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September 2021
Compiled by MysteryWriters.org

Volunteers Needed

With online events the norm—at least for now—SoCalMWA is looking for a tech-savvy person (or a tech committee) to handle our remote events and/or social media accounts.

To learn more, [email SoCalMWA President Jessica Kaye](#).

BOOKS

Tori Eldridge, *THE NINJA BETRAYED*, Polis Books–Agora
Eric J. Guignard, *EXPLORING DARK SHORT FICTION #6: A PRIMER TO RAMSEY CAMPBELL*, Dark Moon
Rachel Howzell Hall, *THESE TOXIC THINGS*, Amazon–Thomas & Mercer
Betty Hechtman, *WRITING A WRONG*, Severn House
William Burton McCormick, *KGB BANKER*, Milford House Press
Dennis Palumbo, *PANIC ATTACK*, Poisoned Pen Press
Matt Witten, *THE NECKLACE*, Oceanview Publishing

SHORT STORIES

Matt Goldman, "Sixteen Lies," EQMM
William Burton McCormick, "Demon in the Depths," EQMM



The President's Rap Sheet

Jessica Kaye

October. Like it or not, pumpkin spice is back. Los Angeles had some cool days recently and it felt like autumn, albeit briefly. Leaves are falling in my neighborhood. Possums still come by for their nightly breakfast.

Covid marches on and home stay is still recommended. In the U.S., Covid deaths just passed the 700,000 mark. Also on the health front, flu shots are back and so are allergies.

In short, same stuff, slightly different season. For our members elsewhere, you may be getting a true change of seasons. Anyone care to [share a photo or two](#)? We are a word-oriented group but the other arts can spark ours.

Heads up, [NaNoWriMo](#) is coming again in November. The first time I managed to write 50,000 words of a novel was by using NaNoWriMo as motivation. That novel remains unfinished but some day I may figure out how to get my protagonist from where he is to where I need him to be.

What do you use to help navigate your plot holes? I would love to hear from you and share advice with the Chapter. Take a few minutes to [email me](#) your good ideas, please!

Well, I am off to buy Halloween candy I don't like so that I won't be tempted to eat it myself. For me, that means Whoppers because I have never liked malt. On the plus side, they are hugely loved by just about everyone else, it seems.

[What are your candy likes and dislikes?](#) For the record, I am a fan of beleaguered candy corn. It tastes like vanilla. How can anyone not like that?

Until next month, stay safe.

Jessica

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SoCalMWA Discussion Group

- Member introductions
- Ideas for book launches & other book promotion
- Publishing insights & tips
- Book deal announcements
- Blog post promotion & discussion
- Book reviews
- Support & Networking
- And more!

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The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

I don't generally refer to things I like as "guilty pleasures." I figure that if I find something enjoyable, why should I feel guilty about it?

But if, indeed, there is such a thing as a guilty pleasure, I most certainly have found it. Readers, let me introduce you to "The Circle."

Netflix describes "The Circle" as follows: Status and strategy collide in this social experiment and competition show where online players flirt, befriend, and catfish their way toward \$100,000."

I'd like to tell you that "The Circle" is so much more than this description would have you think, but I can't. It's exactly what it purports to be and nothing more, yet I can't stop watching it.

I'm no stranger to binge watching reality competitions. I accepted this about myself a long time ago, though the pandemic certainly brought an increase in my consumption of this type of programming. Some of them my husband even watches with me; we've bonded over "Survivor," "The Amazing Race," and, of course, "The Great British Bake-Off." All classier fare than, say, "Love is Blind" and "Floor is Lava" (both of which I watched by myself).

Ah. You're probably waiting for me to get around to what this has to do with writing. If you guessed "nothing," you're closer to the truth than I'd like to admit, but in my quest to paint my "guilty" viewing as "research," I've come up with two things.

The first is language and style, particularly that of Gen Z. As a solid Gen Xer, I sometimes find the language and customs of the Generation Z... unfamiliar. I don't have kids and I rarely spend time with anyone under thirty-five. Since I occasionally want to write characters who are significantly younger than myself, I mostly turn to TV and sometimes, movies, to educate myself. "The Circle" loosely falls into this category. P.S. I still don't know what "kiki" means.

Second is the cliffhanger, or, in the case of writers, chapter breaks. "The Circle" editors are very good at ending an episode at just the right point to entice me to watch another. And then another. Obviously there are plenty of better examples if I'm truly looking for guidance on this subject but my recent binging of "The Circle" has served to remind me of how powerful a good cliffhanger can be.

What's your "guilty" pleasure viewing? [Do tell.](#)

Holly

The March of Crime is the newsletter of the Southern California Chapter of the Mystery Writers of America.

Editor: [Holly West](#)

Opinions expressed herein are those of the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Mystery Writers of America Southern California Chapter.

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Join the SoCalMWA Discussion Group

groups.io/g/MWA-SOCAL
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OVER the TRANSOM

William Burton McCormick's international financial thriller *KGB BANKER* (Milford House Press/Sunbury Press) was published on September 14. The novel, co-written with a real-life whistleblower against the Russian mob, John Christmas, has already received endorsements from such thriller luminaries as Steve Berry, Robert Dugoni, Jon Land, Antony Johnston, Chris Goff, V.S. Kemanis, **Ronald S. Barak** and others. The thriller features Latvian sleuth Santa Ezerina, who also stars in the novella "Demon in the Depths" in the September/October issue of *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*. Learn more at williamburtonmccormick.com.

Lee Goldberg's new book, *GATED PREY*, comes out on October 26. [See related events](#).

IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE MURDER, the third Catering Hall Mystery, which **Ellen Byron** writes under the pen name "Maria DiRico" releases October 26.

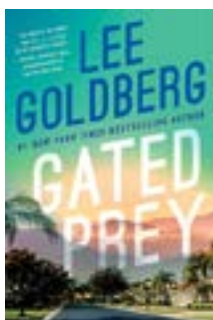
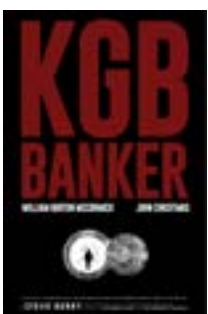
Serita Stevens' forensic nurse series has been optioned by Wolper Productions and will soon (we hope) be on the television. Tentative title is "Suspicious Minds."

Jeri Westerson's *LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED*, a gaslamp fantasy/steampunk novel and the third in her Enchanter Chronicles Trilogy, will be released on October 15. See [related events](#).

MURDER GETS A MAKEOVER, the eighteenth book in **Laura Levine's** *Jaine Austen Mystery* series, is now out from Kensington Books.

Martin Roy Hill's latest Peter Brandt mystery thriller, *THE FOURTH RISING*, was named 2021 Best Crime Thriller by the American Fiction Awards. This is the third such honor for the mystery, which involves a missing cache of stolen WWII gold being used to fund a resurgence of the Nazi Party movement. It was also named 2020 Best Mystery by the Best Independent Book Awards, and received the 2021 Clue Award for Best Suspense Thriller from the Chanticleer International Book Awards.

Shea E. Butler's sequel to her chat story "9-1-1" was released on the SHORTZ story app on September 28. It continues the story of Alisha, a teenage kidnap victim, as she runs for her life after escaping from her kidnapers through rugged woods in upstate New York. It's her 4th chat story published on the app.



OVER the TRANSOM

Aaron Philip Clark's new thriller, *UNDER COLOR OF LAW*, publishes on October 1 by Thomas & Mercer. Set in 2014, LAPD Detective Trevor "Finn" Finnegan is tasked to investigate the death of a police recruit amid protests against police brutality and calls for reform. As pressure mounts to solve the crime and avoid a PR nightmare, Finn scours the underbelly of a volatile city where power, violence, and race intersect. But it's Finn's past experience as a beat cop that may hold the key to solving the recruit's murder. The price? The end of Finn's career...or his life.

The anthology *WHODUNIT* (Jersey Pines Ink) reprinted two stories by **Peter DiChellis** that originally appeared in *Mystery Weekly Magazine*. "The Mysterious Meatball Autopsy" originally appeared in 2017 and "Treasure Cave" originally appeared in 2018. Additionally, the online site *Fabula Argentea* reprinted Peter's story "Callingdon Mountain" (originally appeared in the anthology *THE BEST LAID PLANS* in 2019).

SIDEWAYS author Rex Pickett's debut mystery *THE ARCHIVIST*, a multi-layered crime thriller set in a university special collections and archives, will be published by Blackstone Publishing on November 9 in all forms, including audiobook. "Pickett does for university archives what Raymond Chandler did for L.A." —Janet Somerville, *YOURS FOR PROBABLY ALWAYS*

DEATH IN A SMALL TOWN by **Gay Toltl Kinman** was narrated by actress and mystery writer **Harley Jane Kozak**. A burned-out LA County ADA becomes a city attorney for a small town where she believes a suicide is not that at all. Anyone wanting a code for a free audio download of the book, please email gaykinman@gaykinman.com.



Member APPEARANCES

Lee Goldberg will be doing several events to celebrate the release of *GATED PREY*. Wednesday, October 20, 10 a.m.–2 p.m.: [Alamo Women's Club Sixth Annual Authors Faire](#) with Rhys Bowen, Tim Tigner, Robert Dugoni, and Penny Warner in San Ramon, California. Tickets, including brunch and valet parking, are \$65, on sale now. Email [Jerilyn Strong](#) or [Sandi McKae](#) for more info. Tuesday, October 26, 7 p.m.: Launch Day Event for *GATED PREY*, Lee will be in conversation with **Rachel Howzell Hall**, Calabasas Library, 200 Civic Center Way, Calabasas. Wednesday, October 27, 7 p.m.: Bank of Books, 748 E. Main Street, Ventura. Thursday, October 28, 7 p.m.: Mysterious Galaxy Bookstore, 3555 Rosecrans St. #407, San Diego. Friday, October 29, 5 p.m. Poisoned Pen Bookstore Zoom Event/Discussion with **Matt Witten**. Saturday, October 30, 11 a.m.: Mystery Ink Talk, Party, and Signing, 807 Warner Ave. #150, Huntington Beach. Saturday, October 30, 2 p.m.: Book Carnival Talk and Signing, 348 Tustin St., Orange.



Jennifer J. Chow (Sassy Cat Mysteries) will be in virtual conversation with Kate Lansing (Colorado Wine Mysteries) at the Tattered Cover Book Store on Tuesday, October 26 at 5 p.m. MT/4 p.m. PT. Access the event [here](#).

Holly West interviewed **Josh Stallings** about his latest novel, *TRICKY*, for her YouTube channel in September. You can watch the interview [here](#).

On October 5, **Ellen Byron** will join **August Norman**, **Jennifer J. Chow**, **Wendall Thomas**, and Catriona McPherson for the Sisters in Crime webinar, “Writing Humor.” Members and non-members may [register here](#). For a list of other events Ellen will be doing to celebrate her release, check out the Appearances page on her [website](#).

Andrew Kaplan will be discussing his award-winning #1 Amazon Hot New Release political thriller, *BLUE MADAGASCAR*, on Sunday, October 24 at 4 p.m. at Temple Sinai in Palm Desert.

Mystery Ink has a new location: 7552 Warner Ave., Unit 101, Huntington Beach. October events—October 10, 3 p.m.: **DP Lyle** will launch *THE OC*. October 16, 2 p.m.: James McGrath Morris will talk about his new book, *TONY HILLERMAN: A LIFE*. October 26 and 30, events for **Lee Goldberg** (see above).

Matt Witten, author of *THE NECKLACE*, will do a virtual book talk at the San Diego Writers Festival on Tuesday, October 5 at 5 p.m.

Jeri Westerson's in-person launch celebration for *LIBRARY OF THE DAMNED* is on Saturday, October 23, at 2 p.m. Food and drink, magic, games, and giveaways. Free to the public. Look for a storefront at 2359 Lincoln Ave., Altadena and go all the way through the building to the private back patio. Masks required. Please bring your own camp chair. RSVP to jeriwesterson@gmail.com. See JeriWesterson.com for the Facebook launch link.

Member APPEARANCES

To celebrate the paperback release of her bestselling, award-winning debut book **DARK ARCHIVES: A LIBRARIAN'S INVESTIGATION INTO THE SCIENCE AND HISTORY OF BOOKS BOUND IN HUMAN SKIN**, UCLA librarian and author **Megan Rosenbloom** will be in conversation with Chris Connelly (MTV, ABC News, ESPN) at the Philosophical Research Society in Los Feliz Saturday, November 6 at 7 p.m. Sponsored by Skylight Books, the event will feature the conversation, a reading, and an outdoor book signing opportunity. Proof of vaccination and indoor masking required. [More information](#).

Tori Eldridge winds up her virtual book tour for **THE NINJA BETRAYED** (Lily Wong #3) at [Cook Library Authors Out Loud: The Art of Crime Writing](#) (Tuesday, 10/12, 5 p.m. PT) with Tracy Clark, Cheryl Head, and **Rachel Howzell Hall**. Then join Tori at [The Back Room](#) (Sunday, 10/17, 4 p.m. PT) with Lisa Unger, Jonathan Santlofer, and Lori Rader-Day. Finally, stay tuned in October for the stunning cover reveal for her upcoming Brazilian suspense, **DANCE AMONG THE FLAMES!**



IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR

With board elections coming up, it's time for SoCalMWA members to think about running.

Serving on SoCalMWA's board provides an opportunity to share your expertise, network, get to know our members, and to give back to the community.

To learn more, [email SoCalMWA President Jessica Kaye](#).

A Little Something on the Side

by **Donis Casey**

I'm a puzzle aficionado, and start every day by reading the paper front to back, and then working all the puzzles. This is not quite the time consuming activity it used to be a few years ago, when the daily paper actually had news in it. But at least the puzzles get my brain revved up for the day. One of my favorite puzzles is the Jumble, which consists of an anagram of a quotation from a well-known person. Not long ago I deciphered a quotation by Truman Capote which, as a writer, I found quite insightful. It is as follows:

“Writing has laws of perspective, of light and shade, just as painting does, or music.”

Perspective is a sense of depth. It is a way to show things in their true relationship to one another, a way to make them seem real. The characters who people a novel are what the majority of readers care about the most. Action and suspense and an intricate plot are all fantastic, but if we aren't invested in the characters, we don't much care if they get it all worked out, or if they escape the danger, or figure out who did the deed. And if the author can create a series with true and appealing characters, then the reader will want to read the next installment, and the next.

So, your characters are involved in the intricacies of the plot. The sleuth has to find out who committed the crime, or who is chasing him, and why. The red herrings have to prove they didn't do it. The killer has to throw the hunters off his trail. But if the characters only exist to serve the plot, so what? If instead, the plot exists to reveal the characters ... now you're talking.

What does this have to do with perspective, you ask? Well, have a seat, for I'm about to tell you.

A side story exists in a novel for the sole purpose of adding depth. It's through a side story that the reader discovers why the sleuth is like she is. Why is she so obsessive about unravelling this particular crime, even though she's been removed from the case, or fired by the client, or threatened with death if she perseveres? Could it be because the victim so reminds her of her own mother, who also was a battered woman? We find this out not because the author simply tells us, but because the sleuth goes home after a long day of detecting, and her mother is there, fixing dinner. We discover through successive scenes, actions and conversations, that her mother is physically and psychologically damaged from years of abuse. Perhaps she's agoraphobic. Perhaps she finally shot her abuser and spent time in prison. Perhaps the sleuth was ten years old when this all happened, and to this day is riddled with guilt that she was not able to help her mother at the time.

None of this has to do with the major plot line, which concerns the discovery in an alley of a murdered woman whose body shows signs of years of trauma. Was she perhaps a professional show-jump rider, or a downhill skier? A roller derby skater? Or maybe she was a battered woman. Our sleuth cannot help her now, just as she couldn't help her mother. But perhaps she can show the poor woman justice.

The side story has given the sleuth a life apart from her job. Now the reader knows her as a person, and, we hope, cares about her and is rooting for her to succeed.

Donis Casey is the author of *VALENTINO WILL DIE*, the second episode (following *THE WRONG GIRL*, 2019) of a fresh new series starring Bianca LaBelle, heroine of the silent screen action serial “The Adventures of Bianca Dan-gereuse,” as well as ten *Alafair Tucker Mysteries*, set in Oklahoma during the booming 1910s and featuring the sleuthing mother of ten children.

The
LAST WORD

“I make being a police officer sound storybook—the sanctified knight gallivanting through the countryside, facing the dire and dark. It’s some potent panty-peeler, but it couldn’t be further from the truth.”

—UNDER COLOR OF LAW, Aaron Philip Clark