATES

NOTE: Due to the current pandemic, all meetings are cancelled until further notice.

Member Coordinator Pat Wood will continue to update you by email, And your Nooseletter will be sent every two months as usual.

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

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

Summary of Findings

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

Nooseletter Submissions†

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

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

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

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

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

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Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?

\$20/year brings mystery to your life! The New Mexico **Croak & Dagger** chapter welcomes mystery fans who want to enjoy felonious fun, absolutely criminal companionship, and sensational speakers.

Benefits of membership in the **Croak & Dagger** chapter include a subscription to our *Nooseletter*, close contact with local mystery writers, and fun events with other mystery fans. Come hear our next program speaker and meet the gang. We promise to bring mayhem and murder into your life!

Croak & Dagger members must also be members of the national organization of Sisters in Crime. For information on joining SinC, go to <http://www.sistersincrime.org>. For information about your local chapter, contact our membership chair at pwood73@comcast.net