

Crime Scene

A Sisters in Crime Toronto Chapter Publication



June 2018

President's Message

By Kate Freiman

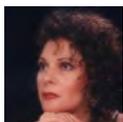
Spring has finally sprung, and I'm sure many of us are looking forward to spending time under a shady tree or beach umbrella with a glass of iced tea (or beverage of your choice) and a gripping mystery or suspense novel.

But what about the lighter side of murder and mayhem? Come to the Toronto SinC meeting on June 21 for a panel on humour in crime fiction, from an appreciative smile to an out-loud guffaw. Death might not be a laughing matter, but sometimes detection is.

While enjoying your summer, remember to check the Toronto SinC website at least weekly for news and events, and do check out all the interesting posts on our [Facebook page](#). Lots of articles, book suggestions and the occasionally oddball bit of information – did you see the [article I posted](#), by Kathleen Ramsland, about serial killers who prefer redheads? Can't help wondering if we bottle redheads need to be worried, too! – and especially our own chapter authors' releases and activities.

To make sure you get the most timely announcements of meetings and other events, send any changes to your contact info to our communications chair, [Marilyn Kay](#).

Hope to see many of you at [Ben McNally Books](#) for our July field trip and at the August potluck. And then we're back at the library for September's meeting to hear from [Nathan Ripley](#) about his debut thriller, *Find You in the Dark!*



Kate Freiman is the president of Sisters in Crime Toronto.

Sisters in Crime Upcoming Programs

Location for our monthly meetings:
Northern District Branch, Toronto Public Library, Room 200, 7 pm, 40 Orchard View Blvd., 416-393-7610

Interested in supper before the meeting? Starting at 5 pm some of us get together for dinner at the **Pickel Barrel**, 2300 Yonge St., just around the corner from the library. They offer healthy options at reasonable prices.

Thursday, June 21, 2018

Die Laughing: Humour in Crime Fiction
A panel discussion moderated by **Lynn McPherson** featuring authors **Melodie Campbell, Elizabeth J. Duncan, Steve Schrott** and Ginger Bolton/Janet Bolin.

Thursday, July 19, 2018

Annual Field Trip, at **Ben McNally Books**, 366 Bay St, Toronto. 20 mysteries in 20 minutes: Check our webpage for details.

Thursday, August 16, 2018

Annual Potluck at Jane Peterson Burfield's condo party room. Details on webpage.

Keep up with your sisters!



[Sisters in Crime – Toronto Chapter](#)



[@SinC_Toronto](#)



www.torontosistersincrime.ca

Interactive Storytelling: One More Story Games

By Kathleen Fraser

Thursday, April 19, SinC Toronto welcomed Jean and Blair Leggett of [One More Story Games](#) to speak with us about interactive storytelling and the variety of innovative and creative technical options writers can use to communicate with readers and tell a story.

Jean introduced herself as the “talkie” and Blair as the “techie.” Some of us first heard about the Leggetts at Bouchercon 2017, where they featured their Lily Bard game, [Shakespeare’s Landlord](#), based on books by and developed in collaboration with Charlaine Harris, the bestselling author of the *Sookie Stackhouse* (*True Blood*) mysteries.



The Leggetts believe there is a hidden marketplace for writers in games. They revealed somewhat surprising numbers about who is playing games: half of all Canadians have played

games – on their phones, their computers, online – in the last month. Furthermore, they asserted that women over the age of 50 are a rapidly growing segment.

They talked about the popularity of puzzle games with hidden objects, and narrative-driven games. The number one reason people, especially boys, are attracted to certain games, they say, is graphics. The number two reason is “story” – and that element especially appeals to women.

“Story tellers of the world deserve access to this marketplace,” says Blair. “You’ve got the stories, we’ve got the technology.”

They created [Story Stylus](#) to provide an easy-to-use game-creation program for storytellers. *Story Stylus* allows writers to create interactive stories that include complex visuals and audio – and incorporate levels of decision-making in which player choices affect the experience and possible outcomes of the stories.

The Leggetts showed us screen shots from an award-winning game called [Danielle’s Inferno](#), which they helped create with a story and original art by a young woman who goes by the name of Olivia



Rivard. Another amusing game, [Attack of the Killer Zombie Cats](#), was created by an 11-year-old at One More Story Games’ summer camp. According to their website, “You play as Barack or Michelle Obama to battle to save Earth from the Killer Zombie Cats. Everyone has disappeared except you, Donald Trump aka Trumpy Cat, and his evil horde of infected zombie cats who have been poisoned! Can you save the world by defeating evil? Can you find the antidote in time?”



But the Leggetts believe their platform can also allow adult writers to tackle more mature subjects and produce content relevant to adults, as they did with the Lily Bard story, in which the main character is coping with post-traumatic stress disorder from violent trauma.

If you’re searching for new ways to “level up” your writing, “unleash your creativity,” find new markets, or just have fun, *One More Story Games* and *Story Stylus* are worth a look: <https://onemorestorygames.com/>.



Have You Got A Short Story Simmering? Better Get Cooking!

The next Malice Domestic anthology has been announced: *Mystery Most Edible*. Deadline is August 31, 2018. Visit malicedomestic.org/anthologies.html. While you’re thinking about it, check out **Judy Penz Sheluk’s** tips on how not to get rejected *before* the judges even look at your story in her article on page 11, “Submitting to an Anthology: One Volunteer’s Perspective.” Hint: For this particular competition, the story *must have* a significant gastronomic or culinary aspect.

Maaja Wentz: From Wattpad to Published Book

By Jennifer Soosar

Author [Maaja Wentz](#) came to speak at our SinC Toronto May 17 meeting about her experiences on an exciting, free digital publishing platform called [Wattpad](#), and how it led to the publication of her first novel, *Feeding Frenzy*.

With six novels (and dozens of short stories) hiding in her drawer, Maaja thought conducting an “artistic experiment” on Wattpad would help her get over the submission anxiety she felt in sending out her work. She decided to post the young adult novel she was writing for NaNoWriMo on Wattpad, one chapter at a time. She figured that “once it was out there, you can’t take it back.”

To her delight, her work got quick attention from a following of excited fans who eagerly awaited each week’s post. They also voted for her story and provided constructive feedback. Soon, her story *Feeding Frenzy* was rising up on the site, allowing her to be “featured” and attracting more readers. In all, her work received over 141,000 reads and a [Watty Award](#).

Never heard of Wattpad before? It’s a Toronto-based company with an international reach and popular with the younger demographic because it allows users to read on their cell phones. While Wattpad’s biggest genre is fan fiction (stories about the band One Direction, for instance), mystery/thriller and romance grab a fair share of the large audience, too. Maaja decided to put her story into the smaller Paranormal category so she could be a “big fish in a small pond.” The strategy worked, and with the confidence gained from Wattpad, Maaja started working with a professional editor to prepare *Feeding Frenzy* for print.

Initially, she hoped Wattpad would act as “training wheels” for Amazon. Through her experience, she gained many of the important skills today’s author must possess for success: designing effective covers, writing enticing blurbs, and engaging and interacting with fans. Of course, it was also a lot of fun.

Now indie published with Ingram Spark, Maaja still uses Wattpad, but now with buy links at the end of each



chapter, directing readers to her book on Amazon (or to any site other she wants).

Are you ready for Wattpad? The site is available as a smartphone app and online as a website. Readers make up the vast majority of users (90%) so writers have a ready audience. Maaja advises that you

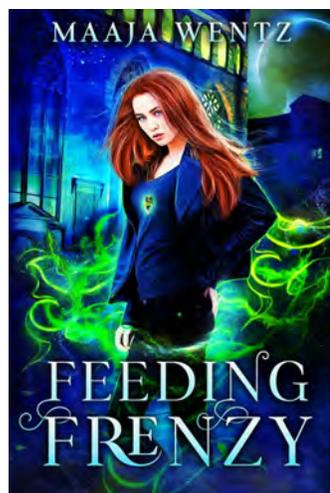
approach Wattpad with both fun in mind and as an experiment — maybe to test out an idea or a character. She says the site is best for aspiring writers and amateurs, yet you can find big name authors like Margaret Atwood posting zombie serials there too.

Because of Wattpad’s casual, social atmosphere, your work doesn’t need to be professionally edited to be posted. Readers on Wattpad are very friendly and forgiving. “No one expects you to be a professional,” Maaja says, so if your work *is* good quality and professional, “you will rise up quickly.”

Not only is Wattpad a great new way to attract new fans, but to catch the eye of publishers and movie producers, too. “If your story gets popular, publishers will find you and offer you a book deal,” Maaja said. She told of the many stories acquired by producers in the Philippines to be turned into movies and television shows there. In these types of cases, the folks at Wattpad headquarters in Toronto help authors to broker deals, acting the way an agent would.

Maaja feels she “circumvented the system” in her journey to become a published author. Wattpad allowed her to work as a professional author — with fans and feedback and awards — all while she was still considered an “aspiring” author.

Want to get started as an author in Wattpad? Maaja says it’s best to have a completely written (and edited) story that you can break up into “chapters” of 500 to 700 words each, and then post each chapter on a regular schedule, say once a week. Tell your readers the day you post and they’ll follow you and add your story to their libraries.



Wattpad provides authors with detailed stats on who is reading their work by gender, age demographic, and more. The in-depth data can really help authors research and test out the market for reaction and demand.

While writers post their work on the platform for free, Wattpad does offer a program called Wattpad Stars for those with the most followers, most reads and most popular stories. These authors are offered paid opportunities to write stories that promote upcoming movies or consumer items (like Sour Patch Kids candy). Maaja says some authors on the platform are earning thousands of dollars a month with these gigs.

Now an official Wattpad ambassador, Maaja Wentz did an excellent job getting the Sisters in Crime excited about the Wattpad platform. Not only does it have amazing potential in helping to launch an author's career, but is a fun and free way to read a wide variety of stories from around the world.

Check it out today at www.Wattpad.com or as an app on your smartphone.

Jennifer Soosar was born and raised in Toronto and has been writing about shady characters from a young age. Her debut suspense novel, *Parent Teacher Association*, was recently published. She is hard at work on her second book.



Missed Maaja Wentz's presentation? No worries! Maaja says, "I have embedded the slideshow on my website where the Sisters can watch it." Here is the link to follow: maajawentz.com/wattpad-fabulous/.

Are you a Sister in Crime making the leap to Wattpad? Maaja says to let her know, so she can follow you and mention you to her followers.

Crime and Congratulations

Here are just a few of the fantastic things SinC members have been up to lately:

- **Catherine Astolfo's** "The Outlier," which appears in the Mesdames of Mayhem anthology *13 Claws*, was named Best Short Story at the Crime Writers of Canada's 2018 Arthur Ellis Awards. Congratulations, Cathy!
- Other SinC authors nominated for Arthur Ellis Awards included **Jane Burfield** ("There Be Dragons"), **Sylvia Maultash Warsh** ("The Rancheros Daughter") and **Madeleine Harris-Callway** ("Snake Oil"), also appearing in *13 Claws*.
- **Janet Kellough's** new speculative fiction/mystery crossover, *The Bathwater Conspiracy*, is now available on all ebook platforms and in print.
- Kingston Sister **Katherine Prairie** conducted a workshop called *Scene of the Crime* at the Limestone Genre Expo. Participants learned how to deliver compelling suspense scenes. She was one of several Sisters who participated in panels at Limestone. (See **Marilyn Kay's** story on page 6.)
- Congratulations to SinC Canada West member **E.C. Bell**, who won the Bony Blithe Light Mystery Award. She was one of a number of SinC members nominated. (See **Lynn McPherson's** story on page 5.)



- **Susan Daly** is pleased to let us know that her story, "My Night with the Duke of Edinburgh," which takes place during the 1951 Royal Visit to Canada, will be included in the next Guppy Anthology.
- **Christine J. Whitlock** started her last course for her Novel Writing Certificate at George Brown College in Toronto with Sister **Rosemary McCracken**. Christine has adapted her TV pilot *Death Crush*, of her mystery series *Wine Crimes*, to a novelette. She is also taking the International Thriller Writers' Online Thriller School, where she will be tweaking her thriller feature film script *Relative Contact*.

Not a Member? Renew or join SinC Toronto in person at our next meeting or online anytime. Sign up for your [SinC International membership](#) online for all the benefits members enjoy.

2018 Bony Blithe Mini-Con and Award Gala

By Lynn McPherson

The 2018 [Bony Blithe](#) Mini-Con was held at the High Park Club in Toronto, on May 25. As a first-time attendee, I wasn't sure what to expect from the full-day event, but with some of my favourite Canadian mystery writers signed up, such as Vicki Delany, Janet Bolin, and **Elizabeth Duncan**, I had a good feeling about it. It did not disappoint. It was a fabulous day!

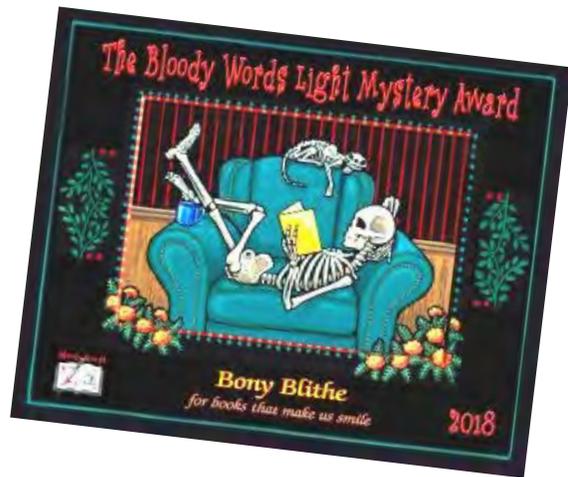
From the start, there was a great energy and friendly atmosphere that welcomed everyone who attended. Large circular tables were set up around the well-organized space that allowed each person to move around, providing a wonderful opportunity for all of us to get to know each other better in a casual and relaxed setting.



Bony Blithe award nominees **Elizabeth Duncan**, Vicki Delany, Ricky Blair, E.C. Bell, Cathy Ace and Caro Soles.

A highlight for me was having the opportunity to sit down with **Cathy Ace**, author of the fabulous Cait Morgan series, and WISE Enquiries Agency Mysteries, and hash out a few ideas about an upcoming series I've been excited to begin. Cathy took the time to thoughtfully listen to a few of the ideas I was bouncing around and offer some fabulous suggestions that helped me hone in and focus on aspects and avenues I hadn't even considered.

There were four panels organized for the event including *Sex and the Saucy Bits*, *Killing Them Softly*, *Sleuths and Sidekicks*, and *Woof! Meow! Oink!* These lively discussions had high audience participation and went from informative to hilarious.



Finally, the awards portion of the day was upon us and the nominees were brought up to the front by Bony Blithe organizer and mastermind, **Caro Soles**. The 2018 candidates were **Elizabeth Duncan**, Vicki Delany, Ricky Blair, **E.C. Bell**, and **Cathy Ace**. Caro opened the envelope and announced **E.C. Bell** as the winner of the award. A loud burst of cheers and applause filled the room.

Following the awards, Caro informed us that the 2019 mini-con would be rebranded into the Bloody Words Mini-Con and Bony Blithe Light Mystery Award Gala. She and fellow organizer Cheryl Freedman were energized and excited about the news, as was each person in attendance.

Caro Soles with Bony Blithe Light Mystery Award winner E.C. Bell.



Looking forward to 2019, I knew then and there it was something I was ready to put in my calendar. If anyone has thought about attending before, I can confidently recommend attending the unique and worthwhile event next year.

Lynn McPherson has worked for the Royal Canadian



Mounted Police, run a small business, and taught English across the globe. She is a debut author who has channeled her lifelong love of adventure and history into her writing, where she is free to go anywhere, anytime. *The Girls' Weekend Murder* is the first book in her *Izzy Walsh Mystery* series.

SinC Members Make a Splash at Limestone Genre Expo 2018

By Marilyn Kay

What a display of talent and community our Toronto SinC chapter generated at [Limestone Genre Expo 2018!](#)

Those from our chapter who came to the expo included **M.H. Callway** (Madeleine Harris-Callway), **Lisa de Nikolits**, **Terri Dixon**, **A.B. Funkhauser** (Lora Avgeris), **Marilyn Kay**, **Rosemary McCracken**, **Ed Piwowarczyk**, **Katherine Prairie**, **Ann Shortell** and **Madona Skaff-Koren**.

Seven of our author members chose to be on panels, with most sharing their knowledge, humour and expertise on multiple panels.

Topics our writers explored in these two jam-packed days included using travel for ideas and where ideas

come from, humour in fiction, the proliferation of free ebooks, how YA fiction appeals to adults, how to make cross-genres work, why people love a good whodunit, film tropes killing prose, self-publishing, romance tropes and setting as character.

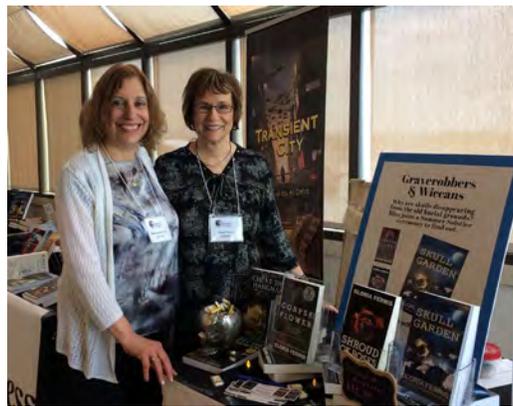
Rosemary McCracken read from her latest novel, *Raven Lake*. And Katherine Prairie offered her two-hour workshop, *Scene of the Crime*, to participants looking for ways to inject into their writing vivid language that thrusts their readers more deeply into the action.

Of course, our SinC table, managed by Terri Dixon and Marilyn Kay, offered a place for our authors to sign their books and plenty of information about our chapter and Sisters in Crime International, as well as an opportunity to sell all three of our own *Whole She-Bang* anthologies.



Marilyn Kay has short stories published in two anthologies, [Passport to Murder](#) and [13 Claws](#). She is working on a police procedural set in Toronto.

Left to right: Marilyn Kay and Terri Dixon, M.H. Callway, Ann Shortell, Madona Skaff-Koren and Giora Ferris, Katherine Prairie, Lisa de Nikolits, Rosemary McCracken and Ed Piwowarczyk, and A.B. Funkhauser.



Criminal Intent

Featuring M. H. Callway

Interviewed by Arlene McCarthy

Madeleine Callway started writing as a child but got sidetracked with science and business before returning to her true love.

*Her thriller **Windigo Fire** (Seraphim Editions) was a finalist for the Debut Dagger, Unhanged Arthur and Arthur Ellis Best First Novel awards. Her short stories and novellas have appeared in numerous anthologies and publications and many have won or been short-listed for awards, including the Arthur Ellis, Bony Pete and the Derringer. Madeleine's published short fiction is collected in **Glow Grass and Other Tales** (Carrick Publishing).*

*In 2013, she co-founded the writers' group Mesdames of Mayhem to promote crime fiction by Canadian authors, especially women authors. Their three anthologies are: **Thirteen, 13 O'Clock and 13 Claws** (all from Carrick Publishing).*

Windigo Fire, Glow Grass and the three Mesdames anthologies are all available on Amazon.ca in print and digital form. Windigo Fire and the anthologies are also available in the Toronto Public Library.

Windigo Fire can be found on the shelf at Sleuth of Baker Street along with the three Mesdames anthologies, Thirteen, 13 O'Clock and 13 Claws.

For more about Madeleine and her writing, go to www.mhcallway.com or to <https://mesdamesofmayhem.com>.

Q: Your writing is so diverse in tone and genre, ranging from noir to comic, from short stories to novellas, to novels, to fascinating blog entries about Toronto graffiti, Mount Pleasant Cemetery and the surreal events and people you encounter. To what do you attribute your unique and prolific creativity and how can we all get some of it?

A: Thanks so much! I guess I've always been a little different. Even as a child, I used to ponder Big Questions and I observed things that weren't socially acceptable to my middle class family. A rebel though I didn't know it at the time. (My Grade 2 teacher, who looked like the Wicked Witch of the West, actually told my parents that I should be crushed!) As a young woman, I sought out adventures on the fringes of society – as an observer not a participant. I guess I was born lucky because I'm still here.

My scientific training meant that my organic, imaginative side lay dormant for decades. Surprisingly, business school unlocked my creativity. I discovered that my organic, holistic thinking had value and in fact, became essential to the success of my business. Gradually I came to trust that side of my nature more and more, which unleashed my creativity. I feel confident now to explore what goes on in my head and to share that on my blog.

My old marketing professor in business school assured us that creativity can be learned. I believe that, too. One of

the best learning experiences I ever had was thanks to a creativity class taught by Maureen Jennings, the creator of the Murdoch mysteries. Her book, *The Map of Your Mind*, is recommended to all emerging writers.

One exercise Maureen teaches is to keep a daily log and to write down at least one thing you encounter that makes you feel wow! This can be an unusual street scene or a witty phrase you thought of or a snippet of overheard conversation. It keeps you engaged and observant: I swear it really works.

Another exercise is to ask "what if?" Imagine the detective in your new novel. What if it was a woman rather than a man? What if it is a transwoman? Or an older transwoman? Let your imagination run wild. Like any muscle, once you exercise it, it will grow.

Q: Tell us how you used the vivid and real setting in and around Red Dog Lake in *Windigo Fire* to strengthen suspense in the novel.

A: I spent a lot of time in Northern Ontario during my working career, first working for a gold mining company then later for the Ministry of Health. The young geologists at the mining company had amazing and bizarre stories about life up north. People pretty much do as they please, living out their eccentricities, which can include bending the law a little or a lot. That was how I



got the idea for “karaoke strip night” in *Windigo Fire* as well as the relaxed attitude to smoking pot.

Living up north carries risk, too. Because of remoteness and distance, emergency services take many hours to reach you. None of my northern friends traveled the highways without a survival kit, winter or summer. By stranding my hero, Danny, on an island deep in the bush, I put him in a situation where he became completely isolated and vulnerable. To survive, he had to save himself.

Forest fires, too, are a hazard in the Canadian wilderness. I used the forest fire as an antagonistic character throughout the book, but at the conclusion, it transforms into a symbol of justice, purification and rebirth.

Q: Each of your major characters is an outsider in Red Dog Lake. Why did you position them in this way in the novel?

A: All the characters in my novel and short stories are people who don't fit in to current society for a spectrum of reasons. They are either struggling to reestablish themselves, like Bella in “Snake Oil” or striving to make society better like Dr. Amdur in “Amdur's Cat.”

In *Windigo Fire*, the fact that so many characters are outsiders reflects the reality of life up north. People who don't fit in tend to congregate in remote places where they can live their lives the way they want. And of course, for the purposes of my story, to break the law.

Q: Why did you infuse the novel with two very different literary themes/traditions to move forward Danny's character arc in the novel?

A: I began writing *Windigo Fire* as a straight survivalist thriller. The indigenous myths were a fortunate stumble-upon. I'm a “pantser” more than a “plotter.” In my first draft, the early chapters read as they do now, but the middle was a complete mess. I didn't know what to do.

So when in doubt, do more research! The Spadina branch of the Toronto Public Library has a great collection of indigenous books, including works on mythology. Reading the legend of the Windigo, my entire novel fell into place: its theme, the true murderer, the ending, everything. Other legends, like The Traveler, helped to foreshadow what fate awaits men who are cruel to animals.

Q: Explain the role Pasha the Bear plays for the reader and for Danny.

A: Pasha is the real murder victim in the story. Fake or “canned” bear hunts are rare, but unfortunately they really happen. The death of the hunters in the first chapter of the story is actually retribution. For what is more wicked than killing a sick, defenseless animal purely for greed?

Danny's crime is his passivity, his tendency to drift through life, like many young, underemployed people, and this detachment led him to get involved with criminals. He knows that the bear hunt is illegal, but he pushes aside any thoughts of who the unfortunate bear could be. He will bear the guilt of Pasha's death for the rest of his life, but it also reawakens his conscience. Her death starts him on a journey, both figurative and real, to save himself, to take control of his life, in other words to grow up and become a hero.

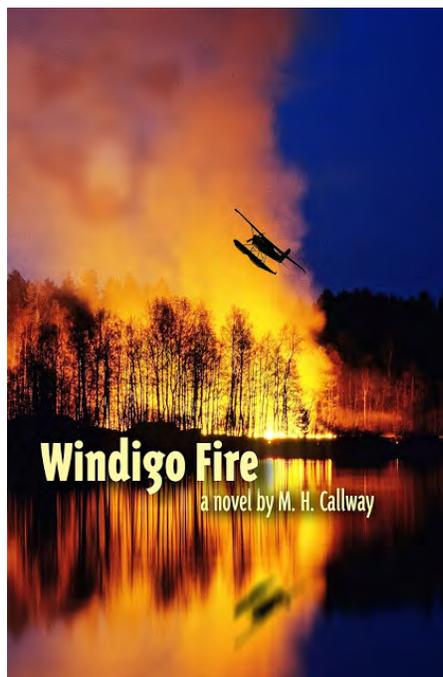
Q: Many of your characters are weird and wonderful, amusing yet frightening. Which characters have you had most fun creating?

I love all of my characters in *Windigo Fire* and I enjoy giving them all a darker edge, but I had the most fun with

Santa, the villain who organized the bear hunt. He is self-serving and scheming, a bully and a moral coward, but at the same time articulate and witty. A darkly comic character, he can do and say outrageous things.

I made him Australian, because Aussie slang is so wonderfully rich and creative. For instance, they call a surfboard a “shark biscuit” and when Santa is thirsting for a beer, he says he's “as dry as a dead dingo's dongler.” I had even more fun humiliating Santa by giving him the punishment he deserves, whether he's outwitted by Rachel, a 10 year-old kid, who steals his car or he's so technologically inept that driving a Prius eludes him.

Corazon, the tough bush pilot, is another personal favourite, because I love tough women characters. She's loosely based on a Filipino work friend who worked for a priest when she first immigrated to Canada. (She's the source of the stories about Filipino shamanism.) I thought to myself, what if Corazon didn't just escape the priest because she landed a better job? What if she *had* to escape? What if she ended up rich in her new refuge? What if she ended up as the boss?



Q: Plot twists and endings are a strong feature of your stories. When you begin to write do you know the outcome and write toward it, or does the story's end emerge as you write?

A: The answer is both. In some of my stories, like "The Ultimate Mystery," the twist was an idea I'd had for a long time and I simply created the story around it. That is true for "Snake Oil" as well, where fear, desperation and lust for social status are the true enemies.

As for my other stories, like "Amdur's Cat," I had no idea how they would end and the twist became apparent as I wrote. More what if questions!

In "Amdur's Cat," my only idea was a respectable gentleman, slightly tipsy from a Christmas party, encountering a lion in a snowy park. Coming up with the explanation for the lion got the plot going. Halfway through I decided who the police officer really was and the rest of the story became a comic romp where Amdur uses the lion to save Ontario's free medicine from an idiotic Minister of Health.

No matter what your method, all plot twists must satisfy your readers. The twists have to emerge from the truth of your story.

Q: How have your hobbies and outside interests find their way into your novels and short stories?

A: I am a long-distance runner and a cyclist. Nature did not bless me with athletic genes, but I thoroughly enjoy being physically active. Consequently, I've had my share of athletic injuries and discomforts. I drew on a couple of unfortunate experiences with dehydration to give Danny's struggle through the bush authenticity.

We are also cottagers. One day, walking through the woods, we ran across a memorial. Really bizarre, even creepy, but a gift for a crime writer. That incident became the core of my suspense novella, "Glow Grass."

Many of my stories spring from personal experiences or stories of friends. "Snake Oil" is based on a story I heard about a woman real estate agent who visited a house filled with reptile fanciers. I never forgot it: how vulnerable you are as a lone woman inside a house where no one can see or hear you call for help. And the tidbits about keeping snakes, like Pinky, I

learned – very reluctantly – when our daughter adopted a pet snake.

On a lighter note, the antics of the Minister of Health in "Amdur's Cat," are based, in part, on real incidents with an unbelievably unqualified political appointee placed in a senior position in the Ministry. I'll let my reader guess which events are true and which are made up.

Q: If you could go back in time and give advice to your newbie writer self, what would that advice be? How did you learn it?

A: Write and keep writing, that's what writers do, as best-selling author, Stuart Kaminsky advised. I only became a better writer by working at it constantly.

My good friend, author Rosemary Aubert, advised me that some writing projects come together, others don't. If you get stuck, move on to a new project. The trick is to recognize when you have exhausted a particular project, and that only comes with experience. I've wasted a lot of time, writing and rewriting manuscripts or stories that weren't going anywhere. *Windigo Fire* only came about because I finally gave up on my learner novel after rewriting it for the third time: it still lives in my file cabinet.

Q: When will we be able to read *Windigo Ice*, the next novel about Danny Bluestone?

A: Hopefully in 2019. I'm devoting the rest of this year to finishing it.

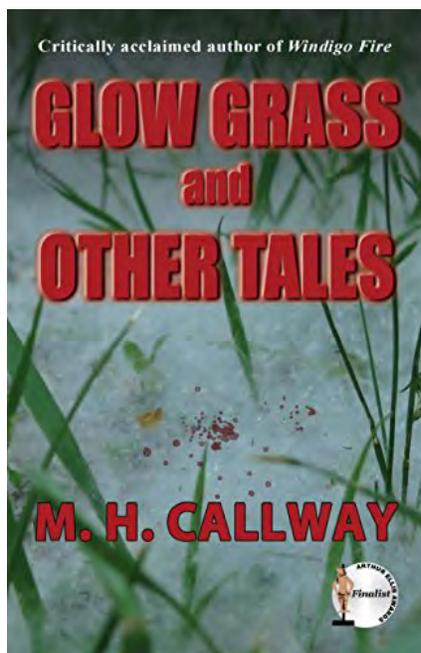
Q: How has being a Sister in Crime affected you?

A: Being a Sister in Crime gave me the confidence to continue writing. I would not be a published, award-winning author today without the innumerable talks at our Toronto branch and the publications for emerging writers from our Mothership.

Q: Complete the sentence: "Because I write mysteries . . ."

A: Because I write mysteries, I get away with a lot: I'm still wild at heart.

M.H Callway's novella "Glow Grass" was nominated for an Arthur Ellis Award.



Write On, Sister

By Mary Lou Dickinson

Where Do Ideas Come From?

[The White Ribbon Man](#), my first mystery (and my fourth book), was launched in early May this year by Inanna Publications.

I never intended to write a mystery. Indeed, I had not even read many when a colleague suggested I write one. He thought that a body left in a basement washroom of the church in the midst of the Eaton Centre would provide a situation for an interesting crime novel. He suggested we work on it together. As fellow volunteers at a Distress Centre, we had discovered we both wrote fiction. It could be an interesting joint project, so I agreed.

At our first meeting, Ray (Bennett) said he was not going to have time, but he challenged me to write it myself.

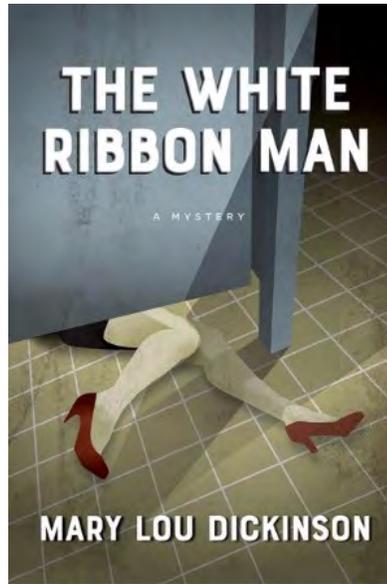
“If you do, you can credit me with the idea.”

So, there I was, mid-air without a parachute. Starting any new book likely feels that way to most writers. Why I then proceeded to do so often seemed absurd as I struggled to write that mystery.

I began by asking friends who were mystery aficionados for titles and soon became an avid reader in this genre. No one suggested Donna Leon to me then, but later when my agent did, I found in Leon’s work characters, ambience and social issues that resonated with me.

Still, it took Eric Wright, to whom my agent sent my manuscript, to point out how to structure a mystery. He suggested I might write a “social novel” instead. By then it was too late as I was hooked on that mystery. And finally, recently, the book was published.

I did not think that at 80 I was likely to write another mystery. But when I came into my building a couple of days ago, the concierge and superintendent both wanted to talk to me. They knew I had been out as I had greeted the concierge as I left to go to an exercise class.



“You know Lucy Gillespie?”

I nodded.

“She came down to the office this morning to tell us that she saw a man leaving your apartment when you were out. She wanted us to tell you.”

“No one else has a key,” I said. “And no one but me arrived or left this morning.”

When I went up to the apartment, it seemed to me that no one else had actually been there.

But later that same day, Lucy knocked on my door to tell me that she had seen this man. She lives at the other end of a long corridor and could easily have thought it was my door when it was one near it, but she said she had been waiting for the nearby elevator. And maintained that indeed she had seen this interloper.

Later, after buying a small alarm for my door used by single travelers, I began to play with ideas that strange event elicited. Where an idea originates could be as simple or unusual as that. Maybe I will end up writing a sequel to my mystery after all!



Mary Lou Dickinson’s publications include a collection of short fiction, *One Day It Happens* (2007), and two novels, *Ile d’Or* (2010) and *Would I Lie To You?* (2014). *The White Ribbon Man* (2018) is her first mystery. Dickinson grew up in northern Quebec and now lives in Toronto.

Visit her webpage at www.marylou dickinson.com/ and blog at www.marylou dickinson.com/blog/ to learn more.



Have some news you want to share? Have an idea for a column or news story for *Crime Scene* magazine? Send it to us at newsletter@torontosistersincrime.ca.

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A Bloody Business

By Judy Penz Sheluk

Submitting to an Anthology: One Volunteer's Perspective

As part of the Bouchercon 2017 Toronto World Mystery Convention volunteer committee, I assumed the role of anthology intake coordinator for *Passport to Murder*, which included short stories selected through a blind-judged submission process. Entries were accepted from November 2016 through January 31, 2017, 11:59 EST. There were 116 entries.



As the intake coordinator, my role sounded simple: log each story and ensure that it met certain criteria: story length (maximum 5,000 words), no identifying marks, correct formatting (Word .doc, double-spaced, Times New Roman 12 point, 0.5-inch paragraph indent), and not previously published in any format (including excerpts or mention on a website or social media).

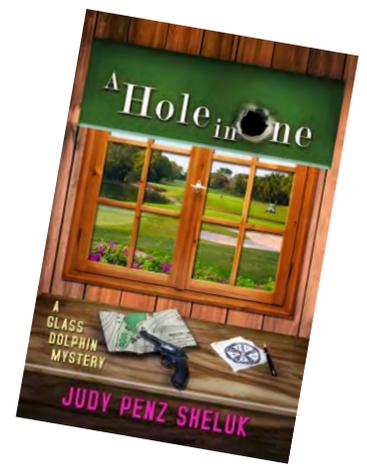
The judges' responsibilities included ensuring that the story met the theme (must include travel and at least a strong suggestion of murder or a plot to commit murder) and that it did not use characters from previously published books or stories. The penalty for compromising the blind judging process was disqualification of the story.

Like I said, simple. And yet, here's what happened:

Story Length: One author argued that 5,017 words was "close" to 5,000, and that they could not pare the story down any further. When I explained the story would be disqualified, they found a way to remove 18 words. Magic.

Formatting: More than half of the stories submitted were formatted incorrectly, i.e. using a font other than TNR 12 or submitting as a PDF or .docx. While PDFs were returned to the author, I converted all .docx. to .doc (hint: not everyone will do this).

All Word documents, regardless of improper font/spacing, were sent to the judges unaltered. Did inattention to detail impact their ultimate decision to accept or reject? I don't know, but why not show them you can read as well as write?



No Identifying Marks:

Ten authors left their name on the actual story (either "By Joe Blow," or in the header), while 30 percent left their name in the Properties section of the document.

I removed these identifiers instead of rejecting the submission, but not everyone's quite so nice: not doing so could DQ you in the future.

Not Previously Published: I didn't check author websites and social media for all 116 stories, but I did verify that the 23 submissions on the long list were clean. Authors beware: someone *will* check.

Use of Known Characters: Two (very good) stories were disqualified for using known characters. Enough said.

Theme: All three judges had to agree that the story met the travel/murder criteria. To emphasize just how important this is, the story judged strongest amongst all submissions was disqualified *because the travel component had not been met*.

Last-Minute Submissions: Of the 116 submissions, 66 were received in the last three days. Of these, 51 were received on the last day, with nine received within the last ten minutes! To all you last-minute submitters: be more considerate. Judges (and intake volunteers) can get cranky.

Every anthology has its own set of rules and guidelines. Each will have a limited number of stories to include, meaning many good stories will be rejected. By following the guidelines to the letter, you improve your chance of acceptance.

Isn't that worth taking a few extra minutes to get it right?



Judy Penz Sheluk is the author of two mystery series: The Glass Dolphin Mysteries (*The Hanged Man's Noose* and *A Hole In One*) and The Marketville Mysteries (*Skeletons In The Attic*). Her short crime fiction appears in several collections, including *The Whole She-Bang 2* and *3*. Find Judy on her website/blog at www.judypenzsheluk.com, where she interviews and showcases the works of other authors and blogs about the writing life.

A Murder Is Announced

- [SinC Canada West 2018 Retreat](#), Saturday, August 18, Victoria, BC.
- The second [Women Killing It Crime Writing Festival](#) will again shine a spotlight on Canada's incredible women crime and mystery writers. Held in Picton, Prince Edward County Ontario, **August 31 and September 1**.
- **Toronto Romance Writers** has offered SinC Toronto members a special deal to attend their first annual writers' conference, [Northern Hearts](#), at the North York Civic Centre the **weekend of September 21**. A full-day, intensive, multi-track conference with a master class by Kelley Armstrong.
- [The Word on the Street](#) happens in Toronto on **Sunday, September 23**. We'll be there. Watch for your opportunity to sign up and be a part of our crew.
- **Marcia Talley** is confirmed as guest speaker for our **June 2019** meeting!
- Going somewhere? **Christine J. Whitlock** is looking for a non-smoking female roommate for the following conventions that she has registered for and reserved the rooms: **Thrillerfest**, New York, July 10–14; **Romance Writers**, Denver, July 17–22; **Bouchercon**, St. Petersburg, Florida, Sept. 5–9; and **World Fantasy**, Baltimore, Nov. 1–4. Contact Christine at info@cjcpinc.com or C: 905/512-8123.



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