

THE NOOSELETTER



CROAK & DAGGER NEW MEXICO CHAPTER – SISTERS in CRIME

Volume XVII, Number 3 — May / June 2021

†The President's Corner†

Happy Sunny Days, Siblings!

Many of you write books with strong protagonists who struggle to go it alone, autonomous learners who don't rely on others to untangle themselves from difficult situations. These personality types tackle the impossible, striving to make it through life without help.

We real-live humans have independence instilled in our genes. Watch any two-year-old's *I can do this myself* attitude. If parents intervene, tantrums follow. We've all, as toddlers, charged forth with this type of spirit. Thankfully, through the years most children mellow and learn the pleasures of teamwork.

We've joined Sisters in Crime, as well as Croak & Dagger, because there's value in knowing how others do what we strive to do. Years ago a C&D member gave me lots of moral support. You know him because he often clicks "like" on your or my events, book announcements, or whatever pops up on social media. As others have, I've found him to be most approachable for expert advice and guidance. This member understands that book writing, promoting, and selling do not happen in a vacuum. He cheers us on because when one of us succeeds, we all do. As members of C&D, we learn from our colleagues, we help promote members' work, and we care about each other.

SouthWest Writers has asked C&D to conduct a Zoom Mystery Month. Each Saturday in June from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m., we'll discuss mystery writing—and we need you! If you're a published author, we invite you to come up with a 3- to 5-minute writing tip. You might prepare two of these just in case we end up with a little extra time. Please let Bob Kidera or me know so we can put you on the schedule to share your *Tips from Successful Mystery Writers*.

C&D now has your books and covers in the Moriarty Library's Locked-Room display. Your books don't magically appear there. Ann Zeigler sorts, boxes, stores, and transports them to the scheduled library. Then members help arrange the display. Let Ann know if you can help.

Las Cruces member Donnell Bell created our fourth Monday 6:30 Zoom. She thought this would be a benefit to our chapter and it has. We've talked with some phenomenal presenters, with more scheduled.



Photo courtesy of Kari Bovée

A no-cost way to support your fellow C&D members requires only mindfulness. If you see members recognized for something on social media take a moment to "like" it or leave a comment. If you read a member's books, leave a review on Goodreads and copy it to Amazon. You can say something as simple as "I enjoyed the story."

I used to marvel at those who could ask for a helping hand without hesitation. Guess it's taken me a long time to shed my two-year old persona.

Here's to enjoying the beauty of spring,

—Charlene Dietz, President

The Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award Is Open

The Eleanor Taylor Bland Crime Fiction Writers of Color Award is an annual grant of \$2,000 for an emerging writer of color. Submissions are open through May 15.

This grant is intended to support the recipient in crime fiction writing and career development activities. The grantee may choose to use the grant for activities that include workshops, seminars, conferences, and retreats, online courses, and research activities required for completion of the work.

An unpublished writer is preferred; however, publication of several pieces of short fiction and/or up to two self-published or traditionally published books will not disqualify an applicant. Log on to the SinC website for more information.



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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Noose News

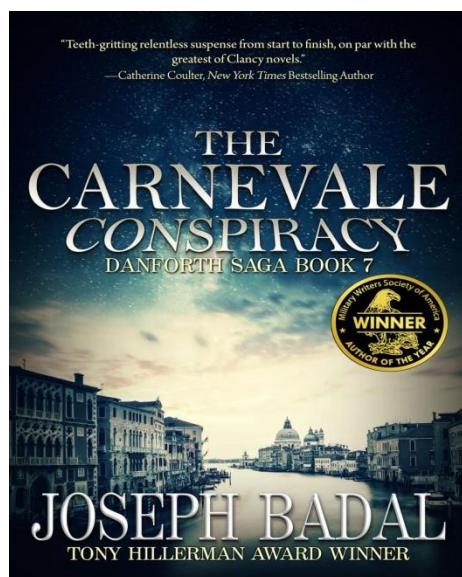
Sneak preview of Joe's latest

Joseph Badal was featured on a recent episode of *Sneak Preview*, a program highlighting forthcoming works by New Mexico authors.

Joe's 7th book in the Danforth Saga, *The Carnevale Conspiracy*, will be released July 20. This story will take you on an action-packed trip to Venice, Italy. Click

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tKucBP3lhF0> to watch Joe's reading.

Sneak Preview is produced by New Mexico Writers, a not-for-profit organization committed to supporting and connecting the literary community in the Land of Enchantment. Authors, poets, playwrights, and others have agreed to share forthcoming work yet-to-be published. In other words, a "sneak preview."



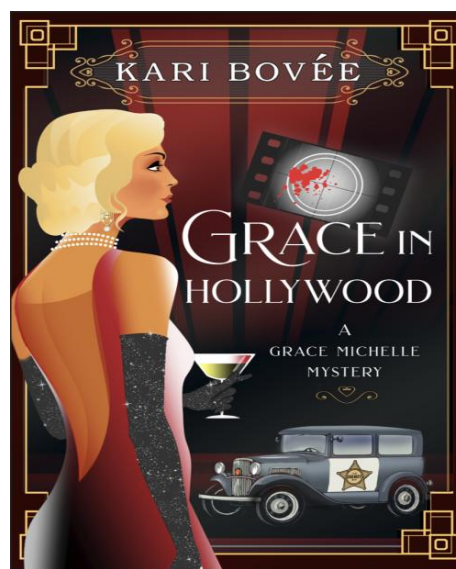
All that glitters...

... is sometimes blood. It's Hollywood, 1924, in Kari Bovée's second Grace Michelle mystery, now available to readers. Promoted to lead costume designer of a star-studded film, Grace Michelle should be on top of the world.

But between her husband's debt, her sister's recent death, and the troubled teenaged girl she's fostering, she's struggling to please everyone and still keep a smile on her face. And when a Tinseltown shindig turns deadly, Grace

is horrified to discover her young charge unconscious next to the director's grisly corpse.

Find out more about Grace and Kari's other books on her website at [https:// www.Karibovee.com](https://www.Karibovee.com). Subscribe to her newsletter to learn about upcoming releases and events.



Virtual Event in the Desert

The Desert Sleuths of SinC presents their annual [WriteNow! 2021. Conference](https://www.writenow2021.com). This year the event is virtual and FREE and everyone is welcome to attend.

The conference takes place September 11-12 and features critically acclaimed authors **Michael Connelly**, **Matt Coyle**, and **Naomi Hirahara**, plus 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) or senior acquisitions editor **Terri Bischoff** (Crooked Lane Books). For more, go to: <https://desertsleuths.com/write-now/conference/>.

Anne does it again!

We've just heard, in case you hadn't, that Anne Hillerman's new novel, *Stargazer* (see March Nooseletter) made the New York Times best-seller list. (#10 in print and #7 on Print / EBooks combined). Congrats, Anne!

In case you didn't get that....

Sarah Baker, Robert Kidera, and Charlene Dietz have been working on the design and format for the C&D June-Is-Mystery-Month Saturday hosted by SWW.

Each Saturday from 12:30 to 2:30 C&D will dispel the mysteries of Mystery Writing. Here's a sketch of what's on deck:

June 5th *The Art of Screenwriting* (SWW will have their morning session on Screenwriting and requested we follow suit in the afternoon with the same.)

June 12th *Mystery Genres and Subgenres*

June 19th *Tips from Successful Mystery and Thriller Writers*

June 26th *The Mystery Market, Today and Tomorrow*

See Page 1 for how you can take part!

GLA on the march:

Libraries are starting to come out of hibernation, Ann Zeigler reminds us. Many of us benefit with our book covers being on the posters and shown in these displays.

Members will be getting an e-mail appeal about the details, particularly getting help setting up the displays—especially from those of you who have book covers on display!

Even if you can't help out of town, but are willing to do an in-Albuquerque setup, please let Ann put you on her helper list.

Lefties announced

The 2021 Lefty Awards were presented virtually on April 10, 2021. Congratulations to the winners and all the nominees (see the March Nooseletter for a list of nominees).

Best Humorous Mystery Novel: Ellen

Byron, *Murder in the Bayou Boneyard* (Crooked Lane Books)

Best Historical Mystery Novel: Catriona

McPherson, *The Turning Tide* (Quercus)

Best Debut Mystery Novel: David Heska Wanbli

Weiden, *Winter Counts* (Ecco)

Best Mystery Novel (not in other categories):

Louise Penny, *All the Devils Are Here* (Minotaur Books)

Thanks, Charlene! (who knew?)

Our on-the-ball chapter president, Charlene Dietz, keeps an eye out for any benefit SinC nationally sees fit to bestow on us. Recently, she filled out a chapter survey explaining what we've been up to, and as a result Croak & Dagger has been awarded a \$400 operating grant for this year. This will be used for some of our library support services. However, there are no requirements except to use it for operations. We'll keep you posted.



SinC-Up!

Have you checked out the [SinC-Up videos](#) on our YouTube channel? Here are some of the most recent entries:

Award-winning author **Josie Brown**, offers a cool lesson on nurturing the readers on your email list to keep them interested in your next book launch: <https://youtu.be/PNfFo61uLIE>.

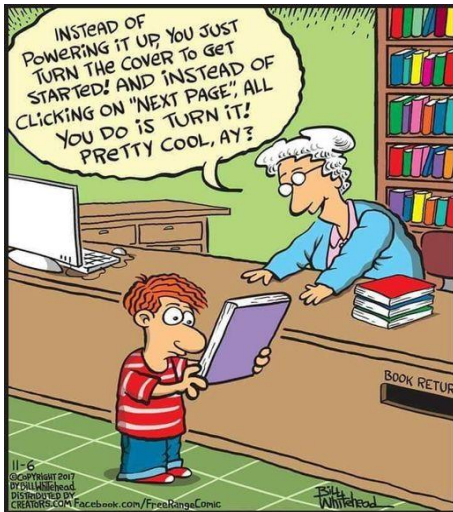
Here's a tip on getting ready to write with author Isabella Maldonado who recently had her book, *Cipher*, optioned for a movie: https://youtu.be/CRdRegbWx_Q.

USA Today Best Selling author, **Sally J. Smith** has advice on using a left turn in your plot. <https://youtu.be/04OU0GRxt3g>.

Award-winning author **Merle McAnn** offers a tip on antecedents - getting your pronouns right so you don't confuse your reader. <https://youtu.be/nDB647FNwAc>.

Freelance editor, **Lourdes Venard** has a great SIN-C-Up! tip on working with an editor. SinC members can also hear more from Lourdes in a recent webinar where Lourdes was on a panel with book coaches and editors about the process. It's in the webinar archives on the SinC website: <https://youtu.be/end5RLuhEoA>.

There are more than 30 webinars about promotion, craft, the business of writing, and subject matter in the webinar library.



Do you have a book coming out in 2021?

As part of SinC's resources for libraries and bookstores, we are compiling a list of our members' books. The information you provide will be downloaded as a spreadsheet that will be available on our website.

We'll also do an "upcoming releases" version that we'll send out with our *We Love Bookstores* and *We Love Libraries* monthly newsletters.

Note: in order to be able to use the form, you'll need to be a professional member of SinC. If you would like to upgrade, contact admin@sistersincrime.org.

Book Drive for Essential Workers

Sunni Battin, a former librarian and current doctoral student, is starting a one-woman, month-long book drive for essential workers in the Kansas City area: "However many autographed books I receive throughout May, I will take to not only some grocery stores in the KC area for workers, but to other service industries like restaurants, hospital or clinic workers and so on. ...Who doesn't want to escape in a good book or learn something?"

Sunni contacted Sara Paretsky, and Sara asked to share the news with SinC Siblings, as "a nice way for Sisters to contribute to morale as the pandemic continues to wear us down."

Siblings interested in participating, please send signed books to: Sunni Battin, 9109 Washington St., Kansas City, MO 64114.

Please contact Sunni directly via bethebliss@outlook.com for more information. Sunni's book drive lasts for the month of May. "Authors may also write a sealed note that can be delivered with the autographed book if they choose.

Please note: This is not a Sisters in Crime initiative.)

Last but not least...

Julie Hennrikus, the new Executive Director of SinC, tells us that "we've launched a podcast!" *The Sisters in Crime Writers' Podcast* features conversations with members about their writing, and publishing, journeys. [The information about the podcast is available here.](#) Apple is still working on getting it published, but it's available in other places like Spotify, Google, Amazon and Stitcher, or via our website. New episodes will be released weekly.

Have you signed up for next week's [webinar about optimizing your Amazon author page](#)? These business webinars always have great advice for anyone, and attending them live means that you can ask questions.

"I'm going to be hosting the June Write-In with past SinC president Sherry Harris. We'll have a discussion about writing a series before we all write together. [Sign up here.](#)

Interested in Volunteering for SinC?

National is currently recruiting for the 2022 Sisters in Crime National board. Are you interested in serving?

There are other opportunities as well. Go to: <https://www.sistersincrime.org/> and enter "Volunteer" in the search box.

Feeling Blah?

by Marcia Rosen

“At first, I didn’t recognize the symptoms that we all had in common. Friends mentioned that they were having trouble concentrating. Colleagues reported that even with vaccines on the horizon, they weren’t excited about 2021. A family member was staying up late to watch “National Treasure” again even though she knows the movie by heart. And instead of bouncing out of bed at 6 a.m., I was lying there until 7, playing Words with Friends.

“It wasn’t burnout — we still had energy. It wasn’t depression — we didn’t feel hopeless. We just felt somewhat joyless and aimless. It turns out there’s a name for that: Languishing.”

Sound familiar?

According to an April 19 article in The New York Times by Adam Grant (*original title: “There’s a Name for the Blah You’re Feeling: It’s Called Languishing”*). For more, go to: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/19/well/mind/covid-mental-health-languishing.html>), “Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness. It feels as if you’re muddling through your days, looking at your life through a foggy windshield.”

I recognized myself immediately in this picture. I’ve looked at my writing projects as if they are complete strangers. And I’ve become consumed with watching Acorn Mysteries. Languishing!

“Languishing is. . . the void between depression and flourishing — the absence of well-being . . . You’re not functioning at full capacity. Languishing dulls your motivation, disrupts your ability to focus, and triples the odds that you’ll cut back on work.

“We still have a lot to learn about what causes languishing and how to cure it, but naming it might be a first step . . . into what has been a blurry experience. It could remind us that we aren’t alone: languishing is common and shared.”

In the beginning of the pandemic, I likened many of the feelings I saw in clients to symptoms of grieving—sadness, depression, anxiety, fear, forgetfulness, losing contact with family and friends, unable to visit the sick and dying, unable to go to weddings or funerals, loss of physical contact—hugging, holding, loss of doing the things that gave us something to look forward.

For a year, we adjusted to many of these changes, and now I am hearing my clients say, “I have no motivation,” or “I renewed my gym membership but am not going,” and “I have such gratitude because I am healthy, I am financially very secure, but I feel no joy.” These are examples of Languishing.

Now what I’m starting to hear is another “adjustment disorder.” Some of my more severely traumatized clients have agoraphobia. They can’t go out. They are afraid of the world. For the healthier clients, I hear “How do I start? Where can I go safely? I would like to travel but don’t know where to go, and it is too complicated to figure out. How do we now make yet another change?”

According to Karen Christensen, NYC Grief Counselor and Psychotherapist, “Change is difficult for most of us. If we have someone to help us navigate all these different, difficult emotions, we can move through this extremely difficult time. Reaching out for support is the sign of health and not weakness. Compassion for self is also so important. This helps us process the experience without blame or guilt. People are all so hard on themselves!”

Okay, C&D members. I admit it. I’ve been languishing. The Times article says there is hope. There is an antidote for it. Read the full article. In the meantime I’m hanging on to my chocolate and binging on *Midsomer Murders*!

“Languishing is not merely in our heads — it’s in our circumstances. . . ‘Not depressed’ doesn’t mean you’re not struggling. ‘Not burned out’ doesn’t mean you’re fired up.”

I’m so relieved to know I’m not depressed, burned out or even close to being over the edge—although there are days I’ve been a bit too close. I often use humor, family and friendships—and of course writing—to intervene. And you?

(Marcia Rosen is a member of Croak & Dagger as well as author of the *Senior Sleuths* series and nonfiction titles such as *The Woman’s Business Therapist*.)

Mystery Genres and Sub-genres

Award-winning author Lois Winston was our April 26 Zoom presenter. Lois writes mystery, romance, romantic suspense, chick lit, women’s fiction, children’s chapter books, and nonfiction under her own name and her Emma Carlyle pen name. In a former life, she was a literary agent renowned for teaching workshops about craft. If you are writing a mystery series, you can take the information she gave us in this presentation to the bank.

Here are her definitions of the various subcategories of mystery (for more about her books, go to her website, www.loiswinston.com):

Cozy (aka Traditional) Mysteries • Crimes solved by non-law enforcement individual, often working with a “sidekick” • Usually adult sleuths but not always • Protagonist will often own a pet • Mostly take place in small towns and center on place of business (library, bakery, craft shop, beauty salon, etc.) • Often include recipes or craft projects • Crime and all violence happen “off-stage” • No graphic violence • No explicit sex, bedroom door firmly shut • No foul language • No harm ever done to children or pets • Can be contemporary, historical, or paranormal • Often humorous with pun-worthy titles.

Amateur Sleuth Mysteries • Similar to cozy mysteries but not as restrictive • Plots often darker with some violence on the page • Can take place in major cities in U.S. and abroad • Rather than predominantly shop owners, protagonists are usually professionals such as medical personnel, lawyers, college professors, etc. • May be some foul language when appropriate to a specific character and scene • Although there is no explicit sex, there may be romantic or suggestive scenes.

Detective Mysteries

Soft-boiled • Stories that contain some violence and profanity but are not as graphic as hardboiled mysteries • Protagonist is often a female detective.

Hard-boiled • Darker stories that contain violence, graphic descriptions, and/or profanity • Protagonist is generally a male detective • Vivid, often sordid urban settings.

Police Procedurals • Stories that involve the investigation of a crime by the police • Story emphasizes the investigative procedures of an officer or police department.

Noir • The protagonist isn't a detective but a suspect and/or perpetrator of a crime • Protagonists are seriously flawed with questionable morals • Stories about losers driven by greed, lust, or jealousy • Protagonist sucked into downward spiral he can't escape.

Thrillers and Techno-thrillers • More action/adventure in nature than suspense • Focus on the "how" of the story • Concern larger problems that impact greater numbers of people (entire city, country, world) • Plot focuses on protagonist trying to prevent something terrible from happening • Often protagonist must overcome overwhelming odds, either internal or external or both • Techno-thrillers are a hybrid that pulls in elements from science fiction, medicine, spy novels, action-adventure, and/or war novels.

Suspense • Stories deal more with the psychology behind why the antagonist committed the crime, why he chose his victims, and why the protagonist cares enough to get involved in bringing him down • Crime generally impacts a small group of people such as a family, business, or town • Often involves murder or kidnapping • Sometimes the reader knows "whodunit" because the antagonist is a point of view character.

(© 2020 Lois Winston, www.loiswinston.com)

Don't miss **Killer Nashville's 15th Annual Writers' Conference** taking place in Franklin, Tennessee, **August 19th 22**. This year's guests of honor at the in-person event (with safety protocols in place) are bestselling authors Walter Mosley, Lisa Black, and J.T. Ellison. Learn, network, meet agents & editors, and mingle with forensic experts. Also, submit your book written in 2020 to Killer Nashville's 2021 Silver Falchion Award! Killer Nashville is the premier forum for all genres incorporating mystery, thriller, or suspense elements. Early bird pricing through **May 15th**. Visit www.killernashville.com.

The Killer Nashville International Writers' Conference was created in 2006 by author/filmmaker Clay Stafford in an effort to bring together forensic experts, writers, and fans of crime and thriller literature. Our objective is simple: to educate and empower aspiring and established writers, and connect them with other industry professionals. We pride ourselves on our intense, intimate [workshops and panels](#), and on our close-knit community of writers.

Killer Nashville features 60+ panels & workshops, nine [breakout sessions](#) for intense smaller group interaction, an authors' bar (free for hotel guests), a [moonshine and wine tasting](#), [agent/editor roundtable](#) pitch sessions, a [mock crime scene](#) designed by special agents and other law enforcement professionals, cocktail receptions, the [Killer Nashville Awards Dinner](#), film previews, live music performances and—of course—all the great activities one can enjoy in downtown Nashville.

In Good Taste: Marilyn Stasio on a Lifetime of Book Reviews

by [Erica Wright](#) (April 8, 2021)

Excerpted from: <https://crimereads.com/in-good-taste-marilyn-stasio-on-a-lifetime-of-book-reviews/>



(photograph: James Estrin/The New York Times)

The legendary critic talks about how she got her start, how crime fiction got taken seriously, and what she's reading now.

When I spoke with the legendary Marilyn Stasio, she planned to spend her afternoon working on a review of Femi Kayode's debut novel Lightseekers. Her editor wanted to know why she chose that particular book. "Well," she said, "I've never been to Nigeria." At 81, Stasio still wants to be surprised, though getting one over on someone who reads more than 150 books a year is no easy feat.

Erica Wright: You grew up outside of Boston, a city with its fair share of crime novelists. Were you drawn to this genre at an early age?

Marilyn Stasio: I was always a morbid kid. That's the best way I can put it. I don't think I was interested in real-life murders, but I remember the first thing that stuck with me. My family had a whole stack of encyclopedias. There was a painting of the two little princes in the tower. They were cherubic boys, holding hands. They both had silken, golden blonde hair and these black velvet outfits. I absolutely fell in love with that, especially because the entry said that their uncle, Richard III, had them murdered. From the time I was very young and could barely read, I decided that beauty and murder were connected. I don't remember being taken with any true crimes. I was always reading.

EW: I read that you were a dramaturg, so I'm curious about your interest in theater. Is that what brought you to New York City?

MS: I was involved with theater long before I did anything with books. My first job was as one of these lowly editors who used to work in New York. I worked for a weekly magazine called *Cue*. It was like *New York Magazine*. They sort of ripped us off. Anyway, the editor would ask me once in a while to cover a show. When the magazine sold, the new editor decided I could be the theater critic.

EW: It sounds like you started reviewing plays before books.

MS: I started reviewing plays long before I started reviewing books. My late husband and I were friendly with [theater critic] John Lahr. He and his wife were visiting our little cottage. I was out on the porch, and everybody else was talking in force. I had my head in a book. After they asked me three times to contribute to the conversation, John said, "You've always got your head in mysteries. Do you read anything else?" I said, "No, not really. What else is there?" He told me that I should review them. And I thought, what a good idea. So I started my own syndicate. This was so long ago that a person could do that. I wrote to all of the book editors I could think of. *The Philadelphia Inquiry*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*. How would you like to have a monthly column called "Mystery Alley," and I would review nothing but mysteries?

Back then mysteries were really not considered artsy. They were like comic books. The editors all said yes, though. I was cheap, and I established relationships with enough papers to make it worthwhile. I kept them supplied, and I really enjoyed it. Those were the days when we had to type everything out and send copies off by mail, but I'd get a kick out of seeing my column in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*.

I was talking to the book editor at *The Philadelphia Inquirer* one day, finding out what she wanted me to review, and she said, "Well, I won't be here anymore, Marilyn, because I'm the new book editor of *The New York Times*." I said, "How wonderful, but I'll miss you." And she said, "You're coming with me." The columns started appearing shortly after she got there.

EW: You bring up an interesting point about how the reputation of mysteries has changed.

MS: Oh, absolutely. You're quite right about. I wonder who did it? I haven't really given it any thought, I mean if a particular person did it. Was it someone who suddenly broke? Like Joyce Carol Oates, but she's always been writing creepy stories. It wasn't Stephen King because he still writes horror. I'm wondering if it might have something to do with the larger culture. Maybe it was some television show or movie or character.

EW: I remember reading a Raymond Chandler short story as an English major.

MS: Raymond Chandler and those guys came in during wartime. It was the boys in the Second World War who are responsible for more action-oriented detective stories because that's what people sent them when they were abroad. They all got bars of soap and packs of cigarettes, and they would also get these paperbacks. That's when paperbacks started, so that these soldiers could have something to read. Mysteries really started in England with Agatha Christie. And then Ngaio Marsh and Josephine Tey. Those were the three great women mystery writers who started it all. But the American version was quite different. It wasn't a puzzle. It was action, adventure, and the male hero. Men and women were both detectives in the British vein. I read it all.

EW: A lot of readers tend to prefer cozies or they like hard-boiled. It's rare to find someone who's reading the whole spectrum. Do you find it more challenging to review a particular genre?

MS: The one genre I find hard is romantic suspense. I really like everything. I love historical mysteries. I love the gruesome ones. Serial killers, the lone wolf, smart little old ladies. I like them all. The only ones I can't stand are romantic suspense. I still reviewed them, but I don't read them now because I don't have to. And it was always a challenge. The challenge was to find something that was good in a sub-genre I did not like personally. But I'm a critic. I can separate my own feelings by analyzing the work itself. Now I only read what I like.

EW: You said that you enjoy the gruesome murders. Does the violence ever get to you?

MS: No. I must say some people are extremely original in what they come up with, but that's not why I read them. If I run across a good writer in that genre, I am happy to read them. I don't look for them. I do tend to like puzzle mysteries. And I like mysteries that take me somewhere I've never been. I love Louise Penny's Canadian mysteries. Martin Walker who writes a lovely series about a guy named Bruno set in France. And Donna Leon, in Venice. I'm appreciative of background. I always like the international mysteries because I like going places.

EW: I'm sure you're overrun with books.

MS: I feel bad because I don't have anywhere for my reviews. I know *The Times* said I retired, but I did not retire. I was surprised. I thought, maybe I'm losing it, so I went back and read a whole bunch of recent columns. No, I'm not losing it. So I don't know. There's the breaks. But it would be nice if there were a million other newspapers or magazines around, and I could slip over to somebody else, but I can't do that.

EW: Do you prefer series?

MS: Personally, I prefer series. But a standalone can be wonderful. One of my favorite books of all time is *Rosemary's Baby*. I don't think it would qualify as a mystery. That's the only story I ever read that I genuinely envied. People say, "Don't you feel like writing?" And I say, "No, I'm a reviewer." But if there were ever a story I wish I'd written, that's it.

EW: *The New York Times* has always been the preeminent place for book reviews, but now it has an outsized influence. I don't know how to even word this, but were you ever aware of that? Did you ever feel extra pressure reviewing for *The Times*, particularly with debut novels?

MS: You're really asking if I was aware of who I was and the power I had. It's actually yes. I did respect, still do respect, the power of *The Times*. And I know that everything in *The Washington Post* is emphatically important. But for the most part, it's awful to write when there's no place to publish, and there's nobody to review them. Everything has to be online, and I hate it. Yes, I was conscious of it. I could be modest and say, "Oh no, I never thought of that." But I did think of it, and I was particularly conscious of it with debut authors. When I opened the mail, I was always careful to set aside the debut novels. And I would always read, maybe, 50 pages.

EW: That's generous.

MS: Sometimes if the writing was absolutely egregious, I'd get rid of the book after the first chapter. But I tried to give them a fighting chance. That's why sometimes I would be criticized because I rarely wrote bad reviews. That's because I'm careful. I want people to read. I want people to enjoy what I love. I feel that there's a responsibility with being a reviewer, especially because there are so few places where you can review.

EW: I'm surprised that you haven't been interviewed more often.

MS: I'm a good talker. I used to get paid for talking. I was on the lecture circuit at one point. I love talking to people who read books. My favorite groups were librarians, and librarians passed me on from one library to the next all up and down Long Island. I was working my way through Westchester. One librarian would say, "She really talks well, answers your questions, and then she'll stick around and have some coffee." I love librarians. They know more than I do.

EW: In a 2017 interview with Daniel Fromson, you said, "if there's no voice in the first couple of pages, you're out." Do you have any advice for beginning writers on that? Or advice in general?

MS: A good first chapter. A brilliant first chapter. Also, I know this sounds cruel, but if you don't have it, you don't have it. I look at every first chapter, I really do. That's no bullshit. And sometimes I say to myself, get a job. Go sell insurance or something. In the first chapter, you can get a sense of love of language, how the language comes slipping off the tongue. The voice is everything. How do I explain taste? It's more than style. I want to read something beautiful. Even if it's ugly, even if it starts with some grisly murder. I think that's what I mean, you have to be a good writer.

Seven Debut Novels You Should Read This Month

Excerpted from:

<https://crimereads.com/seven-debut-novels-you-should-read-this-month-april-2021/>

Erik Hoel, [The Revelations](#) (Overlook Press)

Hoel's debut is one of the year's most ambitious novels to date, a provocative and weighty exploration of nothing short of human consciousness. The story centers on a researcher fallen from grace but offered a second chance in an elite postdoctoral program, where his own search for the roots of consciousness come into a sudden clash with the investigation into a colleague's death. The novel is packed full with ideas, debates, scientific inquiry, and language that seems itself to come alive. This is a mystery novel you won't soon forget and the announcement of a major new talent. —Dwyer Murphy, *CrimeReads Editor-in-Chief*

Carole Johnstone, [Mirrorland](#) (Scribner)

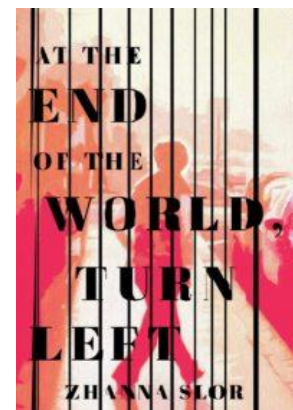
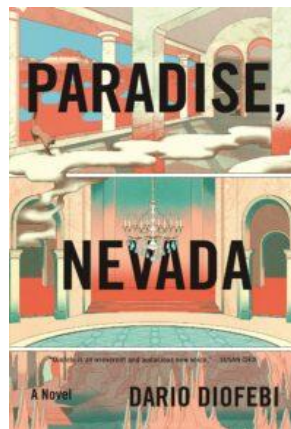
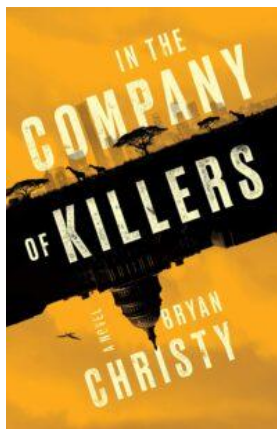
Johnstone's book moves between our world to Mirrorland, a dark place conjured up by two sisters, Cat and El. Cat is now living in Los Angeles, far from her childhood home in Edinburgh where the sisters dreamed of creatures living under the stairs, witches, pirates, and clowns (obviously nothing is scarier than clowns). Cat is moved to return after El disappears, and the house is just as spooky and shadowy as it was in her youth. But now the secrets about her family and the house are both coming to light—every room seems to hold a clue Cat must follow to find El and go back to Mirrorland. —Lisa Levy, *CrimeReads Contributing Editor*

Dario Diofebi, [Paradise, Nevada](#) (Bloomsbury)

Diofebi's debut novel begins with a bang: on May 1, 2015, a bomb explodes in the Positano Luxury Resort in Las Vegas. The resort is an exact replica of the Amalfi coast: a slice of Italy on the Strip. Diofebi, who is Italian, is deft with a large cast of characters, some American, some Italian, a cocktail waitress and a professional poker player, a Mormon journalist, and an Italian tourist. This book aims high and delivers: the combination of his Vegas setting and his empathetic characters push this into a crime novel as a comedy of manners writ broad. An auspicious debut for Diofebi. –LL

Zhanna Slor, [At The End of the World, Turn Left](#) (Agora)

Slor's debut is a powerful story of identity and longing, as two sisters whose family left the USSR for the United States struggle to cope with the ripple effects of displacement and their own relationship. Masha, living in Israel, is called home to Milwaukee following the disappearance of her sister, Anna, following a mysterious contact from a stranger claiming to be another long-lost sibling from Russia. The webs of secrecy and lies are tangled up here, and Masha's journey back toward her sister is moving and subtly haunting. –DM



A.E. Osworth, [We Are Watching Eliza Bright](#) (Grand Central)

Like *The Guild*, Osworth's new novel is entertaining for gamers and noobs alike. Programmer Eliza Bright has just been promoted at her gaming company when she begins to encounter sexism from her coworkers. After she reports the harassment, her attackers turn to their beloved gaming community for vengeance, assaulting her in-game character and doxing her in real life. But Eliza Bright has some powerful allies, and she's not going to go down without a fight. This one kind of reads like GamerGate as told by the guy who directed *The Lives of Others*. –Molly Odintz, *CrimeReads Senior Editor*

Amy Suiter Clarke, [Girl 11](#) (Houghton Mifflin)

This compelling new novel from Amy Suiter Clarke centers on the story of Elle Castillo, a social worker turned host of a popular true crime podcast based out of Minnesota's Twin Cities. Castillo takes on cold cases, and the one that's most haunted her over the years is The Countdown Killer. Police believe the ritual-killer died long ago by suicide, but Castillo gets a tip about the killer, and the tipster ends up dead, setting off a new chain of familiar killings. The serial killer novel is evolving quickly in the new true crime era, and *Girl 11* perfectly captures the new approach. We're no longer following FBI agents and expert profilers, but characters who take on crime in their own dogged way. –DM

Bryan Christy, [In the Company of Killers](#) (Putnam)

Christy, the founder of National Geographic's Special Investigations team, makes his fiction debut with an exhilarating espionage novel tracking investigative reporter and CIA operative Tom Klay, who goes on a very personal mission of revenge following an attack on assignment in Kenya. The story bounces around hot spots in Africa and shines a light on horrifying abuse and exploitation in the world of wildlife trafficking. –DM

2021 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.

Meanwhile, check our Web site, *www.croak-and-dagger.com*, for any new schedule changes and upcoming programs, as well as information about our latest Zoom 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