



The  
MARCH

of CRIME

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Mystery Writers of America

## “Writing Commercial Fiction”

with Jeffery Deaver



Presented by SoCalMWA

MWA University is returning to Southern California—and in a big way! Join MWA SoCal this September for a special MWA-U master class led by international number-one bestselling author Jeffery Deaver. With over 50 million books sold in 150 countries, Mr. Deaver is an authority on bestselling fiction. His three-hour workshop will help you develop the tools you need to craft compelling commercial fiction, providing invaluable insight into the general rules of writing fiction, the elements of a successful novel, and the publication process. No matter what your level of experience, you won't want to miss out on this fantastic opportunity to hone your skills and advance your career.

The event will take place Saturday, September 16 at the Culver City Four Points Sheraton (5990 Green Valley Circle, Culver City, CA, 90230). A free continental breakfast will be served at 8 a.m.; the program will run from 9 a.m.–noon. Admission is \$50 for MWA members and \$65 for nonmembers. Parking is \$6.

To register, email **Elizabeth Little** for further instructions at [president@socialmwa.com](mailto:president@socialmwa.com). Payment will be accepted by PayPal or check. Space is limited, so don't delay!

We look forward to seeing you September 16!

## Authors Needed

La Crescenta  
Woman's Club  
Annual Luncheon

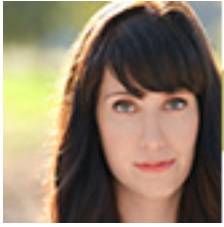
Saturday, November 11  
La Crescenta

[More info](#)

## OCSD Citizens' Academy

The Orange County Sheriff's Department is offering a county-wide Citizens' Academy. This 9-week informational series is designed to give citizens an in-depth look at the daily operations of the OCSD, including interactive course instruction and field trips provided by Sheriff's Department personnel who are experts in their respective fields.

[More Info](#)



## The President's Rap Sheet

*Elizabeth Little*

It may only be August 1, but thanks to the fine folks at the Los Angeles Unified School District, my summer is already almost over—classes, if you can believe it, resume in just two weeks. As usual, I'm a little jealous of everyone who gets to go back to school. I always loved that first month of classes, when everything was still exciting and interesting and there hadn't been enough time for me to really fall behind on the reading. At the beginning of the year it was always easy to convince myself that anything was possible.

Like maybe this time I'd actually write my papers ahead of time.

This is one of the many reasons why I'm so looking forward to our first chapter-run MWA University event in Culver City this September. As many of you may know, MWA-U was launched in 2010 in order to provide both MWA members and the general public with access to low-cost, high-quality writing instruction. Our last local MWA-U event was back in 2013, when six instructors including Jess Lourey, Hallie Ephron, and Reed Farrel Coleman taught one long day of seminars in San Diego. This year's session will be slightly different. Instead of a full day of short classes with multiple instructors, we are going to get to take a deep, sustained dive into the art of commercial fiction with a single—and singular—instructor: MWA President Jeffery Deaver.

Even though I'm working to organize the event, I won't just be there because I have to be there—I'll be there because I honestly can't think of a better way to spend a Saturday morning: I'll get to sit in a room full of people who are passionate about books while also getting to learn from one of the most successful mystery writers in the world. It will also, I suspect, remind me viscerally of those first days of the school year: everything will be exciting; everything will be interesting; anything will be possible.

Even better, no one will be grading me.

You can read more about the event on the front page of this newsletter or on the events page of our website, and of course if you have any questions, you should absolutely feel free to [contact me directly](#).

I hope you'll join me in Culver City this September!

Elizabeth

## CHAPTER OFFICERS

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**VP:** Paul D. Marks  
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Craig Faustus Buck

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Like us on Facebook

<https://facebook.com/groups/72570009680>

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## The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

Recently, a member who has a book coming out soon wrote and asked how *The March of Crime* could help him promote his book. It's a great question, so I thought I'd address the subject here.

While TMOC doesn't currently accept advertising, we're happy to post your [announcements](#) and appearances, and I generally include any graphics you send me. Last month, for example, **Glen Erik Hamilton** provided an image of his book tour schedule that included his book cover. So my first suggestion is don't be shy—send me your content even if you're not sure I can include it. I'll let you know if it's inappropriate or if I need anything in addition.

Second, consider writing an article for TMOC. This month, **Elaine Ash** contributes an informative piece entitled "[Mystery Metrics](#)," which discusses character count and how it relates to bestselling novels. If you're interested in pitching an article for inclusion in TMOC, I've provided some guidelines below.

Finally, get involved in your chapter. Go to a local meeting or an event. Get to know your fellow members. You might even want to volunteer to serve on SoCalMWA's board of directors. I can say with confidence my own involvement in SoCalMWA has led to some wonderful (and unexpected) things, not the least of which is friendship. It's even helped me sell a few books.

Enjoy the rest of your summer, *friends*.

Holly

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

Editor: [Holly West](#)

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

Contact us at:  
[themarchofcrime@gmail.com](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com)

**Join our SoCalMWA  
Yahoo! Group**

Email [SoCalMWA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:SoCalMWA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) to join  
(members only)

## TMOC Needs You!

TMOC is looking for articles (500–700 words) on subjects of interest to SoCalMWA members. This includes craft, marketing, and all aspects of publishing.

Content shouldn't be overtly promotional, but rather instructional or informational. Include a brief bio (100 words or less) and a headshot or cover image.

Send your questions and/or pitches to  
[themarchofcrime@gmail.com](mailto:themarchofcrime@gmail.com)

I look forward to hearing from you!

## OVER the TRANSOM

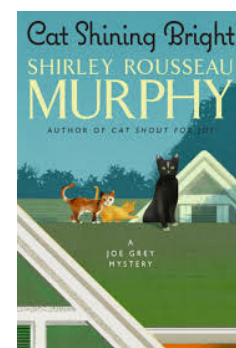
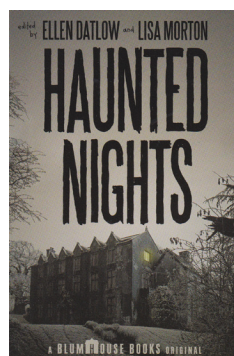
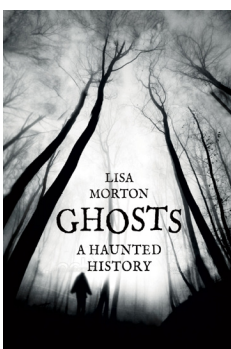
Former Chapter President **Les Klinger's** NEW ANNOTATED FRANKENSTEIN (Liveright Publishing/W. W. Norton) will be in stores on August 8. Just in time for the 200th anniversary of first publication of this brilliant work—hailed as the first true science-fiction novel—this massive and copiously illustrated volume, with nearly 1,000 annotations, includes an introduction by Guillermo del Toro, the director of *Pan's Labyrinth*, and an afterword by feminist scholar Anne K. Mellor.

Coming September 15: **Lisa Morton's** acclaimed GHOSTS: A HAUNTED HISTORY will be available for the first time in paperback. GHOSTS: A HAUNTED HISTORY is the first book to explore ghosts throughout history and around the world. *The Washington Post* said that “GHOSTS abounds with phantasmic lore of every kind,” and *The Times Literary Supplement* noted that the “brisk, handsomely illustrated GHOSTS...excels at presenting us with instances of the persistence of belief, across all times and cultures.” Illustrated throughout in color and black and white. From Reaktion Books.

Celebrate HALLOWEEN AND HAUNTED NIGHTS, an anthology of all-new fiction devoted to our favorite autumn holiday. Co-edited by legendary editor Ellen Datlow and Halloween expert **Lisa Morton**, the collection includes new stories by Kelley Armstrong, Pat Cadigan, Stephen Graham Jones, John Langan, **Jonathan Maberry**, Seanan McGuire, Garth Nix, and more. Available on October 3, 2017, in e-book and trade paperback from Anchor Books.

CAT SHINING BRIGHT, the latest in **Shirley Rousseau Murphy's** Joe Grey mystery series, will be available on August 15.

*Mystery Weekly* (July Humor Issue) includes the detective story “Darkness, Darkness” by **Peter DiChellis**. Additionally, Peter's crime piece “Hostile Plans” appears in the SoCal noir magazine *Switchblade* (Issue Two).



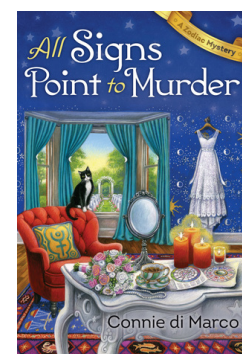
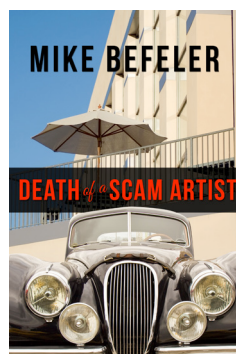
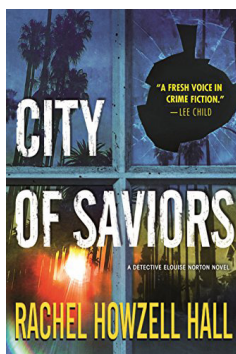
## OVER the TRANSOM

**Rachel Howzell Hall's** CITY OF SAVIORS, the fourth novel in the Detective Elouise Norton Series, will be published August 8 by Forge. She'll be reading at Mysterious Galaxy, Book Carnival, Tattered Cover, Once Upon a Crime and Poisoned Pen. Please check [rachelhowzell.com](http://rachelhowzell.com) for dates.

In many capital crimes in which no one has been convicted, there has been little doubt in the minds of law enforcement personnel as to the identity of the perpetrator, who for lack of admissible evidence has never been brought to trial. In COLD CASE CLOSURE, **Patrick Ian O'Donnell's** latest crime novel, written with coauthor Charles Gaylor, five such fictional cases continue to be pursued by a dedicated former homicide detective who appoints himself judge, jury, and executioner.

**Mike Befeler's** latest mystery, DEATH OF A SCAM ARTIST, will be released August 15. In DEATH OF A SCAM ARTIST, a financial hatchet man who dislikes old people accepts the job of turning around a failing retirement home and undergoes a life-transforming experience in the world of geezers and geezerettes. He must deal with a suspicious death, a scam, a hit man, an unexpected romance, and retired magician Jerry Rhine and his five wacky sidekicks known as the Jerry-atics. He faces the most important decision of his life when he uncovers the secret behind an unusual murder.

ALL SIGNS POINT TO MURDER, book two in **Connie di Marco's** Zodiac Mysteries from Midnight Ink, will be released on August 8th. *Booklist* says "...di Marco crafts an intricate, twisting plot and layers on the astrological details that fans of psychic mysteries so enjoy."



## Member APPEARANCES

Saturday, August 26, 6 p.m. – **T. Jefferson Parker** will be discussing and signing his new novel, *THE ROOM OF WHITE FIRE*, at Mystery Ink Bookstore, 8907 Warner Ave.#135, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, (714) 960-4000, [mysteryink.com](http://mysteryink.com).

**Sally Richards** has a meetup.com group call Go, Be, Write—they meet in various areas (including the Barnes & Noble in Mira Mesa, San Diego.) If you would like to give a talk about you, the craft of writing, and your book and would like to have a built-in audience attend (and have a book that B&N can order through regular channels), call her at 310.601.0070 or write her at [sally@sallyrichards.com](mailto:sally@sallyrichards.com).

**Shannon Baker** was recently named Rocky Mountain Fiction Writers 2017 Writer of the Year. She'll be a special guest and presenting workshops at the [RMFW Colorado Gold Conference](#) in Denver, Sept 8-10, along with keynotes Diana Gabaldon and Lori Rader-Day. It's a long drive from SoCal, but a short trip by plane, and it's a terrific conference, so consider attending this year.

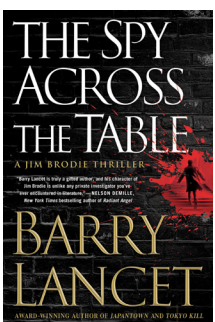
**Mike Befeler** will launch his mystery novel, *DEATH OF A SCAM ARTIST*, at Gatsby Books, 5535 E. Spring Street, Long Beach, CA, on Sunday, September 10 at 3 p.m.

**Donis Casey**, eight-time finalist for the Oklahoma Book Award, will be appearing at eight libraries in eastern Oklahoma from September 12 through September 18 on her Backroads of Oklahoma author tour. Donis will meet fans of her Alafair Tucker mystery series, set in rural Oklahoma in the booming 1910s, to talk about her books, including her upcoming tenth Alafair Tucker mystery, *FORTY DEAD MEN*. Donis will be joined by fellow mystery authors Mary Anna Evans, Will Thomas, and Julia Thomas in a mystery writers' roundtable at noon on Saturday, September 18, at the Muskogee Public Library. For Donis's complete Backroads Tour schedule, including times and dates, please go to [doniscasey.com](http://doniscasey.com).

**Barry Lancet** is winding up the string of events for *THE SPY ACROSS THE TABLE* with two final appearances in Southern California. He will talk about his latest Jim Brodie mystery-thriller, his travels to the DMZ, and his real-life encounter with the spy that inspired the title character. See Lancet at Vroman's Bookstore in Pasadena on Thursday, August 10 at 7 p.m., and at the Los Angeles Public Library, Little Tokyo Branch, on Saturday, August 19 at 11 a.m.



FBI cybercrime expert—and O.C. native—Gina Osborn, left, was the special guest speaker at the OC/SinC & SoCalMWA annual joint luncheon meeting. SoCalMWA president **Elizabeth Little**, right, joined OC/SinC Gayle Carline in welcoming the nearly fifty attendees. There was Mexican food, raffle baskets, and lots of info (some of it sobering) about the crafty world of cybercrime. Thanks to all who took part!



# Mystery Metrics

by Elaine Ash

“Numbers have a way of taking a man by the hand  
and leading him [or her] down the path of reason.”  
—Pythagoras 570–495 BC

Many years ago I discovered mathematical patterns hidden inside bestselling novels. *THE BIG SLEEP* by Raymond Chandler, *GONE GIRL* by Gillian Flynn, *THE LINCOLN LAWYER* by Michael Connelly, and *KILL SHOT* by Vince Flynn are all mysteries—from the P.I. genre to the thriller subgenres of suspense, legal, and political espionage. All four are brilliantly constructed, and their secrets can be revealed by metrics.

Look at the table of numbers starting from the left-hand side. The title and author of each book are listed, then the publication date, then the word count. The last two columns show numbers almost never calculated for novels: the number of characters appearing in the set-up of the story and the number of those same characters who make it all the way through to the climax and ending.

| TITLE & AUTHOR                         | PUB DATE | WORD COUNT (approx.) | Total Characters First Quarter | Characters from 1st Quarter Appearing in Last Quarter |
|--|----------|----------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Kill Shot by Vince Flynn               | 2012     | 118k                 | 25                             | 13  |
| The Big Sleep by Raymond Chandler      | 1939     | 72k                  | 27                             | 8   |
| The Lincoln Lawyer by Michael Connelly | 2005     | 125k                 | 40                             | 17  |
| Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn             | 2012     | 146k                 | 53                             | 13  |

Although the word count varies widely—from 72k to 146k—there is a mere 11-character difference in the number of characters making it from the set-up (the first quarter) all the way through the story to the last-quarter. This is the core cast of each story, the people who have carried the plot on their shoulders all the way through.

Most writers never think of counting characters, but it’s a good way to check how a core cast has fared over the course of a manuscript. Barring a hidden-identity surprise, the characters showing up at the end should be ones readers are familiar with and recognize readily. The more page time these characters have had, and the more ups and downs they’ve gone through, the more readers care about what happens to them as the climax unfurls toward an ending.

[continued on pg 11](#)

# Ladies of Intrigue

Featuring Remarkable Women Mystery Writers

**Sunday, October 1, 2017**

**Embassy Suites**

8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

## Our 2017 Headliners

### Marcia Clark



Marcia Clark is a best-selling author and a criminal lawyer who began her career in law as a criminal defense attorney and became a prosecutor in the L.A. District Attorney's Office. Her book on the Simpson case, **Without a Doubt**, became a #1 bestseller. Clark's new crime fiction series with criminal defense attorney, Samantha Brinkman, debuted in May 2016 with the publication of **Blood Defense**, a #1 Amazon bestseller. The second book in the series, **Moral Defense**, published in November 2016. Her previous legal thrillers have been optioned by TNT for a drama series.

### Wendy Corsi Staub



Wendy Corsi Staub (aka Wendy Markham) is *The New York Times* and *USA Today* best-selling author of more than seventy-five novels and has a Hallmark movie based on her books that will debut this Fall. Renowned for her tales of suspense, she has twice been nominated for the Simon & Schuster Mary Higgins Clark Award and is the recipient of the prestigious RITA Award. She lives in the New York area with her husband and their two children.

### Host:

Barbara DeMarco-Barrett's first book, **Pen on Fire: A Busy Woman's Guide to Igniting the Writer Within**, made the *Los Angeles Times* best-seller list and received an American Society of Journalists and Authors Outstanding Book Award. She has a story in **Orange County Noir** and **USA Noir**, published by Akashic. She's host of Writers on Writing, KUCI-FM, Weds. mornings at 9.

### **Barbara DeMarco-Barrett**



### Panelists:

**Jill Amadio, Greta Boris, Naomi Hirahara, Sybil Johnson, Elizabeth Little, Nadine Nettmann, Kaira Rouda, Alexandra Sokoloff, Patricia Wynn, Pamela Samuels Young**

**\*Additional panelists to be announced soon!**



**Hosted by Orange County Sister in Crime  
(a non-profit organization)**

**Additional information and registration: Mystery Ink Bookstore  
www.mysteryink.com or (714) 743-6127**

[Register here](#)



## Women Writers Needed!

Volunteer to be a creative writing mentor to teen girls and join a growing network of women writers.



WriteGirl ([www.writegirl.org](http://www.writegirl.org)) is a creative writing and mentoring organization that empowers underserved teen girls in Los Angeles through mentoring relationships with women writers, hosting large-scale writing workshops at such places as the Huntington Gardens and the Autry. Since 2001, WriteGirl has maintained a **100% success rate** in guiding girls to not only graduate from high school but also enroll in college.

WriteGirl is seeking **women writers in all genres** including novelists, poets, journalists, songwriters, copywriters, legal writers, and more to help lead workshops and inspire girls to express their creative ideas. Weekly and monthly mentoring opportunities available.

WriteGirl is also seeking **professional women** to volunteer behind-the-scenes with events, public relations, fundraising, and partnerships. (Strong communication skills required.)

Women should apply **by August 25, 2017** at [www.writegirl.org/join-us](http://www.writegirl.org/join-us). For more information, sign up for our newsletter at <http://bit.ly/2tK9WUr>. For questions, contact WriteGirl at [membership@writegirl.org](mailto:membership@writegirl.org) or call 213-253-2655.

**HELP TEEN GIRLS. GET INSPIRED.  
JOIN WRITEGIRL.**



[More info](#)

SoCal MWA Cash Flow  
1/1/2017 through 6/30/2017

Category Description

**INFLOWS**

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|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Advertising income                           | \$0.00     |
| Chapter Share                                | \$4,781.35 |
| Dinners, Banquets, Luncheons                 | \$1,141.74 |
| Royalty Income                               | \$0.00     |
| Special Events – Receipts                    | \$0.00     |
| PayPal transfer (from previous years events) | \$2,397.24 |

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**TOTAL INFLOWS** **\$8,320.33**

**OUTFLOWS**

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|  |            |
|--|------------|
| Hospitality for chapter events, board meetings | \$474.33   |
| Luncheons, dinners                             | \$3,587.02 |
| Special events, Tucson, LATFOB                 | \$1239.71  |
| Office supplies, printing                      | \$543.42   |
| Travel (air, hotel)                            | \$1,077.62 |
| Computer software, web site, web hosting       | \$314.39   |
| Newsletter                                     | \$500.00   |

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**TOTAL OUTFLOWS** **\$7,736.49**

Starting Balance (1/1/2017) \$24,900.55

Ending Balance (6/30/2017) \$25,484.39

*Three Authors Needed*

The La Crescenta Women's Club is looking for three authors to speak at their annual luncheon in La Crescenta on Saturday, November 11.

Authors must have published two titles, have speaking experience, and books available through Vroman's Bookstore. No honorarium.

Arrive at 9:15 a.m. for pre-signing. Speakers present before noon luncheon.

Email [Carol Wegge Stein](mailto:Carol.Wegge.Stein@la-crescenta-women.com) if you're interested.

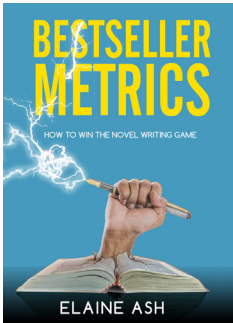
[continued from pg 7](#)

If the number of surviving characters in the last quarter is too high, readers may lack enough time with each one to get acquainted and develop a bond. (Please note the emphasis on “may.” Metrics are not hard and fast rules, they are indicators that something could use a check-up.) A high last-quarter number may signify that characters have whipped through the second act without much development. This can be a common problem in first-draft manuscripts when writers excitedly create new character after new character instead of deeply developing those already introduced in previous chapters. Remember, the more bonded readers are to characters, the more invested and enthused they are likely to be as a story nears the climax.

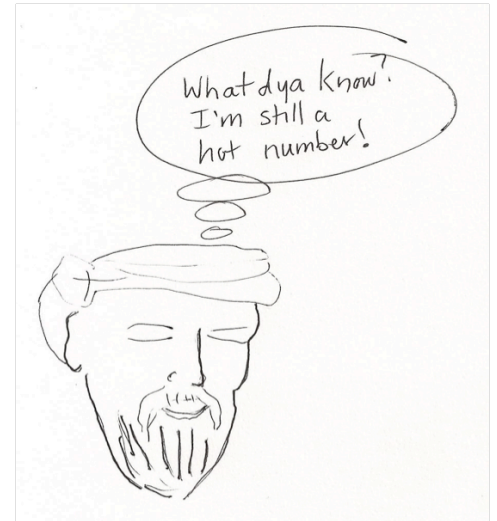
What about a low number of characters surviving in the last quarter? A low number may signal a lack of interconnected relationships that flesh out the “world” of the novel. For example, the lowest number of surviving characters that I found (outside of the mystery genre) belonged to *INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE* by Anne Rice. Only four characters survived. Why? Because vampires outlive everyone around them. Writers can learn something from this metric: A low survival rate indicates a pall of loneliness and loss over the story. If a cozy manuscript-in-progress has a low survival rate, it may not be so cozy. The clue is right there in the metrics.

Somewhere, Pythagoras is smiling.

\*\*\*



**Elaine Ash** edits career authors as well as emerging talent. Her book on novel structure is titled *BESTSELLER METRICS: HOW TO WIN THE NOVEL WRITING GAME*. Patent-pending software is also in development for the publishing industry. Learn more at [www.bestsellermetrics.com](http://www.bestsellermetrics.com).



570– 495 BC, Greece

*Writers of Southern Nevada*  
Presents

4-DAY WRITERS RETREAT  
Thursday September 28 - Sunday October 1  
Boulder City, NV

Join the Writers of Southern Nevada at the historic Boulder Dam Hotel in beautiful downtown Boulder City, NV for a writers retreat. Daily made-to-order breakfast, free wi-fi and daily reading/discussion circles. Free admission to the Boulder Dam Museum too!

Pump up your word count! Finish your manuscript! Start that blockbuster! Only \$375 if you register before August 15th for four quiet days to yourself! Visit [www.nevadawriters.org/writers-retreat](http://www.nevadawriters.org/writers-retreat) for more information.

## Crime CALENDAR

July 11–15 – [ThrillerFest XII, New York, NY](#)  
July 16 – [2nd Annual BBQ Bookswap, Los Angeles, CA](#)  
Sep 16 – [MWA University: “Writing Commercial Fiction with Jeffery Deaver,” Culver City, CA](#)  
October 1 – [Ladies of Intrigue, Santa Ana, CA](#)  
October 7 – [SoCalMWA Gumbo Party, Los Angeles, CA](#)  
October 12 – 15 – [Bouchercon World Mystery Conference, Toronto, Canada](#)  
November 4 – [Murder and Mayhem Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI](#)  
December 10 – [SoCalMWA Holiday Party, Los Angeles, CA](#)

## The LAST WORD

“A fluffy ball of fur named Mitzi was the first to sniff out the intruder, alerting the unsuspecting residents of Seagull Lane to the grim discovery.”

—Sybil Johnson, FATAL BRUSHSTROKE