



SISTERS in CRIME
CROAK & DAGGER
ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER



THE NOOSE LETTER

Volume XI, Number 5 — September 2015

†Expert Testimony†

Congratulations, Croak & Dagger! Take a bow!

Our chapter put on a very well-received one-day conference the weekend of August 21-22. You've heard about the Mystery Roundup for several months. It was a joint effort of Rocky Mountain Mystery Writers of America, and Croak & Dagger Chapter of Sisters in Crime. Since late spring, the C&D board and volunteers began to meet once a week to ensure everything was on schedule. A big thank you goes out to all of those faithful workers. Your efforts made the difference. We attracted 50 registered attendees.

The rest of you, if you don't realize it, made it possible. Without the backing of the members, events like this don't happen. The C&D board, along with several intrepid volunteers, tackled a job I didn't think was possible to do in such a short time. But we did it, and I thank all of you who worked on it. Together we can do so much.

So here it is September—Fall. The year is almost over! I'm still struggling to wrap my head around that. There are only three more meetings left in 2015 (don't forget—we don't meet in December). I hope you've had as much fun as I have with our wonderful guest speakers, the mystery play and dinner, the Mystery Roundup, and the camaraderie of getting to know each other this year. We've welcomed several new members, and I'm delighted with our new meeting facilities. I hope you are too.

The next big event this year is the election of 2016 chapter officers (see below). That happens annually at the November meeting. To that end, I've appointed a nominating committee to come up with a slate

of officers to lead us through 2016. I hope some of you out there will consider throwing your hat in the ring (pardon the really bad cliché) and submitting your name to run for one of the four elective offices. The committee will make a report at our September meeting, and that would be a good time to express your interest. You must be a paid-up member of Croak & Dagger, and officers also need to join national Sisters in Crime. Be sure to attend our next meeting and hear all about it. I'll be emailing chapter By-Laws to all members very soon. Please read them before the November election.

That's all for now! It's almost Balloon Fiesta time! The heat we've complained about all summer will be but a distant memory soon, and the smell of burning pinon logs will fill the air before you know it. So until next time, stay safe, read lots of mysteries, and attend as many meetings of Croak & Dagger as you can. We love to see you there! --Patricia Smith Wood, C&D President

Don't Miss It!

Tuesday, September 22, at 7 p.m.

Irene Blea is a multipublished author of nonfiction sociology books, and the novel *Daughters of the West Mesa*, which is based on the still unsolved 11 West Mesa murders that took place in Albuquerque during the last decade and were discovered in 2009. In the process, Irene set up a support group to monitor more promptly whether any additional streetwalkers disappear in Albuquerque.



Roundup Special Guest Authors David Morrell and Anne Hillerman in conversation



Authors Joe Badal and Steve Brewer in conversation



Don Bullis on true crime



Rob Kresge, Janet Greger, Steve Brewer (Mod), Christine Goff, Darla Bartos



Patricia Smith Wood, Margaret Tessler, Laurie Sanderson Wolcott (Mod), Jim Koehler, Paula Paul



Joseph Badal, Mark Stevens, Judith Van Gieson (Mod), M.L. Rowland, Robert Kidera



Joseph Badal, Judith Van Gieson, Rob Kresge (Mod), Ellen Byerrum, Susan McDuffie, Rebecca Bates

Croak and Dagger Chapter Elections To Be Held in November

Elections for 2016 Croak & Dagger officers will be held at the Nov 24 meeting or by email. If you are interested in being nominated as an elected (President, VP, Secretary, Treasurer/Membership) or considered as an appointed officer, please contact Vice President Anne Ziegler, annz@centurylink.net. See last page for this year's roster of chapter officers. Officers must be or become paid-up members of Croak & Dagger. The four elected officers must be or become paid-up members of National Sisters in Crime.

Dues Increase Announced for Members of National SinC

Some of you may have a memory of the last time Sisters in Crime raised their dues ten years ago. I know the Board of Directors took it very seriously as did our current Board of Directors.

Dues increases are a serious matter in Sisters in Crime. There have only been a few in almost thirty years of our organization's existence!

One-year professional dues will increase to \$50 and one-year active dues to \$40. Two-year memberships will still be available. The Professional Lifetime Membership will be \$500 and the Active Lifetime Membership will be \$400. Lifetime memberships are still a bargain. Sisters in Crime will continue its program of need-based dues waivers.

The National Board has had this program in place since the early 1990s. If anyone can remember the last time SinC raised its dues, e-mail me, Catriona MacPherson, president, at admin@sistersincrime.org and I will mention it in my next column.

The Queen of Suspense: Still Going Strong After 40 Years

August 15 marked the 40th anniversary of the release of *Where Are the Children?*, the breakout suspense novel by [Mary Higgins Clark](#). The book, still in print, in its 75th paperback edition, features a woman who flees the devastating heartbreak of her first marriage and the horrid deaths of her two young children—along with shocking allegations brought against her. With a name change and her hair dyed red, the protagonist leaves her California life and relocates to the tranquility of Cape Cod. She starts her

life over again—remarried, with two more beautiful children. Until one morning, when the children go missing.

In August of 1975, all six members of my family were riveted by and wore out our copy of the novel, personally autographed by the author, who lived only a few blocks away in our small New Jersey town. I don't think anyone in our suburb with only two stop lights could have conceived that Clark—a financially struggling widow with five children, who wrote at her kitchen table for two hours every day before work—would ever surpass the realm of local celebrity and emerge as the "Queen of Suspense," publishing in more than 50 books, which have sold some 100 million copies.

In the past year, Clark, a Grand Master and esteemed member of Mystery Writers of America, shared her "Game Night Chili" recipe in *The Mystery Writers of America Cookbook*, and she edited the anthology *Manhattan Mayhem: New Crime Stories from Mystery Writers of America*. Add to these titles a thriller, *The Melody Lingers On*, featuring a Bernie Madoff-like villain, and the continuing Under Suspicion series co-authored with [Alafair Burke](#) (daughter of crime writer [James Lee Burke](#)), and the 87-year-old Clark is showing no signs of waning in her productivity and passion for storytelling. -- [Kathleen Gerard](#), blogger at [Reading Between the Lines](#)

Who Likes Cliffhangers?

(Reprinted with permission from Colorado Author Terry Odell's blog, *Terry's Place*)

When we're writing, we want readers to keep turning pages. There are lots of ways to do this. Super agent Donald Maass speaks of "microtension," where every sentence makes the reader want to know what's going to happen. According to Maass, the tension, the friction, make the reader want to know the outcome of the immediate situation. It's not necessarily part of the overall plot. He suggested looking at any random page of a novel and studying the following three components: Dialogue, Exposition, and Action.

Looking at Dialogue

Escalating the language can add tension. Stronger verbs, more reactions, show friction between speakers. Raise the reader's apprehension.

Looking at Exposition and Interior Monologue

To add tension, try to add the opposite, or conflicting, or contradiction of inner emotions. Two ideas at war with each other—and this holds true for literary work as well as genre fiction.

Looking at Action

In action scenes, use less expected emotions that play off the action itself. Action does not create tension. The reader must be emotionally involved. Tension comes from inside the POV character's emotional reactions to the action.

Tension can be subtle. It can appear in subtext.

There's also the bigger picture—ending scenes and chapters so the reader wants to turn the page. Ending a chapter on a cliffhanger can do that. There's nothing new about cliffhangers. According to Wikipedia, "a cliffhanger is a central theme and framing device of the collection of stories known as the *One Thousand and One Nights*, wherein the queen Scheherazade, who was facing a morning execution on the

orders of her husband, King Shahryar, devised the solution of telling him a story every night, but leaving it at a cliffhanger, thus forcing the king to postpone her execution to hear the rest of the tale. At the time (19th century), newspapers published novels in a serial format with one chapter appearing every month.”

Cliffhangers were used in the movies, such as *The Perils of Pauline*, a weekly series which was designed to bring viewers back for more. Soap operas on television used this technique as well. In fact, “mini cliffhangers” are used in most television shows to make sure viewers don’t change channels at commercial breaks. If you’re a DVR watcher of television, rather than a “live” watcher, you’re probably tuned in to when to pick up the remote even before the commercial kicks in.

So cliffhangers and tension are good to keep readers turning pages. But what about the end of a book? I recently read a novella (which triggered the idea for this post) where the story simply ended. The heroine gets a call from her new boyfriend who has gone missing, and he basically says, “I’m in terrible trouble.” I turned the page but there were no more pages. What I *could* do, and this was undoubtedly the author’s intent, was buy the second novella in the series. Did I? Nope. No way, no how. I was incensed at being played like that (not to mention I really didn’t care much for the characters anyway), and wouldn’t plunk down a cent for more.

I checked reviews, and was surprised to find that many people left glowing reviews for the story, while only about 20% of the people leaving reviews felt cheated by the cliffhanger ending.

What about you? When you get to the end of a book or story, do you want a cliffhanger? Or do you feel cheated the way I did?

More Mystery Opportunities in Albuquerque

Besides Croak and Dagger, the local chapter of Sisters in Crime, mystery devotees have other monthly opportunities to indulge our passion, courtesy of the Albuquerque Bernalillo County Library System. For more information on the following groups, check out <http://abclibrary.org/books/groups>

Mysteries at Cherry Hills meets the first Tuesday of each month except January, 6-7:30 p.m.

Who Durnit? Mystery Book Club meets the second Tuesday of every month at the **Tony Hillerman Library** 3-4:30 p.m.

Main Library’s *Wide World of Mystery* meets the last Friday of each month at noon.

Reviews

Key: PB=Paperback TP=Trade Paperback HC=Hardcover
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Rob’s Random Shots

September Case File Number One

Seven Dials—A Charlotte and Thomas Pitt novel by Anne Perry, Ballantine Books, 2003, 352 pp (I read the Kindle edition)

Thought I’d start off with the most unusual book for this issue, but as you’ll see from following reviews, the term “most unusual”

could apply to more than one book in this issue's reviews. For one thing, Anne Perry is most prolific, writing two Victorian police procedural series, of which this one is number 23 in one series.

If you don't know, Anne Perry is also the most unusual author you will ever read, having been convicted of murder herself in New Zealand and served several years in prison. Peter Jackson told her story in the film *Heavenly Creatures*, starring Kate Winslet. I met Anne Perry at a book signing near Washington, DC in the early 2000s, when both her series were well-established.

This volume takes place about a year after Thomas Pitt has been transferred from the London Metropolitan Police to the Special Branch, which is concerned more with espionage and the activities of foreign diplomats and high-ranking British officials. What appears to be a police matter, the London shooting of a junior Foreign Ministry official by an Egyptian woman outside her home, takes on more important ramifications when it is found that she is the mistress of an important Cabinet minister, responsible for cotton imports from Egypt and the employment of hundreds of thousands in England who turn the raw cotton into various fabrics.

How involved was the minister? He was discovered helping the woman to move the body to a nearby park. The pistol belonged to the woman. Will her arrest and the involvement of the minister affect trade with Egypt? The livelihoods of many English families? And, as Pitt goes to Egypt to investigate how and when the victim knew the woman when they were both there, the stakes rise to possibly threaten Britain's control of Egypt and the vital Suez Canal.

While Pitt investigates in London and Egypt, his wife Charlotte, as in other Perry novels, looks into what seems to be a totally separate case, the disappearance of a young valet and his master in London. Suffice it to say, the two events are related and the double denouements take place first in the famous asylum of Bedlam and finally in a packed

London courtroom while the Egyptian woman's trial is underway.

A dramatic entry in Ms. Perry's justly famed two Victorian police series. Worth your reading. --Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

September Case File Number Two

Mrs. Jeffries Dusts for Clues by Emily Brightwell, Berkely, 2003, 266 pp (I read the Kindle edition)

As readers of the *Nooseletter* may recall, I've reviewed the first novel in this sprightly series last year. I found it still sprightly and original. Mrs. Jeffries is the housekeeper of Scotland Yard Inspector Witherspoon and she and her household staff clandestinely investigate whatever crime is puzzling the plodding, sometime inept detective.

During the twin investigations, Mrs. Jeffries is able to carefully point the inspector in the direction of certain clues she and her staff find, in talking to servants, tradesmen, and potential witnesses. She never lets on that there is any household involvement in the inspector's cases. This is the second volume in what is now a long and successful series.

Despite the intriguing and original premise, I had more trouble following this novel than I did the first one. So many persons interviewed, in more than one household, I had trouble keeping names and the interviewed servants' masters and their households straight. That may just have been my inabilities and I look forward to reading more volumes in this amusing series. In this novel, there's even an "unsinkable Molly Brown"-like American woman with a missing person to complicate Mrs. Jeffries' helping the inspector when the body of a young woman turns up in a housing construction site. Is she a missing woman the inspector is already seeking or the ward of the American friend? --Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

September Case Files Numbers Three and Four

Fever Dream and *Cold Vengeance* by Douglas Preston and Lincoln Child, Grand Central

Publishing, 2010 and 2011, 540 and 448 pp respectively, PB

I've never lumped two books into a single review, but I do so this time since they are the first two volumes of a trilogy, of which I have not read the third.

Fans of Preston and Child are familiar with their long list of standalones (sometimes by individual author, but more often by the pair). One of their joint series follows incredibly named FBI Senior Agent Aloysius Pendergast, who never seems to be involved in routine FBI investigations, but is usually pursuing apparently supernatural crimes and killers.

Without giving too much away, these volumes (and the third ought to be read in order) involve the reader in the death of Pendergast's wife Helen in a hunting accident in Africa 12 years before the present, in which she is slain by a lion in Pendergast's presence. Cut to the present day Pendergast receives information that his wife did not die by accident but was murdered. By interviewing some persons from the African hunt, he comes to believe this report and sets his own investigation in motion, travelling through the Southeastern United States in the first book and then in Europe and back to the US in the second volume.

I've placed these novels in the free books box that comes to every C&D bimonthly meeting and hope that others will enjoy them (and possibly the third volume) more than I did. The frequent stunts, including the seeming fatal shooting of the protagonist and his superhuman resilience and combat skills on a boat failed to create in me the willing suspension of disbelief so necessary to enjoy fiction. —Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

September Case File Number Five

The Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins, Riverhead Books, 2015, 326 pp (I read the Kindle edition)

This is a justly honored book for one that is such a new release—33,000 reviews and counting. Readers often compare it to *Gone Girl*, in which that book and film rely on the reader's acceptance of unreliable narrators.

That device works well in this novel, too, but it presents some challenges to the reader. The central concept is that Rachel the narrator rides a train into London each day, sees houses near where she used to live, and imagines names for the people—singles, couples, children—she sees in her old neighborhood. We come to learn that she is divorced, fighting alcoholism and depression, and that her imagined stories of the people she sees from the train do not use their real names, which she doesn't yet know.

She comes to learn real names when a young woman she's seen from the train disappears from her house, leaving behind a husband. Another resident of that block turns out to be the train traveller's divorced spouse and a target of her obsession. When she reads of the woman's disappearance in the newspaper, against her better judgment, she reports to police what she's observed in that house and its back yard from the train and of course becomes an immediate suspect herself.

I'm still reading this book as I write this and did not finish it before this issue of *The Nooseletter* comes out. It is hard going in some places, because the main character's imagined names for the people in the neighborhood do not match their real names. But this book is worth your while. Come join me and the 33,000 other readers. —Rob Kresge, rkresge777@comcast.net

The following two reviews are by Linda Triegel.

The Art Forger by B.A. Shapiro, Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2012, 355 pages (HC)

If you don't know anything about art, but know what you like, you'll like this novel. It's not a mystery exactly, although a crime is involved, and there's plenty of suspense; in fact, after you've got to know the protagonist (and can ignore the first-person, present tense narration), it's hard to put down.

Our protagonist is Claire Roth, an artist struggling to be recognized (we writers can identify with that), and in order to make a living in the meanwhile (ditto), she copies masterpieces for an online retailer, Reproductions.com, which makes no bones

about the paintings not being original. They're pretty much the only honest outfit in the story.

The plot is a riff on the infamous real-life 1990 art theft from the Isabella Gardiner Stuart Museum in Boston. The thieves were never caught, nor was the stolen art recovered. Ms. Shapiro imagines a Degas painting, in his Bathers series, which was one of the stolen paintings and comes into Claire's orbit under decidedly shady circumstances, which I won't get into. Suffice it to say, her talents as a copier are called on.

There's a subplot about the artist Claire used to live with, but what happened to him remains a secret until the end of the story. There's a lot of detail about artists I never heard of and painting techniques that I wouldn't know from cooking cassoulet, but the author makes them natural to the setting and even understandable, the way Michael Crichton was able to make high-tech subjects clear. You can learn a lot that way, and have fun too.

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

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

Travis McGee morphs into Rambo in this thriller in White's Doc Ford series (neither the first, *Sanibel Flats*, nor the most recent, *Cuba Strait*, which got good reviews, was on my library's shelves when I went looking).

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

Doc has a past—imbued with Liam Neeson's "very particular skills" in the *Taken* movie series—so he's the one who single-handedly rescues Tula at the end. The girl has a

Joan of Arc fixation that is not the wisest path to take when she tries to befriend and convert her creepy captor and save him from even badder guys. This sequence goes on a bit long, and I'd have liked to see more of Doc Ford in his natural habitat (not being Rambo), but maybe there's more of that in the earlier books in the series. I'm willing to have a look.

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

All the following book reviews are by Susan Zates, smzates@qwest.net

Scaredy Cat by Mark Billingham, Little, Brown, 2002 352 pp

This is book two of the Tom Thorne police procedural mystery series set in contemporary London. Inspector Thorne tracks a series of murders involving women in various locales around the city. Alternating chapters describe stalking a victim and the murder from the killer's point of view. The crimes turn out to be rooted in long-ago events at a boys' public school. A young boy was rescued from a beating by a mean bully, only to become enmeshed in far more evil and violence with his rescuer.

Thorne eventually realizes the crimes are being committed by two serial killers. He struggles to uncover a connection between the killers and a motive for the murders. He is haunted by the wanton violence of the murders and the suffering of the survivors, especially that of a young toddler who likely witnessed his mother's torture and death. The case grows cold while the murders continue, until the psychopathic killer taunts the police and lures them into a trap. A complex story with red herrings, investigative dead ends, and surprise twists.

The Good Fight by Lia Matera, Fawcett 1991, 217 pp

This is the second book of the Laura Di Palma mystery series set in the late 20th-century San Francisco Bay area. Di Palma is a successful young defense attorney about to make partner in a prestigious legal firm. After rising to fame defending mass murderers and

political criminals, she lives a fast-paced life of conspicuous luxury. In a short span of days, all that changes. When her lover Hal goes missing from the hospital, she cannot focus on her client Dan Crosetti, who is accused of murdering an FBI agent. Laura agreed to defend Dan on moral principle rather than the expectation of a big payout (years ago Dan lost his legs during a non-violent protest). Still trying to find Hal, now suspected of murder, Laura relies heavily on her investigator (and former lover) Sandy, who has his own agenda.

Cockroaches by Jo Nesbo , Random House Canada, 2013, 400 pp

This is the second book of the Harry Hole police procedural mystery series. Hole is a homicide detective for the Oslo, Norway police. When the Norwegian ambassador to Thailand is murdered in a Bangkok brothel, Hole is sent to quietly investigate, quickly wrap up the case, and keep it from getting any publicity. As he investigates, he realizes there is much more to the case than it seems on the surface. He encounters plenty of brutal violence, which is portrayed as routine for Bangkok (this is definitely not a travelogue).

Although warned to let his pedophile investigation drop, and return to Oslo, he strives to reveal a cover-up by higher levels of law enforcement. Pursuing a red herring, he teams up with an unexpected ally for a suspenseful and violent conclusion.

High Country Fall by Margaret Maron, Mysterious Press 2004, 320 pp

This is the 10th volume of the Judge Deborah Knott mystery series set in North Carolina. Feeling pressured by her friends' and family's congratulations and high excitement over her upcoming wedding, Deborah is eager to flee upstate to hear another judge's cases during his vacation. She doesn't feel up to the mass jubilation at home, because her agreement to marry Dwight is based on lifelong friendship and practicality, not the starry-eyed romance she imagines others feel.

In Cedar Gap, it's the height of fall "leaf-peeper" season, with all lodgings booked, but

she's able to stay in her cousins' rental condo while their twin teenage daughters are repainting it. The twins are hiding their current lifestyle from their parents, who are unknowingly providing college fees.

Big news in town is the murder of a local doctor. Deborah hears the 'probable-cause' presentation and recommends the case go to trial. Then a prominent local man goes missing from a party Deborah attends at the luxury home of local property developers, and is later found murdered. Like everyone else, Deborah wonders about a link between the two murders, possible suspects and motive.

The plot slowly meanders along with small-town politics and Deborah's vast web of family connections for 82% of the book, then suddenly Deborah is attacked—in an act of violence resulting from a routine court case with complete strangers, nothing to do with the central murder mystery. You have to wonder: Did the author add the attack to show how random violence disrupts lives, or to prop up a sagging plot with suspense and action? While waiting for rescue, Deborah reviews the evidence and the suspects, and solves the murder mystery. Dwight rushes across the state to her side, and she realizes her true feelings.

Hang My Head and Cry by Elena Santangelo, Minotaur Books 2001, 336 pp

This is the second book of the Pat Montella historical mystery series set in contemporary and in 1871 Virginia. Pat lives with Miss Maggie Shelby on the estate she will inherit, where she is helping to set up a foundation for historical research and preservation. Pat can occasionally see and hear the ghosts of those who lived and suffered nearby. She is visited by the ghost of a young boy, "Mance", telling of a church and a residence burning.

From accounts of the fires in archives, Pat and Miss Maggie pinpoint the timeframe as July 1871 and identify Mance as Emancipation Jackson, born to a former slave just after the proclamation. In Miss Maggie's yard, under her grandfather's flowerbed, they find a skull. Emma, an archaeologist from the university, comes to excavate. Her assistant Theo turns out

to be descended from Mance. Murder interrupts the dig and their research; they must investigate the past (distant and recent) to solve murders in the present. Chapters from Pat's point of view are interspersed with chapters from Mance's point of view, describing the racial turmoil of 1871 and the inhumane treatment of freedmen.

Broken Skin by Stuart MacBride, St. Martin's Press UK, 2007, 448 pp

This is the third book of the Logan McRae police procedural mystery series set in contemporary Aberdeen, Scotland. Detective Sergeant McRae works for two very demanding detective inspectors (Inch and Steel), who are professional rivals and tyrannical slavedrivers. Harsh winter weather adds to the grimness of the life Logan leads. McRae's live-in girlfriend also works on the force, so she understands the erratic schedules they keep. She acts as "bait" to trap a serial rapist, but the sports celebrity's status gets him off scot free, while young women keep getting raped, and with increasing violence.

McRae ends up tracking an 8-year-old psychopathic killer. McRae wonders what happened to such a young boy to make him a cold-hearted monster? The rest of the force does not care why, just that he be caught and punished; eventually McRae does find him while solving another case. When a severely beaten and sexually violated body is dumped at the hospital, detectives have to first identify the victim, then all possible connections for clues to the crime; which leads them to a group practicing bondage and domination.

McRae is often frustrated by dead ends in his investigations, not to mention being jerked around by the inspectors, who use him as a pawn in their rivalry, and bureaucratic snafus.

A harsh tale with violent crime, rough language; a vivid portrayal of day-to-day gritty, grueling effort in police homicide investigation. McRae works under tremendous pressure yet still manages to care about the victims.

Truffled Feathers by Nancy Fairbanks, Berkley Books, 2001, 288 pp

This is the second book of the Carolyn Blue culinary mysteries set in the contemporary US. Bored El Paso university wife Carolyn has started a new career as a food critic. She is under contract with a publisher to write about her culinary adventures in New Orleans (first book of the series, *Crime Brulee*). Struggling to finish the book, she welcomes a distraction: the chance to accompany her chemistry professor husband to New York City, where he is asked to consult on toxins (his specialty) with a prestigious firm. Carolyn is armed with tourist guides to dining out in the Big Apple, even wondering if she could convince her publisher to change the book's topic to NYC eats.

Before she and her husband arrive, his contact at the firm dies over a pastrami sandwich. Officers at the firm suspiciously do not want to help the police investigate; they suspect one of their own employees of industrial espionage. While dining out and attending opera, Carolyn and her husband meet employees of the firm and their spouses, as well as the victim's family.

Carolyn has unlimited curiosity (nosiness?) and ferrets out details about everyone's lives, including the waitress who served the pastrami. Her knowledge leads to plenty of false assumptions and red herrings (the plot meanders along in this fashion for the majority of the book). The story's conclusion feels rushed, the crime solution overly complex, and the 'witty' banter between Carolyn and her husband (interrupting the detective) doesn't match their interactions in the rest of the book.

Eight recipes are included, following the chapters in which Carolyn tastes them, with an index at the end.

Stolen Prey by John Sandford, Putnam 2012, 416 pp

This is the 22nd book of the Lucas Davenport police procedural mystery series set in contemporary Minneapolis. Davenport works for the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA), where he tackles tough, violent crimes with high publicity. After Lucas is attacked at an ATM, his arm broken, he's restless to return to work, resolved to find his

attackers. When an entire family is tortured and murdered, even the pets, it looks like a gruesome drug killing. But the family was living an upscale lifestyle, and the husband was a bank executive, with no evidence of drug involvement. Lucas wonders what information the killers were trying to extract by torture; all he can do is investigate the bank.

In thriller style, the reader learns about the crimes and perps ahead of Lucas, who is struggling to find them. Alternating chapters describe the criminal activities and motives of a trio of bank employees. They discovered a money laundering scheme involving front companies, and they are siphoning off millions for themselves from the accounts. Each co-conspirator is a misfit; with odd personality traits or a questionable past.

Other chapters describe the activities of the killers (Uno, Dos, and Tres), who receive their orders via telephone from "Big Voice". As always in the *Prey* series, the plot threads converge with a few surprise twists and suspenseful chases/shootouts. Familiar characters return: Sloan, Dell, Virgil Flowers, Weather and Letty, who saves the day with her quick-witted survival skills.

The Bookman's Wake by John Dunning, Pocket Star, 1995, 448 pp

This is the second book of the Cliff Janeway mystery series. Ex-cop Janeway, now a bookstore owner in Denver, is lured by former colleague Slater (who was never a friend of his) into a bounty hunter assignment in Seattle. It seems simple: Pick up a young woman who has fled bail, and bring her back to the police in Taos, New Mexico. It starts out rocky: Surveillance operator Pruitt (who has been tailing Eleanor) is a bully, and Janeway has to take him down a peg.

Eleanor intrigues Janeway, with her ties to the Grayson Press and legendary Raven. They begin a friendship, but under false pretenses; as Janeway meets her family and is welcomed, he feels uneasy. The police arrive and his cover is blown, but he vows to help her anyway. The plot seems straightforward at first, but after Janeway meets news reporter Trish and

bibliographer Huggins, it becomes a fascinating puzzle, with a suspenseful scene near the end that's tough to put down. This novel includes rich detail about the bookbinding business as practiced by artisans (not bulk publishing), and first edition collectors.

This Body of Death by Elizabeth George, Harper 2010, 692 pp

This is Book 16 of the Inspector Thomas Lynley police procedural mystery series set in contemporary England. Two cases are related in parallel: a toddler kidnapped by a trio of boys; and a woman murdered in a London cemetery.

The baby kidnapping details are horrible; guaranteed to disturb the reader. As in *What Came Before He Shot Her* (number 14 in the series), the young criminals are presented sympathetically as the victims of dysfunctional families. The London murder is quite a puzzle for Scotland Yard to unravel, because the police don't know all the facts until after the case is over, when a surprise twist ties the cases together.

Jemima had broken up with her boyfriend Gordon and moved from the countryside to London. Jemima's best friend Meredith was estranged from her friend after a quarrel, but feels guilty, so bakes and tries to give Jemima a birthday cake. When Meredith can't find her friend, she starts inquiries with police, which eventually leads to identification of the woman murdered in London. Suspicious characters in and near Jemima's London rooming house are convincing suspects, as well as the ex-boyfriend Gordon and his new girlfriend Gina.

Acting Superintendent Isabelle Ardery (a new character likely to remain in the series) is appointed at the Met for a trial run in Thomas Lynley's former position. She coerces Lynley to return to Scotland Yard, to give a seal of approval to her new role with his former team.

Ardery has personal problems and is a terrible leader, antagonizing everyone, but she somehow befriends Lynley. Detectives must defy Ardery to apply their investigative skills to the case; she prefers absolute control and

requires them to drive her around or stand watch (typically constable duties). When things go wrong in the case, she shrilly blames everyone else but herself. Not a likable character; hard to believe she could appeal to Lynley. Ardery antagonizes series regular Barbara Havers at first meeting; she complains about Havers' teeth, clothes, and attitude. Havers turns to her young neighbor Hadiyyah for help shopping, a sweet subplot.

The Lion's Game by Nelson DeMille, Grand Central Publishing, 2000, 688 pp

This is the second book of the John Corey thriller series set in the late 20th-century US, and in 1986 Libya. John Corey is ex-NYPD Homicide. His first foray into joint taskforce efforts with CIA and FBI was on Plum Island, first book of the series, when he was convalescing from gunshot wounds.

Instead of returning to police duty, he's now on a joint agency antiterrorism task force. Irreverent as ever, he adds a touch of humor to dull meetings of stuffy pretentious bureaucrats who worship paperwork and protocol. Although Corey requested assignment to Ireland, he's on a taskforce concerned with Middle East terrorists.

A Libyan terrorist who defected in Paris is on his way to the US on a jet, escorted by the FBI. The plane goes out of radio contact two hours prior to landing, and once it lands, just sits on the runway. Of course Corey is suspicious, and wants to get to the plane immediately. But the airport has procedures and protocols to follow. It isn't until an authorized "guns and hoses" (emergency crew) employee goes to the plane and then also loses radio contact with airport officials that Corey is able to go see for himself.

The story starts slowly as it sets the background of Corey on the task force and unexpected problems with the arrival of the jet. Once Corey gets on the jet, the pace picks up. As the task force pursues the terrorist, Corey is the only one who understands what is likely to happen next. Never-ending layers of security prevent the taskforce from accessing the information they need to interpret the terrorist's

motive and targets. Corey pulls unauthorized strings, going around the rules, once he suspects the real danger. I enjoyed the steady build-up of suspense as they chase "The Lion" around the country, so I may continue reading the series. Remember that De Mille wrote this before 9/11 when you see the death of 300 people referred to as "the biggest attack on US soil."

I didn't like the way his partnership with a woman FBI agent was portrayed. First she seems to be a watchdog assigned to keep tabs on Corey's activities, then she puts the moves on him. His tomcat behavior seems out of character, compared to his relationships in the first book.

Much later in the story (as if the author realized strictly casual sex could alienate some readers, so tried to fix it in one sentence) one-night-stand banter suddenly becomes a serious vow. Not at all believable, especially since Corey doesn't bother to inform his previous significant other of his new commitment until it's public knowledge in a press conference. I assumed (having read the first book) that he would lose her in a shoot-out, but I was surprised. Another reason to continue the series: See if this ill-matched partnership lasts.

The Careful Use of Compliments by Alexander McCall Smith, Pantheon 2007, 256 pp

This is the fourth book in the Isabel Dalhousie/Sunday Philosophy Club series set in contemporary Edinburgh. Isabel is the editor of a philosophy journal, the lover of a sexy young musician named Jamie, and now a new mother. Isabel and Jamie's baby Charlie is a tremendous delight to both parents. Jamie would like to get married, but Isabel isn't ready to make the commitment, concerned over differences in their ages and economic status. Isabel's niece Cat still hasn't forgiven Isabel for having a relationship with Jamie, Cat's ex-boyfriend. Isabel feels the tension when she visits Cat's neighborhood deli, but their relationship gets much more strained after Cat invites Isabel and Jamie to dinner.

Isabel suffers a blow to her pride when she loses her job as the journal's editor (but she gets a very satisfying revenge). Isabel is fond of

paintings by Andrew McInnes, a Scottish painter who specialized in Jura landscapes. She bids on one at auction, loses to another bidder, then days later has the chance to buy it from him. A few details about the painting make her suspect its provenance, so she investigates, including a visit to Jura, and solves a mystery.

Jura sounds like a wonderful place to visit! As usual, Isabel muses on a wide variety of topics as she goes about her days, and the several subplots are happily resolved. The series pace is slow and the mood is relaxed, so it may not appeal to those who prefer a tense thriller, but once in a while it's nice to "drop in" on Isabel. I listen to audio versions just to enjoy Scottish brogue.

†**Nooseletter Submissions**†

Croak & Dagger members and 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 shorter items are also welcome.

Deadlines: Publication is every other month, starting in January. Submission deadlines are the 15th of the month prior to publication: Feb 15, April 15, June 15, Aug 15, Oct 15, and Dec 15.

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 submissions via e-mail to Rob Kresge at rkresge777@comcast.net, with "Nooseletter" in the subject line.

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Summary of Findings

The *Nooseletter* is the internal organ of the Croak & Dagger chapter, Albuquerque, of Sisters in Crime

(SinC). Opinions expressed herein are those of the authors and editors. □

Upcoming Meetings

Tuesday, September 22

Tuesday, October 27

Tuesday, November 24

Meetings are free and open to the public.

As of April, meetings will be held every fourth Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., in Room 6 at the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center, 7521 Carmel Ave, NE, one traffic light north of Paseo del Norte, off Wyoming Blvd.

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

Our October 27 speaker will be **William H. White** (williamwhitebooks.com), who now lives in rural New Mexico where he writes stories of adventure and treasure hunting when not conducting tours in the Caballo Mountains. *The Pancho Villa Treasure of the Guadalupe Mountains* is the second book in the series with Carl Webb and Jack Morgan as the main characters.

Our November 24 speaker will be **Cordelia Willis**, a crime investigator (criminalist) in Santa Clara, CA. Her areas of expertise are blood splatter patterns, tire track identification, DNA identification, cell phone tracking and lots of other areas. She's been working at the crime lab in Santa Clara for a number of years and has some experience working on cold cases.

The 2015 C&D Chapter Line Up

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Sisters in Crime was founded in 1986. ***The mission of Sisters in Crime shall be*** “to promote the professional development and advancement of women crime writers to achieve equality in the industry.”

Our vision is: “Raising professionalism and achieving equity among crime writers.”

And our motto is: “SinC into a good mystery!”



Still not a member of Sisters in Crime?

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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.

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Contact our membership chair at contact@croak-and-dagger.com.