



The
MARCH

of CRIME

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LUNCHEON

at the

TAM O'SHANTER

INSIDE THE ATF:

The Federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms & Explosives

Sunday, May 19

Doors open at 11:30 a.m.

Orders taken at Noon

We may be familiar with the work of local police and even the FBI. But few know the daily doings of the ATF, a law enforcement agency in the United States' Department of Justice that protects our communities from violent criminals, criminal organizations, the illegal use and trafficking of firearms, the illegal use and storage of explosives, acts of arson and bombings, acts of terrorism, and the illegal diversion of alcohol and tobacco products.

Here's your chance to find out the ins and outs of these intrepid crime fighters, what they do, and how they do it.

Our speaker is Carlos A. Canino, Special Agent in Charge of the Los Angeles Field Division. He'll be joined by Ginger Colbrun, Public Information Officer for the division.

TAM O'SHANTER RESTAURANT
2980 Los Feliz Blvd, Los Angeles CA 90039
Noon-2:30 p.m.

Paid valet or free street parking available.

You may pay at the door by cash or check, but PayPal in advance is preferred.

[RESERVE YOUR SPOT NOW](#)

California Crime Writers Conference

Register Now!

June 8-9
Culver City

[More Info](#)



The President's Rap Sheet

Glen Erik Hamilton

This is getting to be a habit: Writing the monthly Rap Sheet while en route home from conferences. Last month, Left Coast Crime; now, the Edgar Awards. Flights seem to be good for my productivity. Maybe I should build an office with tray tables and a single oval window, and reward myself for pages completed with tiny packets of peanuts.

For those of you who've never been to the Edgar Awards, I recommend all mystery lovers who can manage it make the pilgrimage at least once. No question that it's a long and pricey haul to NYC from our coast—plus a fairly long night at the banquet itself—but Wow, what a gathering. If you could bottle the amount of inspiration that the assembled bestselling and critically acclaimed authors have given the rest of our writing community, you'd need—well, a bottling plant, its conveyor belts running twenty-four-seven.

And speaking of acclaim: Huge congratulations to SoCalMWA's own **Leslie S. Klinger** on his Edgar win for Best Critical/Biographical, for his work *CLASSIC AMERICAN CRIME FICTION OF THE 1920s*. Les is a former SoCalMWA chapter president and this is his second time taking home the statuette of Mr. Poe. That's a great pair of bookends!

2020 will be MWA's seventy-fifth year, and 2021 will see the Edgar Awards' seventy-fifth, which means we have two golden anniversary celebrations in the near future. The Grand Hyatt in Midtown Manhattan has been sold and will be torn down, meaning next year will be MWA's final shindig there.

Double-barreled events aimed right at us: Our [May 19 luncheon](#) with guest speaker Carlos Canino of the ATF, and the California Crime Writers Conference on June 8 and 9, co-hosted by SoCalMWA and Sisters in Crime LA. You can expect next month's Rap Sheet to be breathless, as I'll be loading a truck with all of the free books sent to us by publishers for CCWC. [Register now](#) and take a few of these off my hands, won't you?

All Best,
Glen

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The EDITOR'S CORNER

Holly West

It's confession time at The Editor's Corner (yes, again).

I've been writing seriously for a number of years now but I still haven't quite happened upon a writing routine that works consistently for me. Judging from my output, you might have already guessed this. But recently, I started doing three things that have made a big difference. I'm going to share them with you in case you're struggling, like I often do.

1) I started using the [pomodoro technique](#). Basically, I work in blocks of twenty-five minutes, followed by a five minute break. Each session requires my full attention on ONE TASK, and every break requires that I step away from my work to rest (note: this doesn't include checking social media). After four twenty-five minute sessions, I take a half-hour break. I downloaded an app called "pomodoro focus" that keeps track of the sessions.

I know I'm not the first person to work in blocks, and I've even tried it in the past. But this time, it's really working for me.

2) I spent a good chunk of time outlining my current WIP. First, I wrote a two-paragraph synopsis (it was required contractually). Then, I outlined the entire novella, from start to finish, and used that outline to write a full synopsis. Now, I'm writing the actual story, scene-by-scene, as defined by the outline. The writing is going much faster because I know exactly where I'm going.

In a world filled with "pantsers and plotters," I've always been a plotter, but I've never written an outline this detailed before beginning the actual writing. Turns out, I should've done this years ago.

3) I've long been a proponent of the "crappy first draft" doctrine, but this time, I'm editing as I go so that my finished first draft won't be quite as rough as usual. Having my trusty outline in hand means I'm stalling less often.

Once this project is turned in I'll be using this same routine on a full-length novel. It'll be interesting to see if it's as effective for a longer project.

I hope to see many of you at the upcoming California Crime Writers Conference. I'll be at the registration desk, as usual, so stop by and say hello.

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

Join our SoCalMWA Yahoo! Group

Email SoCalMWA-subscribe@yahoogroups.com to join
(members only)

FRESHBLOOD

SoCalMWA welcomes its new and returning members

Carl Lawrence Decker



Dianne Freeman

Dianne Freeman is a life-long book lover who left the world of corporate finance to pursue her passion for writing. After co-authoring the non-fiction book, *Haunted Highway, The Spirits of Route 66*, she realized her true love was historical mystery. She also realized she didn't like winter very much, so now she and her husband pursue the endless summer by splitting their time between Michigan and Arizona. Her debut novel, *A LADY'S GUIDE TO ETIQUETTE AND MURDER*, has been nominated for an Agatha and the prestigious Mary Higgins Clark Award, and won the 2018 Lefty Award for Best Debut Mystery.

Fonda St. Paul



2019 California Crime Writers Conference

Saturday, June 8–Sunday, June 9, 2019

Doubletree Hilton in Culver City

The 2019 California Crime Writers Conference is almost here!

Keynote workshops from Tess Gerritsen and Catriona McPherson! Opportunities to sit in small groups with editors, agents, screenwriters, and producers and Ask Them Anything! Best First Sentence Contest!

From spotting a suicide bomber to writing killer dialogue, launching your debut novel to making the most of a long career, interrogation techniques to swords to getting your work optioned for the screen, this year's California Crime Writers Conference has it all.

[Find the complete list of panels here.](#) Conference dates are June 8–9, 2019 at the DoubleTree by Hilton, 6161 W Centinela Ave, Culver City. Final registration must be received by May 31.

See you in June!

[REGISTER NOW](#)

OVER the TRANSOM

PROOF OF LIFE, **Sheila Lowe's** new paranormal mystery, is set for release on May 7. PROOF OF LIFE is the story of Jessica Mack's reluctant journey into mediumship. After five years of ignoring the voices of dead people who want her to help them, when a little boy goes missing, Jessica is forced to start listening and use her "gift" to look for him.

"Readers who enjoy this genre will no doubt add Lowe to their list of preferred authors after this book."—

RECOMMENDED by the *US Review*. [Related appearances](#).

Gay Tolt Kinman's TONY REYNOLDS: COZY THRILL STORIES features a CIA Agent stationed in London. Tony Reynolds solves three cases in the mystery short stories: "London Spy," "The Duchess," and "Death in Amsterdam." Added are chapters from DEATH IN COVENT GARDEN, the novel which ends the series on a surprising note.

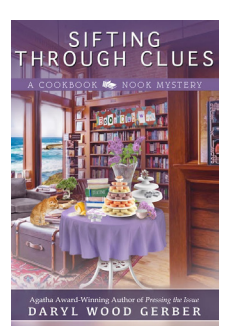
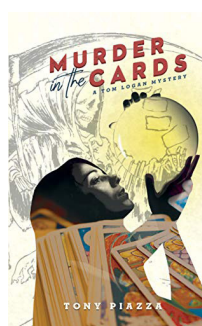
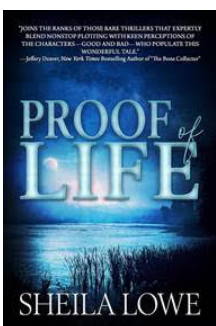
Andrew Neiderman, who has been writing V.C. Andrews for over 32 years, is pleased to announce that the Lifetime Network has completed shooting on the entire Heaven Casteel series. The movies will most likely be aired this summer in a major promotion. Simon and Schuster will issue movie tie-in reprints with the actors on the cover. Annalise Basso stars as Heaven and Jason Priestly plays Tony Tatterton. Neiderman is consulting producer.

Tony Piazza received two awards for his last novel, MURDER WILL OUT, from *InDTale Magazine* and *The International Review of Books*. He has also released the fifth in his 1930s Detective Tom Logan series, entitled MURDER IN THE CARDS. The book takes Logan's investigation from the Grand Canyon to Los Angeles, and eventually to the Central Coast where he's employed by a newspaper magnate, who happens to have a "castle" on a hill. [Related appearances](#).

The mind never truly forgets. Even when it wants to... **Shannon Baker** is excited to announce the publication of the first book in her new Arizona Rangers series, THE DESERT BEHIND ME, a twisty psychological suspense set in Tucson. May 6 from Severn River Publishers.

SIFTING THROUGH CLUES, the eighth Cookbook Nook Mystery by **Daryl Wood Gerber** is out. It's all good food and fun for Jenna and her savvy book club pals, until one of the members is found murdered at the last stop of their moveable feast event. [More info](#).

Glen Erik Hamilton has signed a two-book deal with William Morrow, including the fifth Van Shaw novel for publication in summer 2020, in which the former thief and Army Ranger is forced to confront dark truths about his family's legacy of crime.



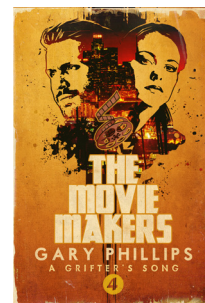
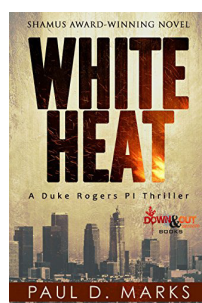
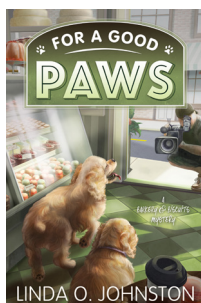
OVER the TRANSOM

The fifth and final book in **Linda O. Johnston's** Barkery & Biscuits Mysteries, **FOR A GOOD PAWS**, is a May 2019 release from Midnight Ink. In it, veterinary technician Carrie Kennersly, who owns both a bakery for people treats and a barkery where she sells healthy dog treats she created, has to determine whether the long-ago murder of the first female mayor of Knobcone Heights is related to the current murder of that mayor's husband. And yes, there are dogs in it!

Paul D. Marks' story "House of the Rising Sun" appears in the new issue of *Switchblade* (Issue 9) out now. Available at Amazon in Kindle. Paper version coming in May. Additionally, Paul's Shamus Award-winning mystery **WHITE HEAT** will be a Featured Deal on Book Bub and will be on sale at Amazon for 99 cents on May 19.

THE MOVIE MAKERS, by **Gary Phillips**, was released on April 1. Harold Robbins meets the violent world of Parker: Sam and Rachel are a grifter couple and working their latest con in La-La Land, where it's all smoke and mirrors, baby. Until it gets way too real. This novelette is among several of their outings in the Grifter's Song series. Hear Gary talk with their creator Frank Zafiro about the story on the [Wrong Place, Right Crime](#) podcast.

The just out Spring issue of **Mystery Scene** magazine has a piece by **Pat H. Broeske** that traces the strange history and allure of William Lindsay Gresham's carnival noir, **NIGHTMARE ALLEY**. First published in 1946, the novel has never been out of print. The 1947 film adaptation, starring a commanding Tyrone Power, is a cult classic. Oscar winner Guillermo del Toro now has a remake on the boards.



Member APPEARANCES

Chapter members are invited to **Sheila Lowe's** launch party for PROOF OF LIFE at Orozco's Mexican restaurant in Ventura on May 7. Prizes, networking, food, and of course, books. 5:30–7:30 p.m. [RSVP requested](#). Sheila will also be signing at Barnes & Noble in Ventura on May 18.

Janet Elizabeth Lynn and **Will Zeilinger** are launching their latest Skylar Drake mystery novel, GAME TOWN, on Saturday, May 4 at Gatsby Books 5535 E. Spring St. in Long Beach from 3-5 p.m. Reading/Q&A/Signing.

Tony Piazza will be doing a book signing on June 15 from noon–3 p.m. at the Bookworm Bookstore in Santa Maria, CA.

Christina Hoag will be at LitFest Pasadena on May 18 moderating the panel “Writing Strong Teen Female Characters in the #MeToo Era” at 4:30 p.m. and as a panelist on “The Good Fight: Can Social Justice Be Achieved through the Literary Arts?” at 6 p.m. At 10 a.m., she will also be speaking about “10,000 Mistakes to Publication” at the Southern California Writers Association, Claim Jumper restaurant, Fountain Valley.

Sherri Leigh James will participate on the panel KILLING IT: HUMOR IN MYSTERIES at Malice Domestic 31, at 9:00 a.m. on May 5. She will be talking about her new mystery book, BLOOD RED, which introduces Cissy Huntington, interior designer to the rich and famous. See more BLOOD RED and her other novels at: SherriLeighJames.com.

Jeri Westerson will be teaching a session at the Writing Conference of Los Angeles on Saturday, May 4, 9:30 a.m.–5 p.m. called “Ten Secrets to Creating Mysteries That Kill.” Doubletree Culver City. writingconferenceoflosangeles.com. Jeri is also launching TWO books in May. The first is the twelfth Crispin Guest Medieval Noir, TRAITOR'S CODEX: Saturday, May 11, 4 p.m. at Vroman's bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd, Pasadena / Sunday, May 12, 2 p.m. at Mystery Ink Bookstore, 8907 Warner Ave #135, Huntington Beach. Then Jeri will be launching her third Booke of the Hidden paranormal, SHADOWS IN THE MIST: Saturday, May 18, 3 p.m. at The Cauldron 8028 Beach Blvd., Buena Park, across from Knott's Berry Farm. You'll find her and her party behind the secret bookcase!



Lee Goldberg and **T. Jefferson Parker** spoke on a panel at the Los Angeles Times Festival of Books with author Melissa Scrivner-Love and Christopher Farnsworth.

May 22 at 7 p.m.: **Wendall Thomas** will be in conversation with Timothy Hallinan and signing DROWNED UNDER at Chevalier's Books (126 N. Larchmont Blvd. Los Angeles).

L–R: Melissa Scrivner-Love, Christopher Farnsworth, T. Jefferson Parker, Lee Goldberg

Member APPEARANCES

D.P. Lyle will make the following appearances to promote the release of his new Jake Longly, SUNSHINE STATE:

Tuesday, May 21, 7 p.m.

Lit Up! OC: Reading from SUNSHINE STATE
Bardot Bars & Coffee, 662 El Camino Real, Tustin
<https://www.facebook.com/litupoc/>

Sunday, May 26, 2 p.m.

Sisters in Crime Orange County
Discussion of SUNSHINE STATE
Irvine Water District, 15500 Sand Canyon Ave., Irvine
<http://ocsistersincrime.org>

Saturday, June 1, 2 p.m.

SUNSHINE STATE Signing and Interview by Maddie Margarita (And it's Maddie's Birthday!!!!)
Book Carnival, 348 S. Tustin Street, Orange
<http://www.annesbookcarnival.com>

Saturday, May 25, 3 p.m.

SUNSHINE STATE Launch Party Signing
Mystery Ink Bookstore, 8907 Warner Ave. #135,
Huntington Beach
<http://www.mysteryink.com>

Saturday, June 1, 9 a.m. (Pacific)

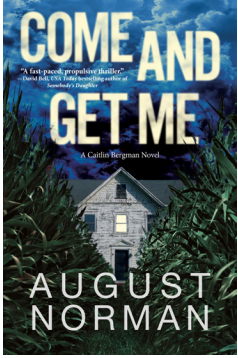
Suspense Radio Interview
Discussion of SUNSHINE STATE
<http://www.blogtalkradio.com/suspensemazine>

On Thursday, May 16, **Patricia Smiley** will lead a discussion of her latest police procedural THE SECOND GOODBYE at the California Yacht Club Happy Hour Book Club.



Contributors to MURDER-A-GO-GO'S: CRIME FICTION INSPIRED BY THE MUSIC OF THE GO-GO'S gathered to discuss the anthology with Alison Arngrim on April 17 at the Last Bookstore in Downtown LA. SoCalMWA members pictured are: Holly West, Wendall Thomas, Josh Stallings, Nadine Nettmann, Travis Richardson, Stephen Beuhler, Lisa Brackmann, and S.W. Lauden.

Member APPEARANCES



August Norman will read from his debut thriller, *COME AND GET ME: A Caitlin Bergman Novel*, as part of Mysterious Galaxy's all-day Birthday Bash in San Diego at 1 p.m., May 11. For more info, visit augustnorman.com.

Georgia Jeffries is the moderator for the "Books to TV" panel at Vroman's bookstore on May 18 at 2:00pm during the Pasadena LitFest celebration. She will be talking with panelists **Attica Locke**, Edgar Award winning novelist and writer-producer of *Empire*, Jim Gavin, author of *MIDDLE MEN* and creator of AMC's *Lodge 49*, and Gina Fattore, novelist and TV writer-producer.

LA Times Festival of Books



Matt Coyle & Patricia Smiley



L-R: Gary Phillips, Rachel Howzell Hall, Pamela Samuels Young

Packaging Your Baby For Hollywood

by Tom Sawyer

Sizzling loglines, film treatments, synopses, & tv series presentations are essential elements in getting your story on the screen. But what are they?

LOGLINES

This is where you start. Also referred to as “hooks,” or “springboards.” The logline should contain the essence of your story—especially its essential conflict(s). Active verbs. Vivid adjectives. The Sizzle. Examples:

The Sixteenth Man

Archaeologist Matt Packard unearths a tomb in Utah containing fifteen ancient skeletons. The sixteenth has a bullet in its wingbone—and Packard is plunged into a web of vicious killers as he unexpectedly discovers the secrets of JFK’s Assassination.

No Place to Run

Framed for their parents’ murder, able to trust no one, Claudia Lawrence, 23, and pain-in-the-ass kid brother Adam must elude nameless killers—and decipher a complex puzzle as they uncover the truth—the massive conspiracy in high places that enabled the events of 9/11.

SYNOPSES

A synopsis is generally defined as a one-to-four page narrative description of what happens in your story, told with sizzle, since it will likely be used as a selling tool—to entice an agent, publisher, or producer to take a look at your project. Generally, for literary agent submissions, one or two pages are best. The same is true for Hollywood agents.

TREATMENTS

A film treatment used to consist of twenty-to-forty or more pages of narrative. That has changed. In Hollywood, where it is rumored that few people will (or can) read, and even fewer have attention spans longer than five minutes, treatments have become so brief that the line between them and synopses is blurred. I’ve had producers caution me that anything longer than four pages is death. Even for the purposes of selling the screen rights to a novel.

SCREENPLAYS

Keep in mind that much of the above applies to your movie script (should you choose to write one): You need to preface it with as much sell as possible in the form of logline, treatment, etc. That’s usually all that will be read by a producer or director, at least until it is on the verge of a sale. First, it will be read by a “reader,” who is paid to do “coverage” on it. Unfortunately, today, most of this coverage is done according to one or more matrices which have been created directly, or adapted from, formulae postulated by various gurus, most of whom have never earned more than twenty-eight cents as screenwriters, but whose analysis of what works and what doesn’t has been largely accepted as gospel within the business.

TV SERIES PRESENTATIONS/PITCHES

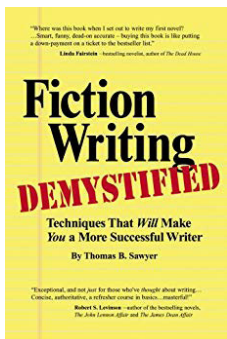
In the case of a pitch for a series pilot, which might also be in the form of a movie, or for a miniseries, the writer usually provides a “leave-behind,” a written proposal of from two to ten-or-so pages. These usually include at least a half-dozen loglines describing the stories for individual series episodes.

PACKAGING YOUR BABY FOR HOLLYWOOD—[continued from previous page](#)

Importantly, to be considered in today's marketplace, your written series' core-character bios/descriptions must include concise descriptions of those characters' arcs—their evolvments and development of new and/or ongoing goals and conflicts over the life of the series.

As with loglines, the single most important element of a good pitch—or synopsis or treatment—is that summation at the top that either suggests (if you're trying for subtlety) or (better yet), spells out the main conflict. In the publishing business, it's often that quotable bullet that sets apart the idea for a novel, the one that succinctly says what it's about, that can make it a “big” book.

And incidentally, the above can be highly effective not merely for selling your project, but also as a way of clarifying it for yourself.



Emmy and Edgar-nominated, **Tom Sawyer** was Head Writer, Showrunner, and Producer of the classic series, *Murder, She Wrote*, for which he wrote twenty-four episodes. He also wrote, directed, and produced the cult film-comedy *Alice Goodbody*, and was the co-librettist/lyricist of *Jack*, an opera about JFK. He's the Author of FICTION WRITING DEMYSTIFIED and his latest thriller is A MAJOR PRODUCTION!. Tom's memoir is THE ADVENTURES OF THE REAL TOM SAWYER and he's written a companion book called 9 BADASS SECRETS FOR PUTTING YOURSELF IN LUCK'S WAY. More at ThomasBSawyer.com.

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.

What Readers Want to Know

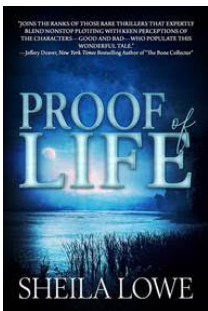
by **Sheila Lowe**

With a new book coming out in May, I wanted to stir up some interest in my social media groups, so I asked them what questions they would like to ask the authors whose books they read. Some of the answers were total non sequiturs and made me wonder whether the respondent actually read the question. For example, one wrote, “Herman Melville said, ‘if I wrote what I actually thought about humanity...I would never have been published.’” Another said, “I like authors who are knowledgeable about the field they write about. It makes their books more believable.” And another: “Everything under the sun in order to calibrate the veracity of what they claim to be true.” Okay, I didn’t specify fiction, so I’ll give the last guy a pass.

The responses boiled down to ten questions that I felt were share-worthy. They split into two general categories. The first five are requests for personal information about the author. The rest have to do with the writing process. Like me, you’ve probably heard them all at one time or another. Still, it’s a good exercise to engage readers, Facebook Friends, Twitter followers, or wherever else you get the word out about your books. What I found most interesting was how much these respondents wanted to know about the writer as a person.

- When did the author know they were going to write? Was it always in their soul?
- A peek into their childhood and also, why and how they started writing.
- Where they grew up, education, family, profession.
- About them personally. Even little things—coffee/tea, wine/beer/cocktail; family, etc.
- I like a photo of the author and to know where they live.
- How does the author research? Online, interview, hands-on?
- What is their writing routine? I like to see their workspace and bookshelves.
- Does the author wait for inspiration or have a method to cultivate ideas?
- How long does it take to write a book?
- How often do they go to a public library? (sent by a librarian)

If you give this exercise a try and get any unique answers, please share them. Although I’ve answered most, if not all, of the above in various guest blogs over time, I intend to put them on my own blog. Who knows what sells books, but letting readers get to know you can’t hurt.



Sheila Lowe is a British-born award-winning novelist and handwriting examiner. Her second career as a mystery writer came after publishing nonfiction books, monographs, handwriting analyzer software, and a self-study course. She’s the author of the Claudia Rose Forensic Handwriting mystery series and the Beyond the Veil paranormal mystery series. Her latest book, **PROOF OF LIFE**, will be released on May 7.

Crime
CALENDAR

May 3–5 – [Malice Domestic, Bethesda MD](#)
May 19 – [SoCalMWA Tam O'Shanter Luncheon, Los Angeles, CA](#)
June 8–9 – [California Crime Writers Conference, Los Angeles CA](#)
July 9–13 – [ThrillerFest XIV, New York NY](#)
October 31–Nov 3 – [Bouchercon, Dallas TX](#)

The
LAST WORD

“A week ago, I’d walked into Chaz’s office and caught him with his shirt up, tweezing his nipples with a binder clip.”

—Steph Cha, BEWARE BEWARE