



ALBUQUERQUE CHAPTER — SISTERS IN CRIME

THE NOOSELETTER

Volume XI, Number 4 — July/August 2017

†The President's Corner†

Dear Sisters and Misters—

The Great Library Adventure Rollicks On!

Well, now we've done it! We have a "locked room case" at the Moriarty Library. (I so love that name for a mystery writers' display.) Particular thanks to Joan Saberhagen and Gloria Casale for their long hours of work to make this one happen, and then make it look fabulous.

We'll be there through July, showing off eighteen (yes, indeed, 18) of our authors. Many have multiple books, and several (Joe Badal, Judith Van Gieson, Albert Noyer and others) have multiple series and/or series plus stand-alones. Look for some photos of the adventure elsewhere in this issue.

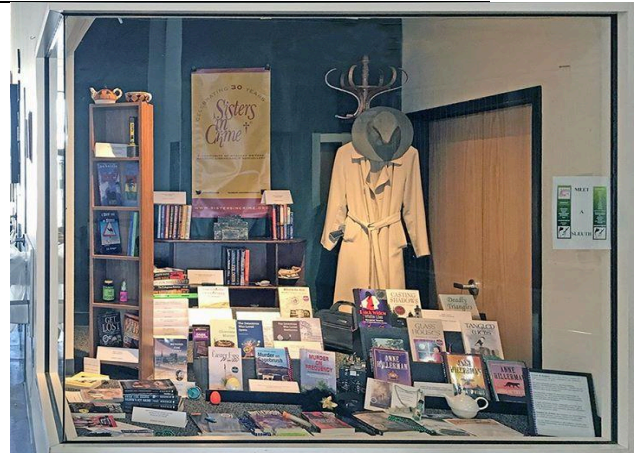
Negotiations are underway for our October visit to both Rio Rancho libraries, then on to Tramway (thanks to Gloria) in November. We're checking in with other libraries in the area.

If your neighborhood library might be interested, tell them to get in touch with me at annz1@centurylink.net. (Reminder, that's a one not an L after the z.)

SinC Banner for You!

Since our SinC 30th anniversary banner is on the road with the Great Library Adventure, we asked National if we could get another one. Score. At the moment the first banner is in the Locked Room, and the newbie is on a shelf-end in the Moriarty Library itself. BUT, here's the scoop. We actually wanted the extra one so you can use it when you go to signings, festivals, and other bookish events.

Let me know what's on your schedule for fall, so I can get you on the banner calendar.



Party Time This Fall!

We're also gearing up to celebrate Sisters in Crime's 30th and our 10th/14th this fall. We're angling for a chapter grant from National to make the festivities even more amazing (or maybe startling—with us you never know). Further bulletins as we plot and scheme ways to honor our Founders. They can run but they can't hide.

*Mysteriously,
Ann Zeigler, President*

Don't Miss It! Tuesday, July 25, at 7 p.m.

Our very own Pat Wood and her husband Don, both amateur radio enthusiasts, will be our speakers. Pat will discuss her latest novel, *Frequency*, which takes place in that world. Then she will interview Don about amateur radio, especially how it has helped people in many situations.

Coming Up...
Tuesday, August 22, at 7 p.m.

Our August speaker will be Joanne Bodin, who will talk about her recent novel, *Orchid of the Night*, a dark psychological thriller about a man running from his troubled past who finds solace in the gay community of Ixtlan. Joanne is on the board of the New Mexico Orchid Guild so knows her epiphytes!

Her earlier novel, *Walking Fish*, won the new Mexico Book Award, and her poetry collection, *Piggybacked*, was a finalist for the same award. Her poetry has appeared in many other venues as well.



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!"



Sisters in Crime **Guppies**

SinC Guppies is an online writers' support group. Guppies 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.

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

- Upcoming Programs
- Meeting Schedule
- Membership Form
- Speakers Bureau
- Links to Mystery Websites & Websites for Your Favorite Croak & Dagger Authors
- *The Nooseletter* Archive

REMEMBER: All the above provide 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!

AND: All members are invited to join the Croak & Dagger Yahoo group, an online gathering place for mystery writers. Join in! Log on to C&D's web page (www.croak-and-dagger.com) and click on the link to moderator Nancy Varian for instructions. Exchange news and information about mystery books, movies, etc., as well as online courses.

The Line Up

President – Ann Zeigler – annz1@centurylink.net
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Noose News

Joe Badal is pleased to announce that two of his novels are finalists for the International Book Awards. *The Motive* is a finalist in the Fiction: Thriller/Adventure category and *Borderline* in the Fiction: Mystery/Suspense category.



SouthWest Writers is sponsoring a class on **Websites for Writers**, presented by Loretta Hall, on Sunday afternoons starting July 16 and ending August 6. You will learn how to design a website that will be attractive and effective. Topics include domain names, website design concepts, hosting options, search engine rankings, and inexpensive (or free) site-building software. Each session is two hours. The cost is \$69 for SWW members and \$79 for non-members.

SWW offers classes and workshops to advance your skills and marketability. Experienced instructors guide participants through lecture, example and, often, critique to increase the quality of their writing. Click here for more information:

<http://www.southwestwriters.com/events/classes>

Charlene Bell Dietz is also an International Book Awards finalist in the Cross-Genre category for her *The Flapper*, *The Scientist*, and *the Saboteur*. Charlene reports (hopefully) that the next book in the series, *The Flapper*, *The Imposter*, and *the Stalker* may be out in the fall. It's the story of the young flapper's life.

C&D Members!

Send news of your latest releases, good news of any kind, and any news you hear about your favorite authors to the *Nooseletter* at the address on page 2.

I can't make this stuff up!

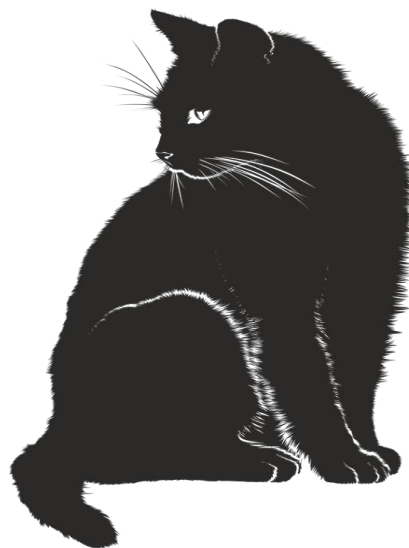
—the editor

THE CAT COMPLEX

by Patricia Highsmith

Cats provide something for writers that humans cannot: companionship that makes no demands or intrusions, that is as restful and ever-changing as a tranquil sea that barely moves. Writers' minds, I think, are active or disturbed enough to need the soothing aura of a cat in the house. A writer is not alone with a cat, yet is enough alone to work. Semyon, my younger Siamese, interrupts me only when he is hungry. Since he is neither fat nor greedy, I always oblige him by going to the kitchen and getting something for him.

Cats as Watsons? Coming by accident onto the facts? I should think they would be worse than dogs at detecting. Both depend on their noses more than on their eyes, but would a cat care? Out of curiosity, it might lead the way to a corpse, might also register hostility to a person by an astonishingly deep growl or by leaving the room. I have seen both my Siamese, however, seek out the lap of a visitor who detested them.



A writer could "use" a cat to sniff at a floorboard at exactly the right time, but this is one of those possibilities that ring true in life and false in fiction. I've never used such a trick, but I recently made use of a cat's predatory habit by having it drag a pair of human fingers, attached to their shattered metacarpals, through the cat door while a game of Scrabble was going on in the living room.

—from *Murderess Ink*, perpetrated by Dilys Winn, Workman Publishing 1979

Mothers of Sisters: Craig Rice

For its January 28, 1946, issue, *Time magazine* selected writer Craig Rice for a cover feature on the mystery genre. It was one of the rare accolades that this now almost forgotten writer received for her amazing body of work during her lifetime (she died in 1957).

Craig Rice was born Georgiana Ann Randolph Craig in Chicago in 1908 and raised mainly by relatives (her mother abandoned her to their care while she and her husband traveled abroad). Her uncle Elton Rice has been credited with stirring her interest in mysteries by reading her the poems and stories of Edgar Allen Poe.

She spent her early career in radio and public relations, trying intermittently to write novels, but it was not until her first novel, *Eight Faces at Three*, was published under her new pen name in 1939 that her writing career took off. The plot features John J. Malone, a rumpled Chicago lawyer (perhaps a precursor to Peter Falk's Columbo), who teams up with handsome but not very bright press agent Jake Justus and eccentric heiress and hard-drinking party girl Helene Brand to discover who killed a vicious dowager and why the murderer then made up the beds in the victim's house and stopped the clocks at three o'clock.

Against the odds and often apparently more by luck than skill, these three manage in subsequent books to solve crimes whose details are often surreal or just plain nutty, and all involve the perpetually exasperated Captain Daniel Von Flanagan of the Homicide Squad.

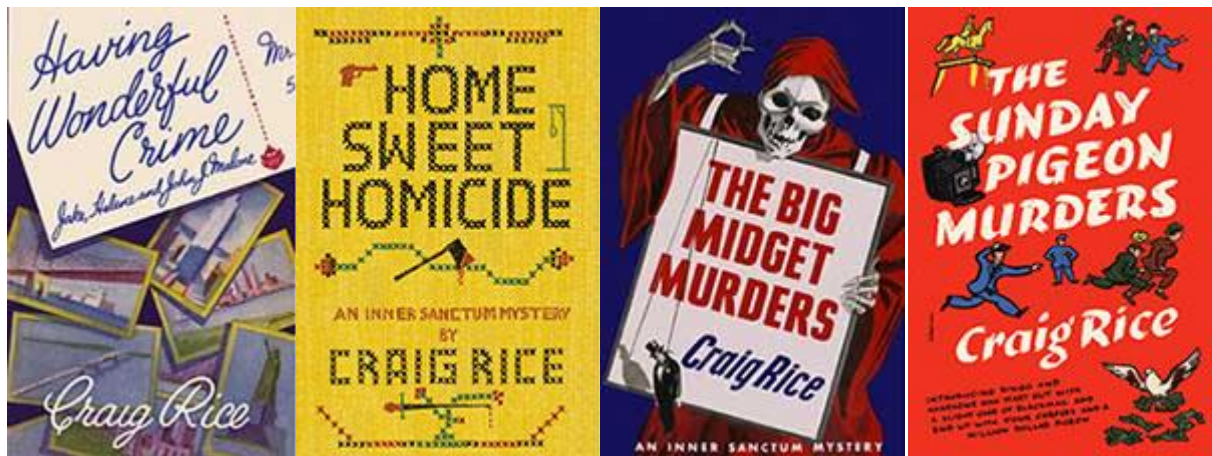
Sometimes described as the Dorothy Parker of detective fiction, Rice has also been compared to such surrealistic filmmakers as Buster Keaton and to fellow mystery writers such as Ellery Queen (supposedly Rice's favorite mystery writer) who also emphasized constantly surprising twists of plot, characters and events. Her fictional world was a very different one than that occupied by her fellow writers on the hard-boiled side of the street, such as Raymond Chandler.

Rice also wrote several stand-alone novels, including *Home Sweet Homicide* (which was made into a film) and a trilogy featuring traveling photographers Bingo Riggs and his partner, Handsome Kusak. The last book in that series, *The April Robin Murders*, was left unfinished at her death and completed by Ed McBain. Since Craig kept no outlines, McBain's major problem was figuring out whodunit.

With all these projects, and more, it was no surprise that Rice was almost as popular in her day as Agatha Christie. In the thick of World War II, she even received a letter on official White House stationery. "Thank you for taking my mind off my troubles for an evening," it said, and was signed Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Typical of Craig, she bragged about it for days, then lost the letter.

According to her daughter, Craig "could write almost as fast as she could type." All she needed for inspiration was a low bank balance. Since at various times she supported three children and *their* children, a brother and several husbands (past, present and future), she was always working on a novel or a new short story.





She also tried her hand at one children’s serial. “It appeared on the pillow, a page a night,” says Iris Follows Metcalf, the middle child of Craig’s three. “It was perfectly delightful, about three kids who happened to have our names, Nancy, Iris and David, and who went to purchase a purple jackrabbit for their mum, accompanied by a cross-eyed bear called Gladly. It was full of her outrageous puns, but it was also a lesson for us. My sister was then going through a phase when she’d take everything too seriously. So, in one part of the story, we reached the Land of Literal-Mindedness, where if someone said, ‘I’ll be with you in a minute,’ everybody else timed her on the clock. It was Craig’s way of telling Nancy to ease up. I don’t remember how the thing ended, and unknowing twits that we were, we’d read it every night and just throw it away.”

Culled from *Murderess Ink*, Wikipedia, and www.thrillingdetective.com/trivia/rice.html

The Word of the Day is: Novella

by J.A. Jance

What are they? A novella is a literary form that is longer than a short story and shorter than a novel. I understand full well that novellas aren’t everybody’s cup of tea. The first time I bought one and realized it was ... well ... short, I was disappointed. And so, for the purpose of this newsletter, we’re going to begin by getting our literary terminology straight.

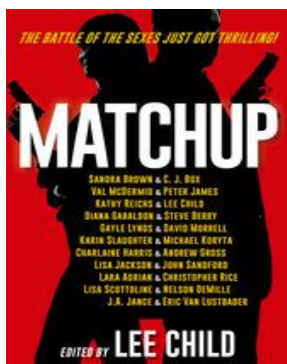
Short stories generally clock in at 2500 to 3000 words. Some can be as long as 5000, but that’s unusual. Novels are around 100,000 words long, give or take. My publishers will allow me 5000 words of flexibility in either direction, but here’s the not-so-artistic reason for that 100 K limitation: shipping boxes—STANDARD shipping boxes. If a given book’s word count comes in much over the 100,000 mark, one of two things will have to happen: either the print will have to be much smaller—and, as you see here, that is not a good idea—or the shipping boxes will be larger and hence non-standard. Let’s hear it for standard shipping boxes!

As for novellas? Word counts for them fall somewhere between those of short stories and novels. Think of them as the literary equivalent of a wine tasting. They're primarily aimed at new readers in order to give them a taste of various characters and story lines and to draw them in.

For the record, not all publishers handle novellas the same way. Simon and Schuster, the publisher in charge of my Ali Reynolds books, brings out novellas in both e-book and audio formats, but their ink-on-paper copies appear only in paperback editions of preceding hardbacks. This strategy is designed to encourage readers to pick up the next book coming out. Unfortunately, and in my opinion, that option does a disservice to my loyal hardback readers who, in order to have access to the new novella, are compelled to trot out and purchase the paperback edition of a book they've already read.

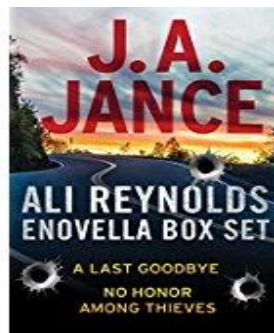
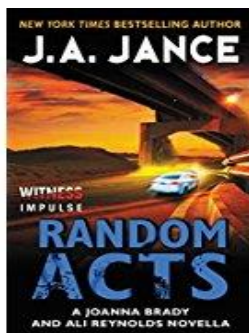
HarperCollins—Beaumonts, Bradys and Walkers—also publishes in e-book and audio formats along with the strategy of including the novella in the back of whatever paperback precedes the next hardcover book. That can sometimes be problematic and confusing, especially if the action in the novella is out of order in terms of the action in the novel itself. I'm trying to do a better job on that score. You'll find that the action in *Still Dead*, the novella that will appear in the back of the paperback edition of *Downfall*, will precede the action in the upcoming Beaumont book *Proof of Life* by a matter of several weeks.

To HarperCollins's great credit, however, when it comes to novellas, they have one additional trick up their sleeves. They print a separate mass market paperback edition of the novellas, which makes them accessible to my beloved DTRs—dead tree readers. This is NOT a hardcover edition—it's a paperback edition—but at least it's something print-only readers can hold in their ink-stained hands. Bookstores don't bring novellas in as a matter of course. If you want one of those babies, you'll probably need to place a special order, and you can count on both my newsletter and blog to let you know when placing those orders would be appropriate.



And appropriate timing is what brings me to my next topic—*Matchup*, the anthology I mentioned which goes on sale tomorrow. The idea of the book, undertaken by members of International Thriller Writers and edited by Lee Child, is a complex literary wine pairing, if you will. Two authors are teamed together to write a novella. In my case, my partner is Eric Van Lustbader of *Jason Bourne* fame. In the case of our novella, his protagonist is Bravo Shaw, while much of my part of the story is carried by Sister Anselm Becker from the Ali Reynolds books. In terms of literary wines, I'd be a summer Riesling and Eric a smoky port.

Reprinted with permission. J.A. Jance's novellas, also available as e-books, include *A Last Goodbye* (an Ali Reynolds story), *No Honor Among Thieves* and *Random Acts* (both Ali and Joanna Brady), and *Ring in the Dead* and *Stand Down* (J.P. Beaumont). For more news, go to: <http://www.jajance.com/>





MACAVITY AWARD NOMINEES 2017

The Macavity Awards are nominated by and voted on by members of Mystery Readers International, subscribers to *Mystery Readers Journal* and friends of MRI. If you're a member of MRI or a subscriber or friend and eligible to vote, you will receive a ballot on August 1, so get reading. The winners will be announced at opening ceremonies at Bouchercon in Toronto on October 12. Congratulations to all the nominees!

Best Novel

You Will Know Me by Megan Abbott (Little, Brown)
Dark Fissures by Matt Coyle (Oceanview)
Before the fall by Noah Hawley (Grand Central)
Real Tigers by Mick Herron (Soho)
Wilde Lake by Laura Lippman (Morrow)
A Great Reckoning by Louise Penny (Minotaur)

Best First Novel

The Widow by Fiona Barton (NAL)
Under the Harrow by Flynn Berry (Penguin)
Dodgers by Bill Beverly (No Exit Press)
IQ by Joe Ide (Mulholland Books)
Design for Dying by Renee Patrick (Forge)

Best Short Story

"Autumn at the Automat" by Lawrence Block (*Pegasus/In Sunlight or in Shadow*)
"Blank Shot" by Craig Faustus Buck (*Darkhouse Books/Black Coffee*)
"Survivor's Guild" by Greg Herren (*Down & Out Books/Blood on the Bayou*)
"Ghosts of Bunker Hill" by Paul D. Marks (*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, Dec 2016)
"The Crawl Space" by Joyce Carol Oates (*Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, Sep/Oct 2016)
"Parallel Play" by Art Taylor (*Wildside Press/Chesapeake Crimes: Storm Warning*)

Best Nonfiction

Mastering Suspense, Structure, and Plot: How to Write Gripping Stories that Keep Readers on the Edge of Their Seats by Jane K. Cleland (Writer's Digest Books)
Shirley Jackson: A Rather Haunted Life by Ruth Franklin (Liveright)
Sara Paretsky: A Companion to the Mystery Fiction by Margaret Kinsman (McFarland)
Something in the Blood: The Untold Story of Bram Stoker, the Man Who Wrote Dracula by David J. Akal (Liveright)
The Wicked Boy: The Mystery of a Victorian Child Murderer by Kate Summerscale (Penguin)

Sue Feder Memorial Award for Best Historical Novel

A Death Along the River Fleet by Susanna Calkins (Minotaur)
Jane Steele by Lyndsay Faye (G.P. Putnam's Sons)
Delivering the Truth by Edith Maxwell (Midnight Ink)
The Reek of Red Herrings by Catriona McPherson (Minotaur)
What Gold Buys by Ann Parker (Poisoned Pen Press)
Heart of Stone by James W. Ziskin (Seventh Street Books)

For more information about the Mystery Readers Journal/Mystery Readers International, or the Macavity Awards and past nominees and winners, go to <http://mysteryreaders.org/macavity-awards/>

Reviews

Rob's Random Shots

Two strikeouts and a base hit

July Case File Number 1

The Bone Collector by Jeffrey Deaver. Berkley 1998, 454 pp.

This is the first volume in the best-selling Lincoln Rhyme and Amelia Sachs forensic mysteries. I wish I could say I liked it and intend to read more, but I don't and I can't. Perhaps the series gets better in subsequent volumes.

The book starts with the kidnapping of a woman in a stolen taxi at New York's JFK airport. From the kidnapper's and the victim's point of view, we see him bury her in dirt in an unnamed location.

Cut to the POV of NYPD rookie uniformed officer Amelia Sachs, who is supposed to be transferring to Public Affairs. She's shanghaied by quadriplegic police forensic expert Lincoln Rhyme when she goes to his home (he's bedridden with an intensive array of life support machines and a small staff). In short order, clues begin to come in and Amelia is sent on the first of many errands of discovery.

Children are endangered, probably molested, and the Rhyme-Sachs team begins a painstaking examination of crime scene evidence. The reader learns how exhaustive this process can be, but Rhyme makes many Holmes-like deductions that help save some of the continuing stream of victims, but not all.

There are many (too many) breathtaking car rides either to obtain evidence or bring a recovered victim to be debriefed by Rhyme, who makes more spectacular jumps of intuition/deduction.

Finally, after the rescue of one victim by Amelia, who is then taken and also buried alive (but rescued with her mouth filled with dirt). There is a sort of solution, but a few pages later there is an unbelievable unmasking of the real kidnapper/killer readers will never see coming.

Beyond description. This has since become a best-selling series. If you've read this book or any of the others, please feel free to send an alternative review to the *Nooseletter* editor. ♦

July Case File Number 2

Hang on to your seats. The next book is probably the only boring and inconclusive trash that mystery goddess Agatha Christie ever wrote:

Ordeal by Innocence by Agatha Christie.

William Morrow reissue 2010, 292 pages (PB)

The murder in this story is (off screen and some months before) of a young man, heir to a local family's fortune. What sets this apart from all other mysteries is that the central character/investigator, Arthur Calgary, is an arctic explorer, but also an amateur sleuth (no Poirot here, not even Miss Jane Marple or Tommy and Tuppence Beresford).

Calgary gave a lift to a younger man in this village the year before, then spent the next year with an Antarctic expedition. When he returns, he finds that the young man he befriended was convicted of murder and his alibi, that he was in a car en route home, was dismissed when no driver stepped forward to corroborate his story.

Calgary proceeds to tell the assembled family and servants his story and feels compelled to investigate, since the local police will not reopen what they consider a closed case.

Calgary does not remain the point-of-view character, however. Some of the heirs question each other about whereabouts at the time of the murder. Some confide other matters, but there is no one at the investigative helm for a large part of the book. This multiple viewpoint arrangement is not one we see in most classic mysteries, including Christie's. The usual POV is over the shoulder of the investigator.

The solution comes to Calgary without very much preceding detail to help readers make up their own minds. Calgary leaves at the end, and it is not clear whether the police will follow up. Other members of the family and staff may take matters into their own hands, but readers do not learn of this.

All in all, very disappointing. Don't waste days reading this when there are many better Christies. ♦

Key:

PB = Mass Market Paperback

TP = Trade paperback

HC = Hardcover

Note: Most titles also available as e-books.

July Case File Number 3

Desert Heat by J.A. Jance. Avon Reprint 2009, 384 pp (PB).

I'm glad I found one rose among the thorns for this issue. Not my usual good luck.

This is the first in the Joanna Brady small-town mystery series set in Arizona and begins with her and her daughter preparing a meal for the husband's return from working a police shift. Joanna gets a phone call that her husband went off the road between Tucson and home and has been taken to a hospital. She leaves their daughter with her own mother nearby and drives frantically to the hospital. No one wants to let her get to his bedside and she's forced to sit in the waiting room.

A doctor approaches her an hour later to tell Joanna her husband has died from his injuries. Police won't even let her see the body, concerned that evidence in his car may indicate he was involved in assisting drug traffickers, a charge she vehemently denies.

On her way home, she stops at the point on the highway where Andy was killed and finds the tracks of another car beyond Andy's and the rescue vehicles. She finds out later that her husband was forced off the highway, then shot. Stonewalled by Andy's police friends, who appear to believe the drug connection may have been true, she begins her own investigation.

She uses some techniques she learned from her husband and pursues a faint lead: A man posing as a doctor visited the hospital while Andy was alone in the recovery room. No one can find him and one woman at reception let a man dressed in scrubs and with a doctor's bag go up beyond the lobby. But no one can find the doctor, and the community believes the story about Andy and drug dealers.

Eventually Joanna goes to Tucson to follow a lead and she and her mother are stalked by a mysterious man whom they manage to evade but not identify. In a thrilling conclusion, the killer is found, Andy is exonerated (he investigated the drug ring while under cover), and Joanna decides to run for sheriff herself. With public sympathy for Andy high, she wins over an older, more experienced male candidate. The day after the election, Joanna finds herself sheriff, a position she will hold for the rest of the series.

I hope you'll add Joanna Brady to your list of must-read sleuths. ♦

—Rob Kresge (rkresge777@comcast.net)

C&D Members!

Your *Nooseletter* wants to hear news of your latest releases, good news of any kind, and all about that terrific mystery you just read. Email news and reviews to the address on page 2.

Thereby Hangs a Tail by Spencer Quinn. Atria Books, 2010, 309 pp (HC)

This is the second of eight (so far) Chet and Bernie mysteries, following *Dog On It*.

Bernie Little is a PI, hired by a rich socialite to guard her prized show dog, Princess, one of those fluff balls that hardly seem canine at all (my cat could beat it up). Chet is Bernie's dog—and the narrator of the story, which surprisingly enough works very well, particularly since Chet is very much a dog, easily distracted by new smells and old roadkill, which makes for humorous asides and will no doubt elicit smiles from readers who have dogs.

Neither sleuth has much tolerance for airheads, human or canine, but they need the hefty protection fee for guarding Princess. Unfortunately, the fluff ball goes missing almost immediately, and her owner refuses to pay for the non-protection before suddenly going missing herself, so Chet and Bernie have to track them both down.

The trail leads to a dusty ghost town, where man and hound get separated, but Chet doggedly (I had to use the word somewhere) pursues the case. He finds the missing pooch but can't find his way home. Nonetheless, there being a soft heart beneath the matted fur, he gets protective toward the ditzzy Princess.

Bernie, meanwhile is more concerned about the fate of his sometime girlfriend, Suzy, who's also gone missing (really). The action gets pretty lively, involving a corrupt small-town sheriff, a disgruntled dog trainer, and a couple of hippies, all of whose motives have to be disentangled by our intrepid duo.

Despite his trouble focusing on human conversations, Chet is not only an excellent detective, but his first-dog narration pulls the reader along at a pace anyone at the other end of a leash with an eager 100-pound pooch can identify with. It's all a lot of fun.

Other titles in the series are *Thereby Hangs a Tail*, *A Cat Was Involved*, and *Paw and Order*. ♦

—Linda Triegel (ljt23@earthlink.net)

Series mysteries:

All reviews by Susan Zates

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

A Vow of Fidelity by Veronica Black. Soho Crime, 2003, 240 pp (PB)

(Book 7 in the Sister Joan mystery series set in late-20th-century Cornwall)

Helpful descriptions remind us of details forgotten over the course of recent books in the series. Joan is 38, has a small trim body, short curly black hair, and blue eyes. Twenty years ago she was in art college, in love with Jacob, but a mixed-religion marriage was impossible for them. She followed her strong religious calling into the convent, but she still feels pangs of guilt over all the pictures not painted.

The Daughters of Compassion convent house is the former Tarquin family estate, with signs of elegance: molded ceilings, carved balustrade. The grand rooms have been subdivided very simply without decoration, to provide sleeping cells for the nuns. The convent is in need of funds, so Mother Dorothy proposes they offer quiet retreats for fund-raising. She allows Sister Joan to attend a reunion of fellow art college classmates, with the hope they may visit as a retreat.

When Joan discovers that a few classmates have died prematurely, then additional friends are killed, she is certain there must be an evil intent. It started when they all received a summons to meet that no one admits to sending. Between convent duties, Joan is allowed to pursue clues and solve the mystery.

A cozy mystery with a likable protagonist; pleasant reading. ♦

The Bad Quarto by Jill Paton Walsh. Minotaur 2007 (HC)

(4th book of the Imogen Quay mystery series set in late-20th-century Cambridge England)

Imogen is the college nurse at St. Agatha's. She originally trained as a casualty nurse (ER) but found the calmer academic setting more to her liking. She pedals her bike to work each day, and lives simply on a tight budget. She is fortunate to have a lodger she likes as a friend; frequently Fran and Imogen cook and eat dinner together.

Fran and her boyfriend Josh belong to a thespian club. In a club meeting at Imogen's house, she is drawn into their moral controversy. Due to a

careless treasurer, they were uninsured when a man was seriously injured in a fire; now they are responsible. Martin Mottle, a student at a nearby college, has offered to pay the club a huge sum that will resolve their debts, if they let him star in *Hamlet*. The director selects *The Bad Quarto*, a shorter version of the play than is usually performed.

Imogen is curious about Martin Mottle's motive. She researches the Night Climbers, risk-takers who climb buildings (strictly forbidden). She remembers John Talentire, a St. Agatha's fellow who performed a dangerous jump from a tower to the roof of another building, then fell to his death. Martin was his best friend.

Now Talentire's father has been proposed for a 3-year college honorary position of distinction. In opposition is a science professor who thinks the man has testified as expert witness on infant deaths for many years with too little evidence to justify his testimony.

Imogen is consulted by Samantha, a student worried about her roommate Susan's temper. Susan is a scholarship student, from a less privileged background than most other students. Imogen discovers she had a difficult childhood in foster care, but seems to have mostly overcome her past.

All these seemingly unrelated plot threads are interconnected, as Imogen eventually learns. Imogen Quay mysteries have philosophical and/or moral quandaries, with leisurely paced discussions rather than swift action. Interesting and pleasant entertainment. However, there is a scene in this book that would be striking in a film—the Night Climbers tribute. ♦

Boar Island by Nevada Barr. Minotaur 2016, 385 p (PB)

(19th book of the Anna Pigeon mystery series set in US National Parks)

Anna is a National Park Service Ranger. She's tough and resilient, fiercely loyal to her friend Heath, their Aunt Gwen, and Heath's adopted daughter Elizabeth ("E"). When Elizabeth falls victim to cyber-harassment, loses her best friend, and has her reputation sullied at school, Anna has no clue how to find an electronic stalker. But she recommends that Gwen, Heath and E travel with her to Maine, where she will be Acting Chief Ranger at Acadia National Park. They will stay on Boar Island near the park, for a welcome break from the hostile situation at home. The wild coastal setting should provide a balm to E's emotional health.

Park Ranger Denise Castle is filled with hate for her ex-boyfriend and his new wife. She rages at his fatherly love for his baby daughter, since he forced Denise to abort when they were a couple. Fostered since babyhood, Denise resents everyone with a family. When she meets Paulette, her life changes forever, and she crafts a terrible plan. Paulette is an abused wife with a victim personality. She goes along with Denise's plan...almost.

Acts of violence prove that Gwen, Heath and E are not safe. Luckily they have a few experienced lobstermen for local allies. They absolutely need all the protection they can get. Even Anna is not safe from attack.

In the end, Anna survives a tense violent scene, all is revealed, and justice prevails. The many plots rely entirely upon coincidental events, accidents, and just-perfect timing. Too far-fetched for me. The national park itself is usually a significant context for each of Anna's cases, but not this time. The focus is rather on Heath's equipment. A paraplegic, she is frustrated with being confined to a wheelchair. A scientific researcher has crafted a device Heath is happy to test. Once she straps herself into the contraption of metal and electronics she calls "Dem Bones", it's possible for her to 'walk' (free of the wheelchair). ♦

Bitter End by Christine Kling. Little Brown, 2011, 358 p (HC)

(Book 3 of the Seychelle Sullivan mystery series set in contemporary Ft. Lauderdale)

Seychelle watches in shock as Nick Pontus, a man she hates, is shot on his boat. She acts swiftly to rescue his yacht from sinking.

Nick was married to Seychelle's childhood best friend Molly. Years ago, Molly had dated and was in love with Seychelle's brother Pit. But Molly suddenly dropped out of school, married Nick, and never spoke to Seychelle again. Losing their beloved friend still hurts Seychelle and Pit.

Now Molly is the prime suspect in Nick's murder, and she needs Seychelle's help—to shelter Molly's teenage son Zale. Not only does Seychelle need to find out who killed Nick (Russian mob? trophy wife?) but she must protect Zale from sneak attacks on his life (from Indian gaming thugs? ecological protesters?).

Complex side plots, wide variety of suspicious villains, plenty of fast-paced action and suspense, and of course sailing adventures. Seychelle recovers her best friend, and deepens her relationship with B.J. A happy surprise ending. ♦

Crescent City Kill by Julie Smith. Ivy Books, 1998, 368 pp (PB)

(Book 7 of the Skip Langdon mystery series set in late-20th-century New Orleans)

Skip Langdon is a homicide detective with the New Orleans Police Department. A new clandestine organization called The Jury specializes in murdering those they feel are guilty of crime but have escaped punishment. Skip recognizes the evil influence of her purely evil adversary, Errol Jacomine, in The Jury.

Skip knows Jacomine will come after her one day and fears he will harm her loved ones first, to devastate her. Warning: Read the previous book first, to fully understand the dire threat Jacomine poses. Best idea: read the series in sequential order, to understand Skip and her relationships.

Jacomine's teenage granddaughter, Lovelace, is kidnapped by her own father, but escapes to New Orleans, where her artist uncle Isaac lives. He's known as the White Monk, dresses only in white, and has taken a vow of silence. He loves his niece dearly, and wishes to shelter and protect her. But her presence in his apartment causes great inner turmoil, due to his obsessive-compulsive need to continually clean all his belongings, and touch no one.

While Jacomine hunts for his granddaughter, so does Skip. Eventually she gains the girl's trust, and together they face off against The Jury in a suspenseful conclusion. ♦



Gloria "The Hand" Casale assists Ann "The Prez" Zeigler setting up this month's display (see also page 1) of award-winning books by NM authors in the Moriarty Library's Locked Room. Come check us out!

2017 MEETING DATES

Tuesday, July 25, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, August 22, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, September 26, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, October 24, 7:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 28, 7:00 p.m.

Meetings are free to the public.

Unless otherwise noted, meetings are held every fourth Tuesday of the month, at 7:00 p.m., at the North Domingo Baca Multigenerational Center at 7521 Carmel Avenue NE, north of Paseo del Norte and west of Wyoming. Check our Web site, www.croak-and-dagger.com, for schedule changes and upcoming programs.

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. ♦

†Nooseletter Submissions†

Croak & Dagger friends are encouraged to contribute articles, reviews, and essays on aspects of mystery writing *and* reading for publication consideration. Information on relevant conferences or events is also welcome. 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 29, 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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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.sistersincrim.org>. For information about your local chapter, contact our membership chair at pwood73@comcast.net.