

mutterhood

every woman is a story



SECRET

winter 2020

welcome

What is it that fascinates us about the spaces in between? The things we can't see, the places we don't know, the tales we've heard a million times that may actually only tell part of the story?

Sometimes we keep our secrets close; other times, the fun of solving a mystery or following a trail of breadcrumbs feeds our curiosity. Whether it's trying to predict the future, explain a riddle or expose a larger truth, a secret teases, taunts and yes, even drives people mad. It's the fascination of not knowing.

Secrets exist in the air all around us, about things that are known and those that aren't. Follow the clues and who knows what you'll discover.

We hope you enjoy **SECRET**.

ellen & cathi





CONTENTS

murder she wrote6

sweet mystery..... 18

secret places..... 22

third eye blind 38

buried secrets 42

on the down low 54

behind the scenes 58

credits & resources 59

final photo 60

next issue 62

mutterhood

cathi kern borushek
Publisher/Creative Director

ellen fowler hummel
Publisher/Editorial Director

Unless otherwise indicated, all works represented here are the property and copyright of mutterhood, cathi kern borushek and ellen fowler hummel.

All rights reserved. 2020

the writer

MURDER

she wrote

With dozens of books to her name, author Denise Swanson could be forgiven for easing up on the publishing pedal a bit. After all, her cozy mystery and romance novels have sold tens of thousands of copies worldwide, and her audience on Facebook and other social media has crossed the 10,000 followers mark.

But resting on her laurels isn't in Denise's nature. For one thing, she has more stories to tell. In September, Denise published ***A Call to Charms***, the first book in a new romance series, Forever Charmed Mysteries. On New Year's Eve she released ***Come Homicide or High Water***, the third book in the Welcome Back to Scumble River series (her most successful). A third book, ***Winner Take All*** from her Chef-to-Go romance series, is set for a September 2020 release.

That's a lot of publishing in just one short year.

For another thing, she's having too much fun. Changes in the publishing industry have brought new opportunities, as e-readers, digital and self-publishing, and social media attract new readers and a wider audience for Denise's writing. That audience, with which she interacts daily online, trusts her to write stories they like to read. And that trust is something authors, including Denise, covet. It's also earned, and something Denise never takes for granted.

A lifelong resident of a small, rural town, Denise finds inspiration in the people and goings-on around town. And until that natural curiosity goes away, Denise has no plans to slow down any time soon.

The Kankakee River in Wilmington, Ill.



Author Denise Swanson

Let's Get Cozy

Denise Swanson writes what's known in the publishing industry as cozy mysteries, or cozies for short.

A subgenre of the mystery and crime category in fiction — a \$725 million market that's second only to the romance category, which earns \$1.4 billion (yes, that's with a B) — cozies are typically set in a small, tight-knit community. They feature a clever crime; a brilliant, engaging and plucky (typically female) amateur sleuth; and a sense of justice.

Patterned after the whodunits of the early 20th century (think Agatha Christie and P. D. James), cozies shy away from the graphic sex and violence typical of traditional murder mysteries, true crime novels and courtroom dramas, which is exactly what true fans love about them.

After all, what's not to like in a world where justice always prevails?

"There's enough bad out in the world; my readers want an author they trust to make it right," Denise says. "They want to read something where good will prevail, bad will be punished, and the cat's not going to die. They're looking for an idyllic little world where bad things happen but there's always a consequence."

Seldom standalone books, cozies are typically written as a series set in the same small town with the same clever crime-solver and characters that recur from book to book. This lends familiarity for the reader, which cozy audiences love.

"True cozy readers get to know the people in the books, and that's what keeps them coming back," Denise says.

"They're not gorgeous, they're not rich, but they remind them of themselves and the people they know in real life. They're able to put themselves in their shoes."

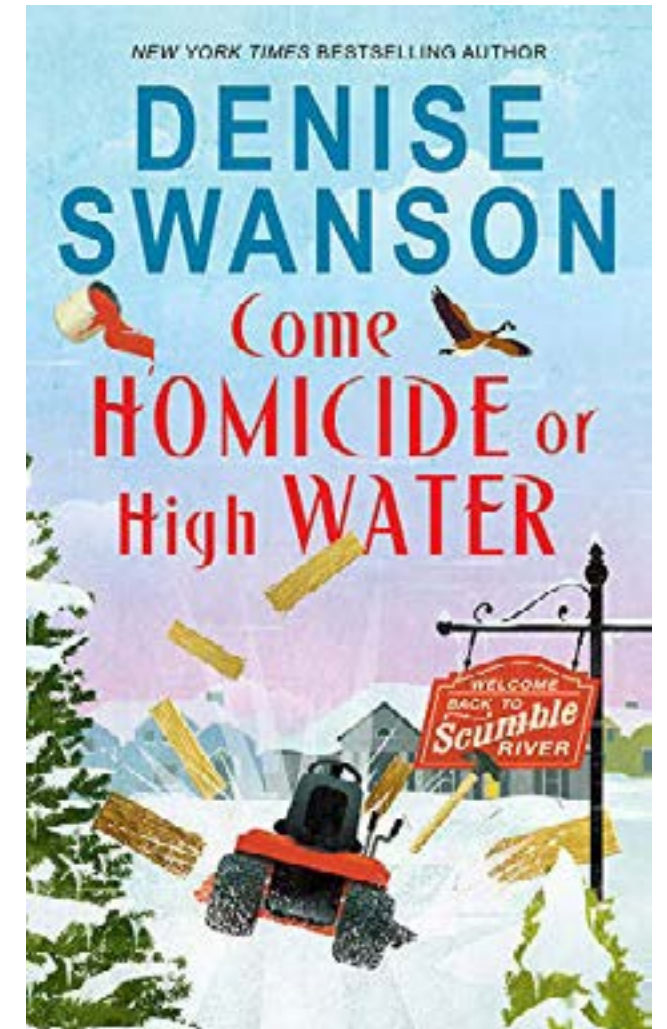
Her readers agree.

"I like the suspense with humor and a little romance while getting to know the characters' families and towns," says one Facebook reader. "Each book in the series is a continuation of a bigger story of the characters' lives."

The Scumble River Series

Denise hit on the cozy formula with her debut series, The Scumble River mysteries. Of the 22 Scumble River books to date, five have landed on *The New York Times* bestseller list.

The series features Skye Denison, a school psychologist who returns to her childhood hometown and finds herself solving all sorts of crimes. The first Scumble River mystery, ***Murder of a Small Town Honey***, was published in 2000; ***Come Homicide or High Water***, the latest installment, was released in December.



Swanson's latest book, released in December.

Denise's second cozy series, Devereaux's Dime Store Mysteries, stars Devereaux "Dev" Sinclair, owner of a five-and-dime shop in a small Missouri town. Her third series, the Chef-to-Go mysteries, about personal chef and caterer Dani Sloan, is her most recent.



Hometown Inspiration

Coal City, Ill., where Denise Swanson was born and raised, looks like a lot of small midwestern towns. Named for the coal mines that dominated local industry in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Coal City is marked by Broadway Street, which runs four blocks through the historic downtown business area, and acres of cornfields that stretch beyond the city limits. A few miles away, the Kankakee River bisects the town of Wilmington, famous as a stop on US Route 66.

Denise's family, both her mother's and father's sides, has lived in the area for more than a century; her mother, Marie, still lives in the rural country house that Denise's father built for them in 1965.

Denise met her husband, classical music composer David Stybr, in second grade, and together they returned after college, marriage, and three years in Maryland, where Denise worked as a school psychologist in Prince George's County. Back at home, she continued her work in the Will County, Ill., school system, one of just a handful of trained school psychologists nationwide as the field was being established. After 22 years, she left to write full-time.

The infamous Scumble River goose.

Her experience as a school psychologist lies at the heart of her storytelling.

"I draw on all of this for my books," Denise says. "I started writing seriously in my 30s,

when I kept a notebook of anecdotes of funny things from work, and I use all of Coal City's controversies. There's a section in the *Coal City Courier* [the local newspaper] called Sound Off, which is where I get a lot of my ideas. It's just the stuff going on around town."

She frequently references people and places she's known her whole life to develop new plots and characters.

"Skye's hairstylist brother is based on my cousin, who still cuts my mom's hair," she says. "***Dead in the Water*** is based on a tornado that came through Coal City a few years ago, and ***Die Me a River*** centers on an explosion at the bowling alley in Wilmington."

Even the ceramic goose in front of her mother's house makes an appearance, as Skye's mother has one too. Skye uses it to gauge her mother's mood, depending on how the goose is dressed when she pulls into her driveway. While Denise's mother Marie's goose sports a similar wardrobe, Denise insists she doesn't view it as the same emotional indicator.



The Gemini Giant is a local landmark in Wilmington Ill., the place on which Swanson bases her fictional town of Scumble River.



Denise Swanson and her mother, Marie.

Denise grew up an only child, a voracious reader since she taught herself to read at the age of three. Her father farmed the family's land during the day and worked the 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm shift at the clay pit in Coal City, mining clay for firebrick and foundries after the coal mines closed.

Her mother stayed home with her until Denise left for college. Marie then joined the police department as an emergency dispatcher, eventually working her way to sergeant. Denise's father passed away in 2000, just a few months before her first book was published. Marie joined her on her first book tour.

Marie doesn't read her daughter's books until they are complete, but she is understandably her No. 1 fan.

"What I like about her writing is that I can get into her books right away," Marie says. "They're very good stories."

After each book is published, Marie adds it to a bookshelf in her spare bedroom where she keeps a clean copy of every book Denise has written, each one signed "To Mom" by the author.

"I'm very proud of her," Marie says.

The Deadly Divas

When her first book was published in 2000, the internet and Amazon and all the ways people buy books now didn't exist, so Denise decided to hit the road.

Enter the Deadly Divas.

"We were a group of four mystery writers who traveled around, talking about our books at libraries, bookstores and women's clubs," Denise says. "We wore boas and tiaras, and gave out Diva beads, bookmarks, chocolate — all kinds of stuff — to people who came to our readings.

"Back then, independent bookstores were big and when we were able to get one bookstore to stock our books, we would build around it. Word of mouth from that bookstore would sell more books, and that's how I was able to build my readership."

The Divas traveled to Texas, New England, California, Alabama and throughout the Midwest. In 2000 alone, Denise made 78 appearances.

"That first year was really important," she says.

“I'm more than happy to promote other authors when they're willing to share what they know, because authors did that for me when I was starting out.”

Denise Swanson

Today, Denise maintains an active, engaged audience on Facebook, each day reaching close to 8,000 readers and authors through two separate

groups. For her reader's group, she posts information about new books, events and her writing process, along with a question of the day and Tuesday treats — recipes that connect to characters and stories in her books. Her second page is where she promotes other cozy mystery authors with giveaways and links to free Kindle books she thinks her readers would enjoy.

Denise often invites new authors to her book signings and Facebook groups in order to introduce her readers to writers she likes. She's also an active participant in writer's groups and professional organizations such as Mystery Writers of America, Romance Writers of America, and Sisters in Crime.

Building community among writers and fans is something Denise believes in strongly.

"I'm more than happy to promote other authors, especially when they're willing to share what they know, because authors did that for me when I was starting out," she says.

“ I had to put that one down for a while, before I could return to reading it.”

Marie Swanson

Industry Changes

Denise published her first book with Penguin Publishing Group. At the time, the only path to publication was to be agent-represented and she spent three years — and 270 rejections — writing and querying agents.

“I was getting discouraged,” Denise says.

She attended a writing conference in Georgia, where she submitted 50 pages plus a synopsis of her novel for judging. To her delight, the book finished in the Top 10, earning her a meeting with a publisher’s rep who, while she didn’t sign on to represent her, allowed Denise to share her critique: “Cozy mystery writing at its very best.” Using the editor’s quote in three more queries, Denise signed with a St. Louis agent, who sold a three-book deal to Penguin.

“I was ready to give up, but I didn’t,” Denise says.

Denise wrote 25 books and two series for Penguin before moving to Sourcebooks, a boutique publishing house based in Naperville, Ill., in 2015. At the time, Penguin was closing down its mass market paperback division and wanted Denise to publish her new books in hardcover, which she refused.

“My readers had been loyal to me for 19 books, and I felt it wasn’t fair to ask them to pay more for a hardcover,” Denise says.

Hers was an industry-wide problem. The growing popularity of e-readers meant the mass paperback market was shifting away from print to digital publishing, and Denise’s books were no exception. She was able to move the backlist of the original Scumble



Two of Swanson's romance novels.

River series to Sourcebooks, which made them available as e-books. They then rebranded her post-Penguin Scumble River books as a new series, Return to Scumble River, and Denise set to work writing more Skye Denison mysteries.

She appreciates the close partnership that a smaller publishing house offers its authors.

“It’s been a really good fit,” she says.

Today, traditional publishing is just one segment of Denise’s publishing platform. A fan of romance as well as cozies, Denise entered the contemporary romance market in 2015 with the Forever Charmed series, which follows four sorority sisters looking to spice up their lives. A year later she debuted a second romance series, Delicious Love — each book a standalone story that, shall we say, sizzles.

“Take one smoking-hot top chef who thinks food should be a sensual adventure, add a venture capitalist who has struggled with her weight since she was a teenager, and mix well. Is this a recipe that sizzles, or is he just another craving she must resist?” reads the blurb for **Sinfully Delicious**, the debut novel.

“I had to put that one down for awhile, before I could return to reading it,” Marie, Denise’s mother, says.

In September Denise entered the fantasy and paranormal market with **A Call to Charms**, the first book in the Forever Charmed series about witchcraft and magic.

She also contributes regularly to Mystery Lovers’ Kitchen, a blog where mystery authors talk about their books and post



Marie Swanson's collection of signed first editions.


recipes. (Marie's pumpkin cake was the treat for November.)

Each move Denise makes in publishing has two considerations: her readers and her business. Denise credits e-readers with making self-publishing possible, and self-publishing with making more of her books available, which has helped to grow her audience. Since authors earn a higher percentage of sales from e-books than they do with traditional publishing, the shift to electronic publishing hasn't hurt the bottom line, either.

Today, Denise writes full-time and manages her active Facebook groups, while her husband David handles business

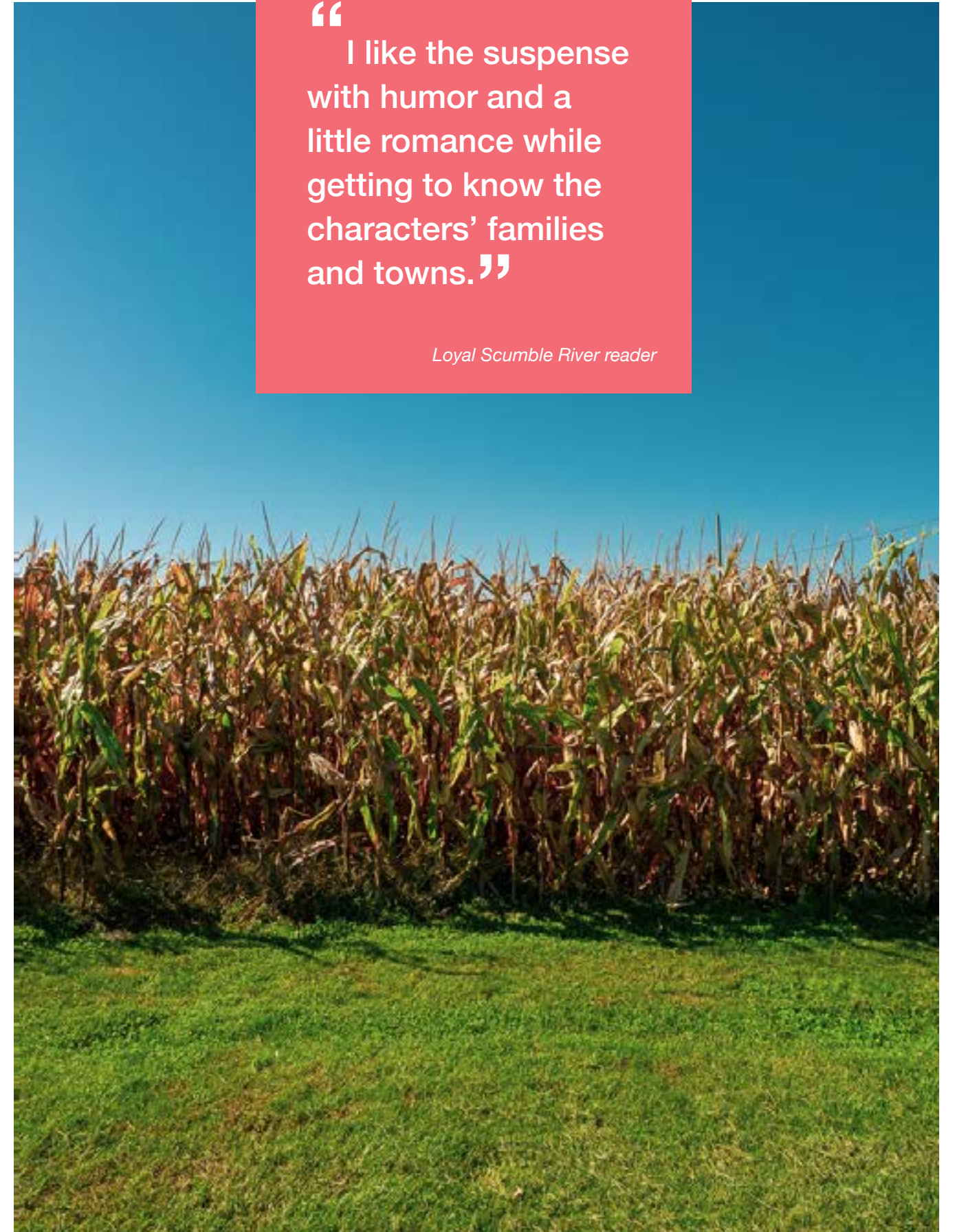
operations and web development. Her current writing schedule doesn't allow as much time for book tours and events as when she first started writing, but Denise never forgets her roots when a new book comes out.

One of her favorite local events is to hold a book signing at the Coal City Pharmacy, a downtown landmark located on Broadway Street. Denise usually draws a crowd, signing books and catching up on the news.

It's the kind of small-town touch that her readers enjoy most about her books. As one reader said, "She makes you feel a part of their world." 

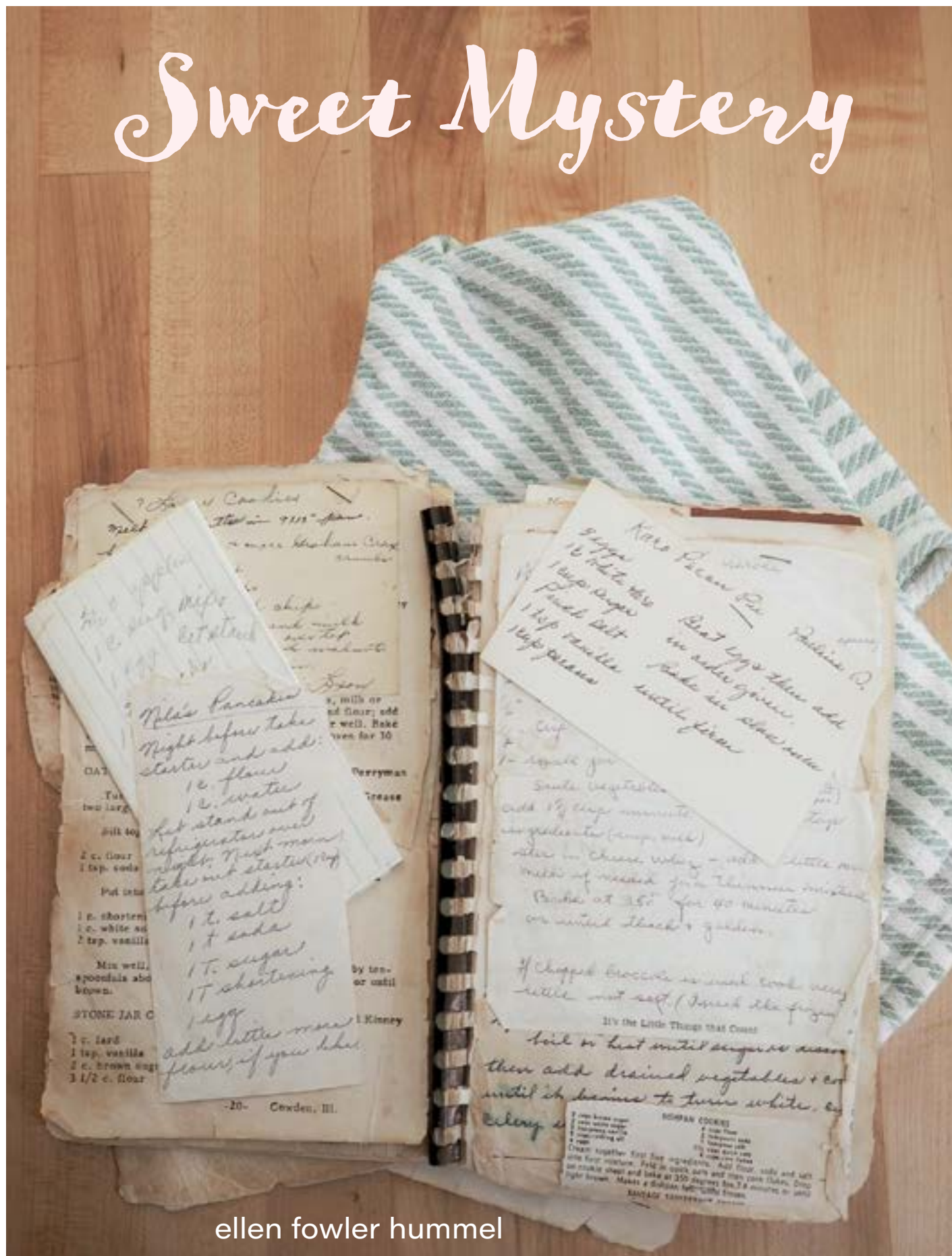
“ I like the suspense with humor and a little romance while getting to know the characters' families and towns.”

Loyal Scumble River reader



Denise Swanson finds inspiration everywhere, even in the cornfield outside her childhood home.

Sweet Mystery



ellen fowler hummel

I solved a family mystery after spending a few minutes sorting through a kitchen drawer. It's not a skeletons-in-the-closet mystery, or a what-happened-to-grandpa's-money question. My grandparents were poor, lived in the same tiny central Illinois farm town their whole lives, and shared a life dictated by the seasons - planting, growing, harvesting and winter. So no, there's no hidden money.

This mystery wasn't impactful by any stretch of the imagination; instead, it was one of those silly, nagging family questions that we just couldn't let go. It had to do with Christmas, a tasty treat, and the source of a recipe turned holiday tradition: Who the heck was Mrs. Ike?

To understand the story, you should know one thing about my paternal grandmother: She was a lovely woman but a less-than-gourmet cook. Sure, her fried chicken was sublime, but any dish would shine next to her canned-salmon-and-Ritz-cracker "meatloaf", green beans with bacon boiled in water, and cottage cheese sprinkled with spoonfuls of sugar.

She was a country cook whose eggs came fresh from her friend Eileen's chickens, but whose culinary sensibilities were rooted deep in the Great Depression.

My grandmother cooked from scratch every day — breakfast, supper and dinner — and

dessert always completed a meal. She made pie crusts from scratch but filled them with store-bought chocolate pudding, canned fruit gels and mince meat she scooped out of plastic buckets she bought at the IGA. She baked biscuits made from Bisquick, preferred Oleo over butter and never met a box of Jell-O she didn't like, always mixing it with grated carrots, crushed pineapple, walnuts or Cool Whip.

Her frugality drove my parents nuts. Because she refused to buy real coffee — my grandmother sipped Postum and Nescafe — we'd travel with our own Folgers. My mom offered to cook, but that only caused my grandmother to purse her lips and shake her head no. We never went out to dinner when we visited, as there weren't any restaurants or fast-food places closer than a 30-minute drive. But it also never occurred to us to try. Despite being surrounded by farms, her house was a fresh food desert.

There was one thing my grandmother was known for, however, and that was chocolate fudge. Every year at Christmas, she made the sweetest, silkiest and smoothest chocolate fudge I've ever tasted. It was light, airy, a perfect rich mocha color, and the perfect balance of sugar and chocolate. She made pans of it — 8-inch by 8-inch aluminum pans of it — each of them buttered on the bottom and sides so that

after the fudge cooled, it popped right out onto a sheet of waxed paper, ready to be cut into sixteen squares.

Some batches were plain; others were mixed with walnuts she gathered from under the tree in her back yard and pounded with a hammer to extract the sweet meat of the nut. Her fingers would be stained black and it took her hours just to fill a small bowl, but every fall she'd put on my grandfather's old barn coat, grab a pail and head out back to fill it.

"What else do I have to do?" she'd ask, when we told her she could just buy chopped walnuts at the store.

She called it "Mrs. Ike's fudge", and there it was, the mystery.

"Who's Mrs. Ike?" we asked, and each time we did she'd just smile — which was strange since she wasn't usually that coy. My grandmother was direct, and not really one to hedge on her information

"Who's Mrs. Ike?" we'd ask my dad, who'd grown up in the town where his mother still lived, home to just 498 people according to the sign we passed every time we drove into town. It seemed odd to us that he wouldn't know.

"I have no idea," he'd say. "Maybe it's someone from church?"

"Oh, you wouldn't know her," my grandmother said.

The whole song-and-dance was like talking to teenagers.

When my mom asked for the recipe so she could make it at home, my grandmother always demurred.

"Oh, it's just a little of this and that," she'd say, and she'd promise to write it down but then would always forget.

Back home, my mom tried different fudge recipes from Betty Crocker, *The Joy of Cooking*, *Gourmet* magazine, even the back of the marshmallow Fluff jar. They were fine, but nothing came close to Mrs. Ike.

As my grandmother got older and cooking became more difficult, she decided it was time to let Mrs. Ike go. She wrote the recipe in her shaky hand on a plain white index card and handed it to my mother, a simple gesture that seemed to demand a more ceremonious passing of the guard. After my grandmother died, my mom kept Mrs. Ike's recipe alive until Alzheimer's took hold and we let the candy-making go. We have other things to worry about.

Flash forward to an afternoon a few summers ago, and I'm cleaning out a messy kitchen drawer. As I dig through rubber bands and placemats — as an aside, how did we end up with so many pencils? — I find a gallon-sized Ziploc bag with my grandmother's 1954 Methodist Women's Cookbook inside. Where this came from I have no idea, but inside the bag is a spiral-bound book with a tattered blue cover featuring a drawing of my grandparents' church.

The thick paper pages are orange and brittle, the recipes typed and organized according



Condensed milk, Mrs. Ike's secret ingredient.

to appetizers, main dishes, salads and desserts.

As I flip the pages, I find the Jell-O salads, salmon loaves and molasses cookies of my childhood, the names of the contributors reminding me of women I haven't thought of in years but whose faces I still remember clear as day.

I open the book to the desserts section and see my grandmother's entry for Mrs. Ike's fudge. Stapled to the page is what looks to be the back of a label, dotted with tiny splatters of something. I look closer; the label is from a can of condensed milk,

and on it is a recipe with the title, "Mrs. Ike's Fudge," with a note written in my grandmother's curly, slanted handwriting: "from the kitchen of First Lady Mamie Eisenhower."

I call my dad, feeling like I've solved a mystery of the ages.

"I found Mrs. Ike," I tell him. "Would you believe it's actually Mamie Eisenhower?"

He's quiet on the other end of the phone.

"Well, I'll be damned," he says.

secret places

Secrets here, secrets there. Look around and you'll see secrets hiding everywhere. Here are just a few of the places that hold our deepest fascinations.





secret gardens



A public rooftop terrace sits atop an office building in San Francisco, marked only by a small brass plaque next to the revolving door at street level.



secrets in the cards

Tarot cards first appeared in the 15th century and were especially popular in England and France, where the occult world claimed them in the late 18th century for divination, or fortune-telling.

In a reading, the deck is shuffled and the cards are laid out in a pattern, or spread. They're interpreted based on positions and neighboring cards.



secrets of the faith

Open doors welcome the faithful and curious visitors alike inside the sanctuary of a well-kept cathedral.



secret rendezvous

Ashley Madison, an online dating and social network service for those who are married or in relationships, was launched in 2002 with the slogan: "Life is short. Have an affair." Today, the site boasts more than 60 million users in 53 countries, despite a 2015 data hack that released every customer's name, emails, home address and credit card information. In all, the company claims it helps to create up to one million affairs each month





secret dreams

Freud considered dreams the road to the unconscious mind, but understanding dream psychology has fascinated people for centuries. The nine most common dreams are falling, being chased, being naked in public, taking a test, losing teeth, infidelity, pregnancy, flying and dying. Curious about yours?

This [dream dictionary](#) will help you interpret any of thousands of dream topics.



secret messages

Propaganda and misinformation spreads messages rather than truth; symbols like the Bat signal communicate meaning that's accepted by all.

secrets of the universe

"We're each of us alone, to be sure. What can you do but hold your hand out in the dark?"

Quotation by Ursula Le Guin, award-winning American author and essayist known for works of speculative fiction, including science fiction and fantasy.

Le Guin was named a Living Legend by the US Library of Congress in 2000 and received the National Book Foundation Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters in 2014. She died in 2018.



third eye blind

“You are married, yes?” the psychic asks as she scowls at my right palm, currently gripped tightly between her hands.

“Sure,” I lie. “For many years.”

She glances up into my eyes and then back down.

“You have children,” she says, waiting for my tells that make it true.

I nod and she guesses one — wait, two little ones at home.

“Two,” I quickly acknowledge before she saddles me with more.

I look around. Lamps draped with scarves and fairy lights hanging throughout the room seem a little over the top.

My girlfriends giggle in the corner, their futures already predicted. I, on the other hand, am getting impatient with our psychic, who is dressed like a Woodstock refugee, with long, dark hair artfully tousled and dozens of bangles on each arm.

We expected an older, wiser seer, like a gypsy fortune teller in a movie, but this one's in her twenties. She seems more like the women I see each morning on the L dressed in power suits and comfy shoes, saving their pumps for the office. This is clearly her side hustle.

“You are unhappy in your job,” she states confidently.

I think, who isn't? Even a skeptic like me could predict that.

“But I see good news. You will soon have your dream job.”

Uh-huh. I don't even know what my dream job is but her Human Resources third eye apparently sees something I don't.

I'm getting restless. It's a lark, this visit, the last stop on an overserved girls' night out that's quickly becoming a sobering bummer.

We'd been daring ourselves to come for the advertised *Readings: Five minutes - Five dollars* since the neon sign went up a few months ago. What did we expect from a \$5 reading — all the answers to our future?

Our psychic suddenly shifts in her seat and appears worried.

“I see here there's a bit of trouble in your future.”

I'm momentarily alarmed.

“I'm getting the sense it's something with family. Maybe with your husband or maybe one of your children.”

She bites her lip.

“It's not clear to me yet. Maybe with a longer reading . . .”

Irrationally relieved for my nonexistent family, I slide my hand out of her grip and stand up.



cathi kern
borushek

“Nah, I’m good,” I tell her, dropping my money on the table and weaving my way towards my friends.

“I’ll figure it out on my own.”

I admit I’m not much of a believer in the mystical arts. As a child I was under the hypnotic spell of the standard holy triumverate. I was all in on the giant rabbit that hid candy around the yard and the beautiful fairy who left coins under my pillow.

I was under the thrall of the big guy for longer than I care to admit, in spite of his unbelievable, and in retrospect slightly creepy, backstory of entering every house in the world while the residents slept.

When those three were outed as frauds by a boy on the playground, the world seemed a little less bright.

Sure, I dabbled in the dark arts here and there. A brief fling with astrology in my early twenties had me checking my horoscope daily. When a self-proclaimed astrologist was hired at my company (in a non-astrology related job) her constant run-ins with staff were blamed on misaligned zodiac signs rather than her inability to do her work.

She didn’t last long but her drama tarnished the allure of the stars for me. Though, as a Capricorn my hard-working, attention-to-detail nature should have been able to rise above her BS.

For a while I thought numerology might be my thing until I discovered I just had a mild case of OCD.

A part of me wanted to believe in the five-dollar psychic. My mother certainly would have. Newspaper psychics, astrology signs, palm readings and soothsayers — she welcomed all comers. Raised a Southern Baptist where the answer was always no — no movies, no alone time with the opposite sex, no dancing, no alcohol, no rock-and-roll, just no — she said yes to all sorts of ideologies as an adult.

She bought books by the psychic Edgar Cayce, billed a modern-day Nostradamus. A reading with a suburban mom, famous in the area, left her with pages of notes detailing all the family’s futures. A call to Dionne Warwick’s Psychic Friends Network left her with a big phone bill and a dose of skepticism. But she remains open to the possibilities.

Was I too fact-based to *really* believe in that stuff? (I’m a Capricorn after all.) Who wouldn’t want ready answers to life’s questions?

With that intent, I recently watched a bit (okay, three episodes) of a Lifetime show: **Seatbelt Psychic**, with the tagline *One ride can change your life*. The show stars psychic Thomas John who tells us that as a child he talked to dead people rather than playing with live children at recess.

John picks up unsuspecting passengers in a type of spiritual ride share service and astonishes them with his insights. Instead of his celebrity clients (among them one of the Friends, most of the Real Housewives, and vaccine-denier Jenny McCarthy) he channels the dead relatives of ordinary folks like you and me.

The non-believer in me wanted to find the wires among the smoke and mirrors, but I was caught up in his channeling long-lost relatives for some highway soul-healing.

Perhaps I was too harsh on that psychic long ago. Maybe there is some unseen magic out in the universe. After all, I did end up with a husband and two children. And, albeit much later, I made my own dream job.

Chalk it up to womanly intuition but the power within us to believe in something greater than ourselves could be a real thing.

Unless you’re a Taurus. They tend to only believe in things they can see with their own eyes.

mh



Can a Magic 8 Ball divine the future?

stories from the past

BURIED *secrets*

Chicago's Graceland Cemetery is the final resting place of the titans of this great American city.

Designated in 1860, Graceland spans 120 acres of landscaped grounds on the city's north side, an urban arboretum filled with monuments, vaults, obelisks and crypts that announce the individual and family importance of Chicago's giants — industrialists, architects, athletes, writers, philanthropists and politicians — and everyday people alike.

Here you'll find the Fields, Armours, McCormicks and Palmers. But look more closely and you'll uncover stories just as fascinating, especially of the women buried there, whose engravings are faded by wind, rain, sun and snow. Their stories are told in the language of symbols found on lichen-covered headstones that help mark their place in eternity.



Graceland Cemetery



The section of Graceland Cemetery where employees of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, including Kate Warne, the first US female detective, are buried.

Private Eye

Kate Warne is one of those women. As elusive in death as she was in life, Warne was the first female detective in the United States. Hired in 1856 by Allan Pinkerton, founder of the Pinkerton Detective Agency, Warne applied for a secretarial position but convinced Pinkerton to make her a detective instead.

The Baltimore Plot, a Southern conspiracy to assassinate president-elect Abraham Lincoln in February 1861, was her first case. Warne charmed her way into a group of secessionists to uncover the plot to attack Lincoln in Baltimore as he changed trains for Washington, DC. Traveling with Lincoln, Warne disguised him as her ailing brother, had him stoop over to hide his height, gave him a cane and hid him on a separate train car guarded by more Pinkerton agents. Together they smuggled the future president into Washington DC in time for his inauguration.

Warne's work in the Pinkerton Agency's military intelligence services had her adopting dozens of disguises to gather information for the Union. After the war Pinkerton appointed Warne the chief of the agency's first Female Detective Unit. When she died of pneumonia in 1868 at the age of 35, Pinkerton insisted Warne be buried in the Pinkerton Agency's plot in Graceland Cemetery, adjacent to the family burial site. Her grave is still there, under a headstone that misspells her name.





The last blooms of fall.

Wife. Mother. Daughter.

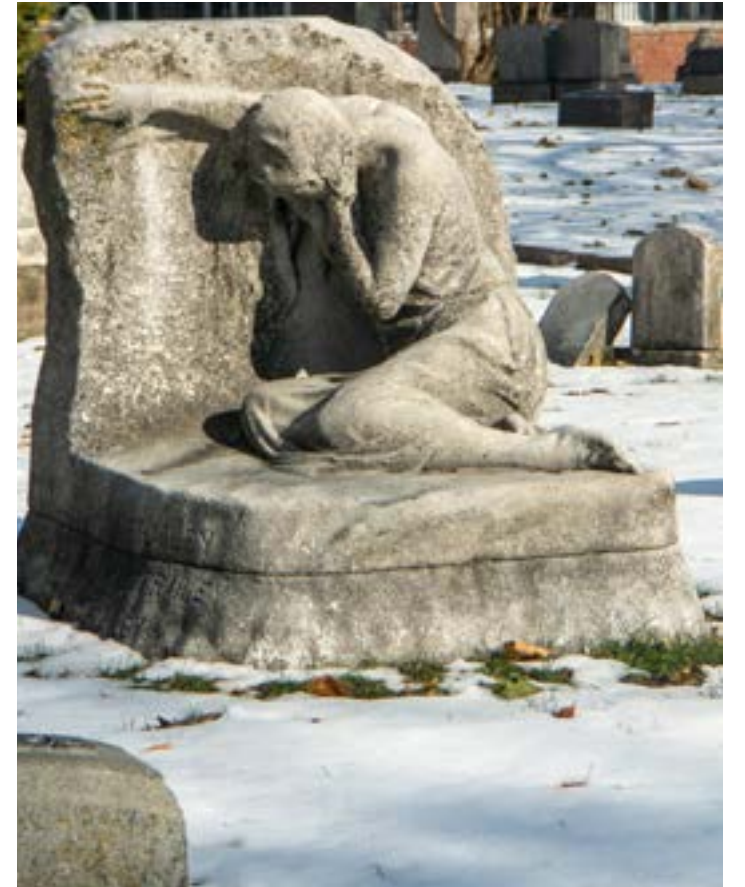
Hundred year old oak trees shelter even older family plots, the gravestones faded over time, some sinking in the ground while others still stand tall. A close examination of some of those weathered headstones offers clues to the stories buried underneath. On one, an angel prays over the name of a child; on another, a rosebud decorates the marker for a young girl. Statuary depicting tree trunks, columns, and crosses of every faith testifies to the importance of a family name and centers the spray of headstones and markers in the earth nearby.

Mother. Devoted wife. Departed sister. These are the ways in which women are remembered, in many cases fondly and devoutly, in others with a simple name and date.

These simple tributes often underplay the importance of the woman they remember, among them dancer and choreographer Ruth Page and Annabel Anderson Arnold, a lawyer and law professor who supported women's suffrage and the Equal Rights Amendment, and who organized the Women's State Bar Association of Missouri, the first association of women lawyers in the world.

Sarah E. Goode is buried at Graceland, a woman born into slavery who in 1885 became the first Black woman to receive a US Patent, for a convertible folding cabinet bed designed specifically for tenements and other tight living quarters common among immigrants and minority city residents.

Then there's Mary Hastings Bradley, a prolific author of mysteries and fiction, who in the early 1900s traveled to and wrote about societies closed to women. As a war correspondent she reported on the Holocaust and women in the military in Europe during World War II, and authored the Old Chicago series, four books tracing Chicago's history from its frontier days to the 1893 World's Fair.



An angel weeps over a family plot.



A herald stands guard.

Reading the Clues

Graceland's famous women are far outnumbered by the number of women who led more ordinary, but no less interesting, lives.

One headstone features the carved profile of a young woman, ringlets indicating her age, whose headstone simply reads May. The insignia of the marker next to the stone, G.A.R. 1861 - 1865, hints at her or her family's association with the Grand Army of the Republic, a fraternal order of Civil War veterans founded in 1866 that became one of the first advocacy organizations in American politics. The GAR helped make Memorial Day a national holiday; supported voting rights for Black veterans; and lobbied Congress to establish federal pensions for retired veterans.

In 1886, the Ladies of the Grand Army of the Republic was founded to promote patriotism and community service to veterans, widows and orphans; the organization still exists today.

Was this young May involved in these activities? The signs seem to point in that direction.



Grave decorations offer clues to a larger story.

Eternal Mystery

Perhaps the most mysterious person at Graceland is Inez Clarke, who died in 1880 at the age of seven after being struck by lightning while on a family picnic. (Or Inez died when she was locked out of her family home as punishment, or she died from tuberculosis — the causes of her death vary, according to legend.)

The bottom line is that Inez's parents were so grief-stricken at her death they commissioned a statue to capture young Inez for eternity, sitting on a park bench with her parasol and bonnet. The statue is encased in glass, and it is something of an urban legend.



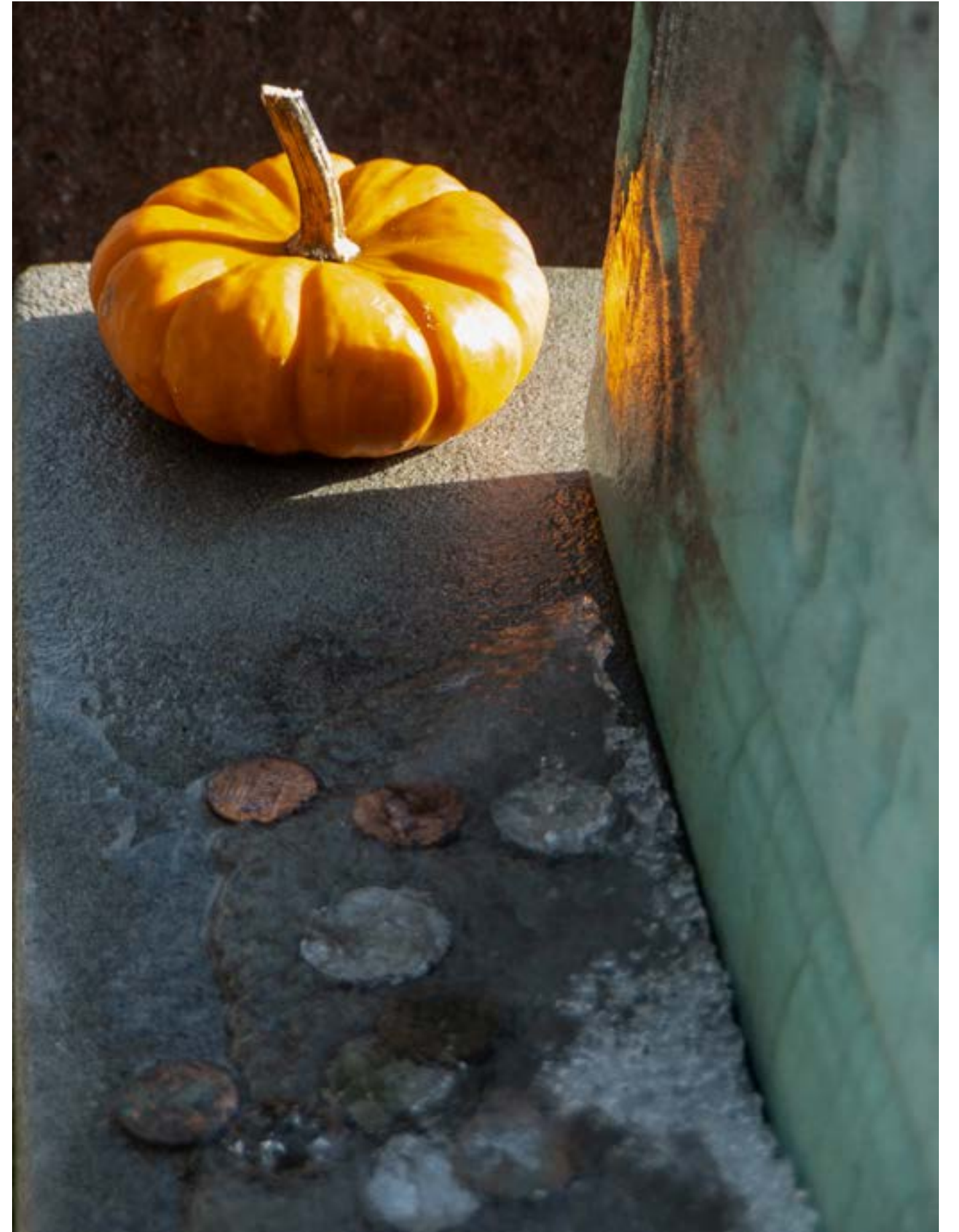
Detail from the statue of Inez Clarke.

The story begins when a night watchman making his rounds at Graceland during a thunderstorm approached Inez's grave to find the glass case empty. Believing that she abandoned her resting place due to her eternal fear of storms, the watchman fled the cemetery, never to return.

It's said that on a clear night you can hear the sound of a young girl crying; on other nights, the figure of a young girl can be seen dancing among the graves. There are even some reports of young children visiting the cemetery and encountering a young girl in old-fashioned clothes asking to play.

The real story may be that Inez Clarke doesn't actually exist. She is not in the cemetery records, nor is she listed on the census roll for that time. More likely, she is the daughter of a woman named Mary Briggs, who sent Inez to live with her grandparents after Mary and her husband divorced. Inez Briggs died of diphtheria in 1880 and her mother, who by then had remarried a man named John Clarke, buried Inez under her new married name in Graceland near where her grandparents were buried.

While the facts of Inez's life may be in dispute, her statue has become a touchstone for visitors who leave money, toys and other small gifts at the statue's feet. Whether those tokens are to honor a young life cut short or left as ghostly talismans, Inez Clarke remains one of Graceland's most intriguing mysteries. 🍂



Visitors leave coins and other offerings at the tomb of Inez Clarke.



The statue of Inez Clarke encased in glass.

the secret keepers

on the down low

These women broke into the traditionally male fields of espionage, law enforcement and counterintelligence to access secrets around the world.



Isabella Goodwin

NYPD Detective

Widowed in 1896 at the age of 30, Goodwin became a jail matron for women and children in a new program started by then New York Police Commissioner Theodore Roosevelt.

During her 15 years as a matron, Goodwin also went undercover to investigate crimes on her own time. In 1912 she bested 60 detectives to solve a robbery that had attracted national attention, disguising herself as a cleaning woman with an Irish brogue to gather information.

As a result, she became the first NYPD female detective whose work in exposing fortune tellers and swindlers led the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* to call her the "best known woman sleuth in the United States."



Virginia Hall

WWII Spy

During a diplomatic post in Turkey, this Baltimore native accidentally shot herself while hunting, resulting in a wooden leg and a lifelong limp.

When World War II erupted, Hall worked with the French resistance until forced to flee to Britain. A chance meeting led her to work with British intelligence.

One of the first British spies in France, Hall successfully ran dozens of secret missions until the Germans discovered their troublesome enemy was a woman with a limp.

Escaping by hiking through the Pyrenees to Spain, she began working with the American Office of Strategic Services, an agency that became the Central Intelligence Agency after the war.

Hall died in 1992. Her story is told in three new books and two soon-to-be-released movies.



Martha Peterson

CIA Agent

Peterson joined the CIA in 1975 and became the first female CIA case officer. She was also the first female agent sent to the former Soviet Union.

Posing as a low-level clerk, Peterson was able to fly under the radar thanks to the Russian belief that women couldn't be spies. She cultivated a mid-level Soviet bureaucrat, nicknamed Trigon, who passed her secret intelligence that many believed helped the United States win the Cold War.

Both were arrested by the KGB in 1977 and held in Lubyanka prison for interrogation. Trigon killed himself in prison with a CIA-provided suicide pill. Peterson was eventually released and returned to the United States. After retiring from the CIA in 2013, she finally confessed her spy past to her children.



Joanne Pierce Misko

FBI Agent

A New York native, Misko entered a nunnery at 20, spending 10 years teaching schoolchildren. When an FBI agent visited for a career day, she was inspired to quit the convent and join the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

When J. Edgar Hoover, who banned women from becoming agents, died in 1972, Misko and ex-Marine Susan Roley Malone became the first female agents in FBI history. They followed the same rigorous Quantico training as the men.

Misko was soon dispatched to South Dakota when members of the American Indian Movement seized the town of Wounded Knee in 1973. Often under fire, it took 71 days to recapture the town. The violent and deadly incident caused so much damage that the town wasn't reoccupied until the 1990s.

Misko retired from the FBI in 1994.



Phyllis Shantz

Secret Service Agent

Shantz (above right) began her law enforcement career with the New York Police Department on the hippie beat. She joined the Secret Service in 1970, the first female agent in its more than 100-year history. Four more women were sworn in the following year.

At first, the agency wasn't quite sure what to do with its female agents.

Because these women were young and attractive, they were often used as decoys in places like bars and restaurants. They were also often assigned to protect women and children only.

These biases have changed and women are now an integral part of the service. Shantz stayed 10 years before joining the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.



Rose Mary Woods

Secretary

One of Washington's most famous secret-keepers, Woods became Richard Nixon's personal secretary in 1951 when he was still a congressman. She stayed in the position throughout his political career, until his resignation in 1974.

Loyal to the end, when Nixon's White House tapes became part of the Watergate impeachment inquiry Woods told a grand jury that she was to blame for an 18-and-a-half-minute gap on one of the tapes.

Woods never gave up the details of those missing minutes. To this day, it is not known what was on that tape.

She died in 2005 and was memorialized in a ceremony at the Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum in Yorba Linda, California.

"Patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness towards anyone." - Edith Cavell



Belle Boyd

Civil War Spy

Boyd's outsized personality, with exploits to match, made her one of the Confederacy's greatest assets.

Frequenting Union camps, her flirtatious nature disarmed the soldiers into giving away secrets. Nicknamed La Belle Rebelle, she was so enthusiastic about the cause that she often rode onto battlefields with information for the generals.

Arrested at least seven times, Boyd would sing Dixie and wave the Confederate flag from her window. To relay secrets from jail, she would sew them in rubber balls and throw them to her accomplices.

Banished to the South, she escaped to England after the war, where she married. She died in 1900 in the Wisconsin Dells while on tour with her second husband, an actor.



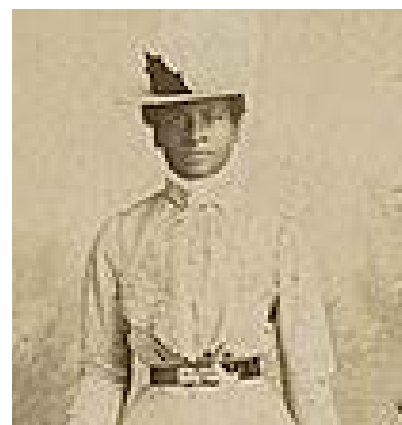
Elizabeth Van Lew

Civil War Spy

A fervent abolitionist, Van Lew was raised in an affluent Virginia family. When her father died, she freed their household slaves (including Mary Bowser, right) and used her inheritance to buy and free their relatives.

During the Civil War, she nursed wounded soldiers, including those in prison. Setting up an elaborate spy network, she would carry out information from the captured soldiers and relay it to the Union generals. Her cipher system included sending messages in hollowed-out eggs.

Post-war, President Grant made her Richmond's postmaster, but she was shunned by most in the Confederate town. She died in 1900 and was buried facing north.



Mary Bowser

Civil War Spy

Born enslaved to the Van Lew family, she was freed by Elizabeth Van Lew (left) and was active in her Union spy ring during the Civil War.

Bowser's most famous spy role found her posing as a slave in order to infiltrate the Confederate White House by working for Jefferson Davis and his family. Everyone assumed she was unable to read or write, giving her greater access to vital information.

After the war she worked teaching former slaves and lecturing about her experiences.

A recent dispute over Bowser's actual name, caused in part by poor recordkeeping regarding slaves, has led historians to a renewed interest in her story. The photo above, attributed to her for decades, is now believed to be someone else, adding to the mystery.



Edith Cavell

WWI Nurse

Cavell was a British nurse stationed in Brussels during World War I.

She began harboring British and French soldiers and citizens of military age, helping them escape to the Netherlands with forged papers and connecting them with a network of guides. Belgian and French aristocracy aided the cause with money and documents.

In 1915, the Germans charged and convicted her of war treason. Cavell was executed by firing squad that same year in spite of international condemnation and pleas of mercy.

Her story became a rallying cry, recruiting soldiers and other support for the war. She came to be revered around the world. The Church of England honors her annually on October 12, the day of her death.

In 2015 her remains were returned to England.



Josephine Baker

Performer/WWII Spy

Born in Missouri in 1906, Baker ran away at 15 to join an African American theatre troupe. Living in New York during the Harlem Renaissance, she became a popular singer and vaudeville performer, eventually taking her act to Paris.

During World War II Baker joined the French Resistance, passing on secrets she heard while performing for the enemy. She wrote the information in invisible ink on sheet music to elude the Germans.

Post-war Baker returned to the United States to widespread discrimination. Refusing to sing in segregated clubs, she became a civil rights activist and one of the few speakers at the 1963 March on Washington.

Baker continued to perform around the world until shortly before her death in 1975.



Nancy Wake

WWII Spy

A New Zealander, Wake was living in the south of France with her husband, a wealthy industrialist, when World War II broke out. An earlier visit to Germany, where she witnessed Nazi gangs beating Jewish citizens, made her determined to fight back.

Wake joined the resistance, her standing in high society gaining her access others were denied. She helped wounded allied soldiers to escape and was once forced to kill a German soldier with her bare hands. Nearly captured, she fled to Britain. Her husband remained in France and was executed as a spy.

Wake joined the British Intelligence Service and was among the first men and women to parachute into France to prepare for D-Day in 1944.

Awarded top honors from Britain, France and the United States for her bravery, Wake died in 2011.

behind the scenes



My love for photography does not extend to the other members of my family. It's not that they don't enjoy photographs, it's that they don't enjoy me taking them. Of them. My kids tend to scatter when they see me, camera in hand, saying "wouldn't it be fun if . . ."

That was especially true the day I took this photo. At the time I was experimenting with what my husband called "putting crap in front of our faces." My boys complained mightily about wearing button-downs and being forced to participate in hours of shooting — though it was 20 minutes tops. The shot above is one I printed. That's when the arguing began. Each claimed it was the other one behind the stripes. They were certain.

I know the truth, the real boy in this photo. But they choose to argue about it to this day, so it remains my little secret.

As we close our look at **SECRET** we hope you'll join us for our next issue — **COLOR**.

— *ckb*

mutterhood

contact

editor@mutterhood.com

ckb@mutterhood.com

efh@mutterhood.com

follow

www.mutterhood.com

[instagram@mutterhood](https://www.instagram.com/mutterhood)

[twitter@mutterhood](https://twitter.com/mutterhood)

facebook.com/mutterhood

CREDITS & RESOURCES

Denise Swanson's cozy mystery and romance books are available in print and digital formats from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Books A Million and Kobo, as well as most independent bookstores. Several of her titles are also available as audiobooks on [Audible.com](https://www.audible.com). For more information, visit Denise's website www.deniseswanson.com and follow her on Facebook.

Denise Swanson photo on page 8 ©David Stybr



mutterhood

every woman is a story



Next:

COLOR

SPRING 2020