

Bloodletter

Fall 2012

New York/Tri-State Chapter Sisters in Crime

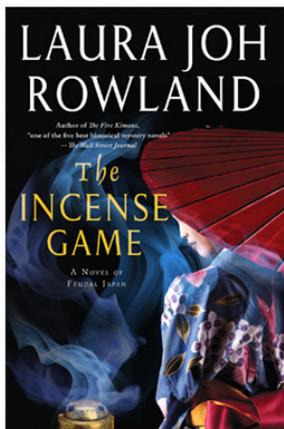
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Leigh Neely, Editor

The Year of Learning Dangerously *A Quick Look at Upcoming Programs and Speakers*

Because this chapter calls New York City its home, members are given a unique perspective on the publishing industry. Speakers are generally representative of some of the best editors, agents, and writers in the world of mystery. This year's speakers make up an impressive list of dignitaries who will provide insight, information, and inspiration at every meeting.

In October, member Laura Joh Rowland will talk about writing historical mysteries. Laura is the author of the popular Sano Ichiro Mystery Series. Her 16th book, *The Incense Game*, was released in September.



Chamberlain Sano Ichiro began the series as a reluctant police officer who had gained knowledge and prominence through each murder he has solved. Laura effectively brings ancient Edo, the city that is now Tokyo to life with her diverse and fascinating characters.

She also wrote *The Secret Adventures of Charlotte Bronte*, which is set in Victorian England, about as far away from ancient Japan as you can get. Based on

Charlotte's interesting and brief life, these books share a rich history of a woman who became a well-known author and actually enjoyed an adventurous life edged with tragedy and romance. It's a given that Laura will have some valuable advice about historical research and accuracy.

November's guest speaker is Janet Hutchings, editor of Ellery Queen Mystery Magazine since 1991. In addition to her editing duties at the magazine, she also edits anthologies with stories from the archives of the magazine. Titles include *The Deadliest Games*, *Simply the Best Mysteries*, and *Crème De La Crime*. Co-winner of the Mystery Writers of America's Ellery Queen Award, she was also honored at the 2003 Bouchercon World Mystery Convention for "Contributions to the Field."

The annual holiday party will take the place of December's meeting. Members of the board are busy securing a place for this delightful event. More information as details become available.

Once the New Year has arrived, members are invited to share their own work at the "Open Mic Night" for the January meeting. Each reader will be given a set amount of time to read and is free to share whatever they like from their original writings.

February marks the return of one of the group's most interesting presenter: Frank Ahearn. The skip tracer, who provided invaluable advice on helping characters disappear and create a new life, will be discussing his new book, talking about digital manipulation, and a variety of other ways to control or completely change your digital

life. Can we believe him? Who knows? He refers to himself as a "Liar for Hire." Be sure to mark the date on your calendar!

FRANK M. AHEARN & EILEEN C. HORAN

HOW TO DISAPPEAR

The world's number one guide
to vanishing without a trace



Springtime in New York City is wonderful, and the March meeting will feature Vincent "Vinny" Casale, friend of popular guest speaker, Joe Giacalone. Vinny, who retired from the NYPD in 2004, worked for the elite Move-TV Unit. Their job was to with the cast and crew of the many movie and television productions on the streets of the city. He wrote *The Coparazzi*, a memoir about his time with this unit and shares stories from the "real world" perspective of a police officer.

Plans are still in the works for meetings in April and May. June, of course, will feature the annual end-of-the-year party. It's going to be a great year for the New York/Tri-State Chapter of Sisters in Crime. Make plans to attend every meeting!



Meeting Dates and Upcoming Programs

October 18

Laura Joh

Rowland

Historical

Mysteries

November 21

Janet

Hutchings,

Editor,

EQMM

A Cozy Little Murder by Erin Feretti Slattery

I spent much of the summer editing, copy-editing, and typesetting a friend's travel memoir, the first title published by my kitchen table. (I mean, published by my kitchen-table-based micropress, Deadrise Books.) At night, I tried to shut out visions of cascading InDesign menus and dived happily into the cozy mysteries stacked precariously next to the bed. Some, like Susan Wittig Albert's China Bayles Herbal Mysteries and Laura Childs's Tea Shop Mysteries were old favorites; others, like Ellery Adams's Books by the Bay series and Joanne Fluke's Hannah Swensen series introduced me to new characters and settings. I've enjoyed them both as much-needed escapism, and as inspiration for someone who's been trying to chip away at a cozy manuscript for two years!

For me, China Bayles sets the bar for amateur cozy sleuths. (The series is published by Berkley Prime Crime.) Okay, "amateur" may be a misnomer; after all, China's legal background and acumen set her apart from nearly every other cozy sleuth—but Albert makes China's sleuthing style both accessible and inspired. China's combination of tenacity, maturity, wit, and common sense also separate her from the rest of the crowd. She may have her weak spots, but she never looks like a fool.

I didn't read the series in order, and I tried to catch up, reading the early ones, followed by the latest books, *Holly Blues*, *Morning Gloria*, and *Cat's Claw*. *Rueful Death*, the fifth in the series, was one of my favorites; set at St. Theresa's Monastery in a quiet corner of Texas, the mystery revolves around a series of crimes, including a suspected murder, in this closed community of ostensibly peaceable women.

As in any China Bayles book, herbs play key roles in the plot in *Rueful Death*, and readers glean a variety of herb-related tips (and recipes) along the way. Aided by her friend Maggie, a former nun at the monastery, China tries to unravel the crimes and winds up becoming a target of the murderer, which raises the stakes substantially (as usually happens to raise the stakes in this series). There are the usual subplots involving China's outlandish but lovable friend Ruby and an ongoing relationship with McQuaid (who plays various law-enforcement roles throughout the series), which buoy the main plot. The latest in this series is *Cat's Claw*, which came out in March and is available in hardcover and e-book.

Like China, Theodosia Browning, the amateur sleuth from Laura Childs's Tea Shop Mysteries (also from Berkley Prime Crime), has steady nerves and deductive powers. Where China is queen of all herb lore, Theo's domain is tea—specifically, the Indigo Tea Shop, which she owns. Part of what I love about this series is that reading it holds all the vicarious joys and sensory delights of running a tea shop and cafe—selecting teas to sell, planning themed teas, meeting the cast of Charleston, South Carolina, characters who pass through the shop—with none of the real-life headaches. Theo's world seems much more insulated from economic troubles than China's, which shares the financial strains of a business in a small Texas town. Theo thinks nothing of ordering the highest-quality teas (on the recommendation of her right-hand-man Drayton, the shop's tea sommelier and resident true Southern Gentleman) or ordering a few Spode teapots on a whim for the shop.

Theo is surrounded by a coterie of able, lively friends and adversaries, as well as her Dalmatian-Labrador mix, Earl Grey. The practical Haley, the cafe's chef; zany Delaine, who owns a dress boutique; and grumpy Sheriff Tidwell provide the expected (but not caricatured) quirky circle that readers usually encounter in a cozy. Nearly all the characters are three-dimensional, with clear passions and drive, and I found myself invested in each of them. The latest in this series, *Agony of the Leaves*, came out in March and is available in e-book and hardcover.

I fell completely in love with Ellery Adams's Books by the Bay series (also Berkley): the first four are *A Killer Plot*, *A Deadly Cliché*, and *The Last Word*. Like China, Theodosia, and Sophie, Olivia Limoges is a business owner and strong amateur sleuth. Initially a fish out of water in the small Outer Banks town where she lived as a child, Olivia returns with a hard exterior and, as an heiress, a line of credit that would make Imelda Marcos swoon. The series has some of the most compelling emotional subplots and twists of any mysteries I read this summer, and Adams balances this well with comic scenes and wry dialogue.

In contrast to China or Theo, Olivia wields substantially more buying power than anyone in town, and solves every problem by glancing coolly at it and swiping her AmEx. Adams prevents Olivia from being an aggravating poor little rich girl, however, by equipping her with solid business sense, a decisive nature, vulnerability, and an unspoken desire to fit in and make friends (despite her brusque exterior).

Over the course of the first three books, Olivia develops more as a character than either China or Theo, in part due to emotional tension of her status as an outsider. In addition to the way Adams handles this, I enjoyed the attention to setting, and the evocative (but not overdone) descriptions that conjure humidity and salt spray.

The main subplots in this series involve the occasional flicker of romantic interest and, more importantly, the writers' group that gradually forms Olivia's circle of trusted friends. These secondary characters are diverse, quirky, and provide a good sounding board when crimes demand to be solved. Main furry character and loyal companion: Olivia's dog, Captain. The latest in this series is *Written in Stone*, due out in November.

(Story continues on page 4)



Murder by the Book

Triss Stein has sold her novel, *Brooklyn Bones*, to Poisoned Pen Press and it's due out in February, 2013.



Mainly Murder Press is expected to publish *Murder at the P&Z* by **Dorothy H. Hayes** in May, 2013.



Erin Ferretti Slattery launched Deadrise Books, a micropress devoted to travel-oriented nonfiction, this summer after a career in international publishing. The first title, *Once Around the Room: Discovering*

Estonia, by Jennifer Doherty, is now out in paperback, Kindle, and Nook formats. A portion of the proceeds benefit the International 4-H Youth Exchange program.

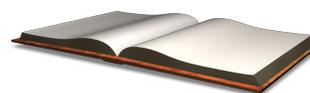


Clare Toohey and Laura K. Curtis teamed up to reimagine a Grimm fairy tale as a love story with an undead twist. A diversion from their normal writing, it's an e-pubbed novella for Kindle, *Sybelle and the Seven Ravens: A Sweet Zombie Fairy Tale* by Clare Curtis (Gee, how did they come up with that nom-de-plume?!)

Leigh Neely and **Jan Powell** sold their urban fantasy, *Second Nature* by Neely Powell, to L&L Dreamspell. It's set to come out in early spring of 2013.



You can see a trailer at YouTube for **Tanya Goodwin's** new book, *If Memory Serves*, at <http://youtu.be/Br0A211jHMU>



Bouchercon Oct. 4-7, 2012

The New York/ Tri-State Chapter of Sisters were all over Bouchercon in Cleveland this year! Not only did many members attend, but a whopping eight of them served as panelists and moderators, too!

Rosemary Harris moderated the panel "**50 Shades of Cozy**" with authors who know that "cozy" doesn't have to equal "sweet," and their wicked senses of humor proved it! She appeared on "**Girls Just Want to Have Fun!**" co-moderated by last year's NYSinC workshop presenter Hallie Ephron.

Hilary Davidson appeared on "**Murder, He/She Solved,**" with other crime authors whose lead characters happen to be crime-solving writers. (It's like a mirror within a mirror!)

Clare Toohey moderated "**Not So Secret Agents,**" where five lively literary agents discussed trends in the marketplace, and what they like to see from authors. She was also seen "**Putting the Fan in Fanatic,**" with other online gadabouts and reviewers.

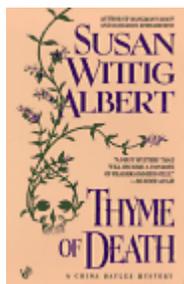
Laura K. Curtis appeared with "**Mystery Blogs and Bloggers,**" discussing her experiences at CriminalElement.com and WomenofMystery.net. She also took her turn as moderator on a panel about short fiction's lasting appeal and influence called "**Nuggets of Mystery.**" The panel's comprised of noted short story specialists, as well as one of our own short story pros and editor of the chapter anthology, **Terrie Farley Moran**.

Daryl Wood Gerber, a.k.a. **Avery Aames**, was on the panel, "**Judging a Book By its Cover,**" dishing on the stories behind their covers with feedback from an indie bookseller.

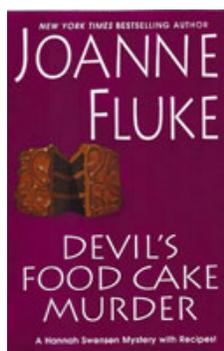
Cathi Stoler was part of the "inspirational" panel "**Where it Begins: The First Clue**" along with critically-acclaimed, award-winning authors.



A Cozy Little Murder (cont. from pg. 2)



Joanne Fluke's Hannah Swensen Mysteries (Kensington Publishing) are the only non-Berkley series I read this summer, and the differences between these books jumped out at me. The book I began with, *Devil's Food Cake Murder* (fifteenth in the series), is much longer—well over the typical 65,000 to 80,000 word count for a cozy—and things consequently moved much more slowly. (Of course, it could just be that the book is set in Minnesota in the winter...where things move glacially, if at all.) Amateur sleuth and bakery owner Hannah tries to solve a murder involving mixed-up identities in *Devil's Food Cake Murder*...while juggling orders for cakes and cookies. (Obligatory fuzzy companion: Moishe the cat.)



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Erin Ferretti Slattery, a member of SinC/NY and MWA is a freelance editor and translator, who launched Deadrise Books, a micropress devoted to travel-oriented nonfiction this summer.

A Note from the President



Dear SinC Member:

The mission of Sisters in Crime is to support published and unpublished mystery writers in their efforts; to provide a friendly, nurturing meeting place for mystery writers; to offer programs and information related to the process of writing, getting published, and marketing mysteries.

Your board is always working to accomplish that mission. We search for interesting speakers and programs for the monthly meetings, arrange field

visits to places of interest, like the NY Medical Examiner's office, and offer a day-long writing workshop with a master teacher.

We reserved a table at the Brooklyn Book Fest, with free signing slots for members, and a handout listing member's books, to give published members visibility in the larger reading community.

*And, through our judged short story selection program we offer members an opportunity to be published. To date the chapter has published two anthologies of stories written by members: *Murder New York Style* and *Murder New York Style: Fresh Slices*.*

But most important, we provide a

welcoming and nurturing place for members to meet. Whether at the monthly meetings, the holiday and end-of-year parties, or the optional dinner after the monthly meetings, the atmosphere is warm and convivial; our members love to talk to each other. In fact, a number of members, published and unpublished, have confided that the conversation and opportunity to exchange information with other members at the dinner is just as important to them as the program.

You've joined Sisters in Crime, now make sure you get your money's worth.

Looking forward to meeting you,

Catherine