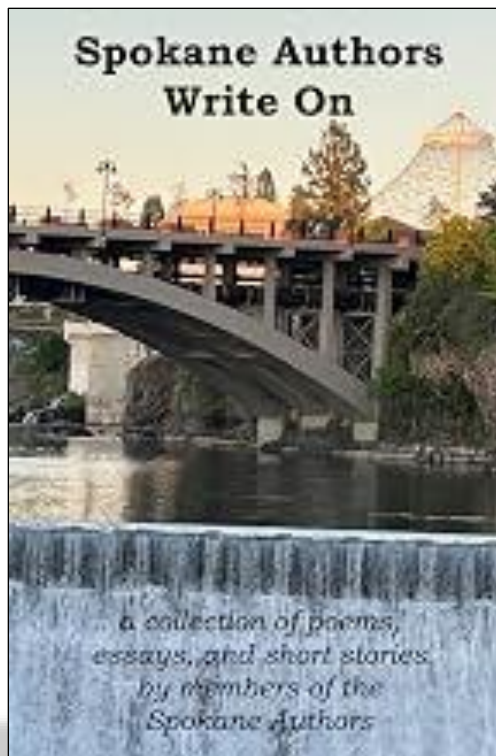
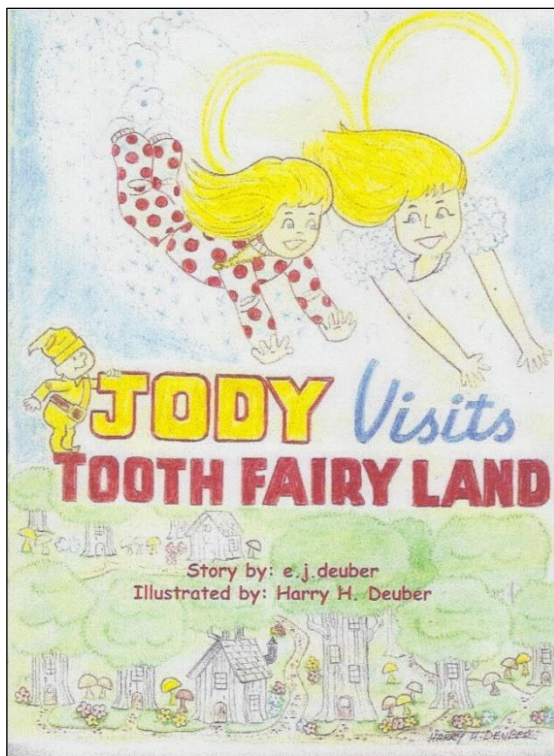




Literary Gazette

September 2026

Spokane Authors
2504 W. Walton Ave.
Spokane, WA 99205-1569



Spokane Authors and Self-Publishers (SASP), now known as **Spokane Authors**, began in 1998 when *Chuck O'Conner, Elmer Freeman, Joe Meiners, and Dan Vollmer*, Spokane area authors, formed a club to share knowledge and experience with those interested in writing and alternative publishing. Today, Spokane Authors is an organization dedicated to anyone interested in any aspect of writing and art. Members include aspiring (and successful) authors, poets, writing instructors, and many others. Monthly meetings provide inspiration and education by way of knowledgeable and entertaining guest speakers, and the cheerful camaraderie of people sharing common interests and goals. Membership is open to all who love writing, art, and interesting people.

Spokane Authors meets the **second Friday** of each month at the **Sans Souci West Club House**, 3231 W. Boone Ave., Spokane.

The meeting room opens at **1:30 pm**.
Presentations and discussions begin at **2:00 pm**.

Spokane Authors also meets the **third Wednesday** of each month, at the **Sans Souci West Club House**, 3231 W. Boone Ave.

The meeting room opens at **5:30 pm**.
Presentations and discussions begin at **6:00 pm**.

We set up a collection jar for those who wish to help reimburse whoever might bring refreshments.

Membership benefits include listing on the Spokane Authors website, www.spokaneauthors.org. Many members provide short biographies and links to external personal websites, creating more marketing exposure. Current members may list and describe their published works on the Spokane Authors website and offer their work for sale at meetings.

Visit the "members" page on our website to connect with members' webpages. Our "links" page connects to interesting on-line locations.

Guest speakers inform, inspire, and entertain with a variety of topics designed to provide knowledge about writing and publishing.

Spokane Authors members are encouraged to purchase or trade completed works with fellow members. They are also encouraged to donate copies of their work as door prizes. Winners of other members' work are expected to provide a review.

Note: Your name tag is yours to keep and maintain. We provide space to display your books, but *you* must bring them to each meeting.

**Submissions Due
July 30th for the August 2026
issue.**

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"Like" the Spokane Authors Facebook Page:
www.facebook.com/pages/Spokane-Authors-Self-Publishers/1640079982945679

"Join" the Spokane Authors Facebook Group:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1646364128981815/>

"Follow" us on "X": <https://twitter.com/AndAuthors>

Contact us at: spokaneauthors@gmail.com

Videos of many of our presentations are available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/@spokaneauthorsforyou>
Links for newer videos are in the Vice-President's message and in accounts of our most recent meetings

New Video Channel!
<https://www.youtube.com/@SpokaneAuthors-Org>
(Eventually all videos of our meetings will be on this channel)

On the cover: Spokane Authors member Betty Deuber penned Jody Visits Tooth Fairy Land. We have just published our newest anthology, Spokane Authors Write On.

OUR SEPTEMBER MEETINGS!

2:00 pm. Friday, September 11, 2026, San Souci West Club House, 3231 W. Boone Ave., Spokane, WA. Meeting room opens at 1:30 pm. Frank Scalise – on revisiting and rewriting your first book.

6:00 pm. Wednesday September 16, 2026, Sans Souci West Club House, 3231 W. Boone Ave., Spokane, WA. Meeting room opens at 5:30 pm. Presentation on screenwriting by Spokane Authors member Gary Edwards.

(We don't have anything from our president this month, but he promises us something next time.)

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Back to School

From kindergarten through college, school is back in session. We face cooler temperatures, some much-needed rain, and the annual reactivation of school zone speed limits. Fall is also the harbinger of football season, colorful changes in the leaf colors, and the high school craft fairs and other holiday events and, of course, Halloween.

Now to the news of our meetings. Our next one will be Friday, September 11, at the Sans Souci West clubhouse, 3231 West Boone Ave. in Spokane, from 2-4 pm. Our guest speaker will be Frank Scalise, who will talk about his experiences revisiting and revising his first book. Thankfully, we learn as we write, and I have often felt the urge to go back and redo Meadowlark Madness, my first book in the Emily Trace Mysteries series. Revisions are one of the reasons I like the self-publishing model.

Our September 16 meeting (same location) goes from 6-8, and this month member Gary Edwards will do a workshop on screenwriting. These two Spokane Authors

events occur each month: the second Friday from 2-4 pm and the third Wednesday, from 6-8 pm, and are held at the office/clubhouse building at Sans Souci West mobile home park. We allow half an hour before and after each meeting to set up beforehand and clean up afterward. Any volunteers to help with these tasks are greatly appreciated.

There is a change in the lineup for the rest of the 2026 meetings:

1. October - will be Dave McChesney speaking on the need for and the processes of editing.

2. November - Tina Hammond - The Perfect Cover-up (November is also our election of officers month)

3. December - as always, open mic. Members read from a new composition or an excerpt of their work in progress or newly published book.

The Guy twins, Denise and D. J., have taken over the video recording of

our guest speakers and learned how to upload them to the Spokane Authors YouTube channel. Go to

<https://www.youtube.com/@SpokaneAuthors-Org> to access the videos (or click on the link if you get your newsletter in digital form). Subtitles are available by clicking the CC link, but they are AI generated and not always accurate. It always helps if you truly like a video to hit the like button. It also helps to subscribe to our channel. Check back from time to time to see if some of the older videos have been added or if you want to see one you really liked again.

And don't forget to check our wonderfully informative website www.spokaneauthors.org for more information and the latest on current member activities. See you September 11th.

V. P.

Sue Esser



FROM THE EDITOR, WEB-MASTER, TREASURER

Some of you may remember Chuck O'Conner, one of the founders of Spokane Authors and Self-Publishers. He passed away a couple of weeks ago and for those who care, I will send a copy of his obituary when I send along this issue of the newsletter. Sadly, it seems there may only be one of the founding members left.

Those involved in the process finally got our newest anthology, *Spokane Authors Write On* finalized and have published it on KDP. We will be ordering "author copies" soon to distribute to those who would like some to sell at craft fairs or elsewhere. Cost per copy for our members will be \$5.00, which will cover the cost of printing and shipping. Anything over that will cover other costs incurred in the process. Let me know as soon as possible how many copies you would like so I can have an idea of how many to order. While the cover price for sales on KDP is set at \$12.00, we suggest a sale price of \$10.00 at craft fairs and the like.

You may remember that a few months ago I stopped sending out copies of our roster, as various members pointed out certain security concerns. I had originally thought of creating a place on our website that could be accessed by using a pass word, and to include the roster there. I still might do that, but as an alternative, I'd like to propose bringing back an abbreviated version. Basically, it would have member's names and whatever contact information you would feel comfortable with being shared in public. It would also include something to indicate whether or not you are current in dues. (I'll try to have a sample of it at this coming meeting.) If it isn't satisfactory to most of you, I will pursue the password protected idea.

I won't say anything about paying dues this month, other than to remind you that you can bring them as cash, check, or money order

to an upcoming meeting.

I remember my "Square" card reader, you can use a credit or debit card. You can also send dues payments to:

Spokane Authors
2504 W. Walton Ave.
Spokane, WA 99205-1569



OUR AUGUST 2026 MEETINGS

Compiled by Genny La Morgan and Dave
McChesney

On Friday, August 14, Spokane Authors met at the Sans Souci West Club House on West Boone Avenue. Attending were: Caryl Briscoe-Michas, Gary Edwards, Sue Eller, Mark Lee Golden, Anna Goodwin, D. J. Guy, Denise, Guy, Tina Hammond, Esther Hildahl, Bob Hildahl, Keven Hostbjor, Rich Kellogg, Joan Kopczynski, Genny La Morgan, Amy Logan, Dave McChesney, Carl Northrup, Elena Smith, Terry Stratton, and Sarah Vail. No visitors joined us for the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 pm., and fellow Spokane Authors member Joan Kopczynski was introduced as our speaker. Her topic was "How to do a Book Club!" She told us about her Book Club Kit and shared a handout. She emphasized the importance of using standardized questions in your Book Club Kit.

Benefits: You add readers and gain feedback; Increase interest through your local city and county libraries. Half your market may be your local library. Bring copies to the libraries but realize some libraries don't take self-published books. Library discussion groups can total up to 30 people. You cannot sell books at the library, but you can give away free copies. Libraries are an inexpensive way of advertising and may have lists of local Book Clubs.

Book Club Kits can generate sales without amazon.com ads.

Craft Fairs: Balance your time with prospective sales.



Kit Page 1: Cover. Adobe has a Template to use.

Kit Page 2: Welcome letter: Introduction and "Welcome to my book club." Call to action: Please leave a Review. Book Group Discussion. Please contact me at email or website.

Kit Page 3: About the author as it pertains to the book.

Kit Page 4: Six to ten Discussion questions. Google has standardized questions/universal book club questions: How well did the author explore the title? Were you inspired to...?

How did the story relate to your life?

Reviews/Advance Praise. Offer a playlist of songs with music notes.

Recommend other books. Offer swag: bookmarks and canvas bags.

Bookstores (and possibly libraries) have lists of book clubs. ***Spokane Authors can create a list of local book clubs for its members.***

Children's Books: Libraries and stores, Schools and teachers, have Children's Reading Hour and Summertime fun with hands on activities. Donate your books to schools and libraries.

At 2:45 pm. we took a break and returned to our Door Prize giveaway drawing and notices of importance. Tina Hammond announced that Sans Souci West would hold its 2026 Craft Fair on October 2nd and 3rd. Cost is \$10.00 for Sans Souci West Residents and \$15.00 for non-residents. Indoor locations will have tables and chairs provided, but those requiring or desiring an outdoor location will need to bring their own booth set up, including chairs.

Next month's speaker will be Frank Scalise.

Gatherers Magazine is a new quarterly and one can submit short stories and articles. There are themes. It is for sale online.

A Spokane Authors member mentioned selling her second story to a Pacific Northwest Writers Association (PNWA) publication and receiving \$50.00 for it.

Spokane Authors President, Carl Northrup, writing as Nathaniel Bennett, announced he has finished the manuscript for ***Yank***, and has started a sequel to ***Caroline's Secret*** called ***Out of Time***, which is also the name of a chapter in ***Caroline's Secret***

Vice President, Sue Eller is halfway through her new Emily Trace Mystery book. Thankfully, Sue's vision is improving, and she is excited to continue her editing work for fellow members of Spokane Authors.

Some members are slated to participate in an event on August 22 and 23 at Arbor Crest Winery in Spokane Valley.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:20 pm, with a lot of general visiting occurring as all packed up to head for home.

Spokane Authors also met on Wednesday August 19th at 6:00 pm at the Sans Souci West Club House on West Boone Ave. Present were Caryl Briscoe-Michas, Sue Eller, D. J. Guy, Denise Guy, Genny La Morgan, Dave McChesney, and Terry Stratton.

We talked about Character Creation and Development, with short presentations from both Dave McChesney and Sue Eller. Dave noted that characters are as important to a story as a plot or story line. He also mentioned that a character's name, as it appears on the page helps us identify and set that character apart from the rest. He also said the name should fit the individual's nationality, ethnicity, gender and so on. Character development refers to making characters unique from the others.

Sue noted the need for believable characters and an arc of development for them.

In September, our Wednesday evening meeting will feature Spokane Authors member Gary Edwards who will talk about screen writing.

Once we were done, we put the meeting room to rights and headed home.

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Inland Northwest Writers Guild (INWG) has resumed its "First Wednesday" meetings. (September's meeting has already occurred.) Meetings are now at 6 pm on Zoom.

More INWG Plans

- **Monthly newsletter (occasionally more) to provide a calendar and some info.**

- Quarterly in-person get-togethers, tentatively planned for January (Winter), April (Spring), July (Summer), and October (Fall) - January & July at the Meeting House; April and October - location TBD.

- Special zoom events as warranted. I may have an occasional Meet the Author event as we have done in the past, with local/national authors.

- Support (technical & promotionall) for a member who wants to lead a zoom event - discussion, workshop, launch, etc. - Member Events - if you have some ideas, go ahead and pitch 'em!

Spokane Authors

Friday, September 11, 2:00 pm
Sans Souci West Clubhouse
Frank Scalise: revisiting and rewriting your first book

Spokane Authors

Wednesday September 16, 6:00 pm.
Sans Souci West Clubhouse.
Screenwriting Workshop with Gary A. Edwards

INWG First Wednesday

Wednesday, October 7, 6:00 pm
On Zoom: lindathewriter@gmail.com for link.

Spokane Authors

Friday, October 9, 2:00 pm
Sans Souci West Clubhouse
Dave McChesney: Editing from a writer's viewpoint

Spokane Authors

Wednesday October 21, 6:00 pm.
Sans Souci West Clubhouse.
(Possibly) Dave McChesney with more about editing.

INWG First Wednesday

Wednesday, October 7, 6:00 pm
On Zoom: lindathewriter@gmail.com for link.

Spokane Authors

Friday, November 13, 2:00 pm
Sans Souci West Clubhouse
SA member Tina Hammond: "The Perfect Cover Up"

Spokane Authors

Wednesday November 18, 6:00 pm.
Sans Souci West Clubhouse. TBA

INWG First Wednesday

Wednesday, December 2, 6:00 pm
On Zoom: lindathewriter@gmail.com for link.

Spokane Authors

Friday, December 11, 2:00 pm
Sans Souci West Clubhouse
Our annual OPEN MIC session

Spokane Authors

Wednesday December 16, 6:00 pm.
Sans Souci West Clubhouse.
Possibly more OPEN MIC

Sandpoint Writers on the Lake

Meet twice each month, both in person and via ZOOM for critiques. Information at bonniemcdade@gmail.com

SASP BOOKS ON AMAZON/KINDLE

Many members' books are on Amazon and/or Kindle™ (We print short parts of the list on a rotating basis. The complete list, soon to be updated again, is available on the website, under "NEWS.")

To speed your search, add the provided ten digit numerical or alpha-numerical code (ASIN) to: [www\(dot\)amzn\(dot\)com/dp/](http://www(dot)amzn(dot)com/dp/)

Johanna Price

Raising Buckshot: A Family's Experience with Autism B00RKH993A 1483420205

Joan Kopczynski

Spies, Lies and Psychosis B0D6HMC4XX B0D6XF6118
Descent into Madness BOCHMJB9WM B0CHTQZSSG

Joan M. Kop

The Freedom Chaser B07PNYVCSF 0578217740
The Spy from Beijing B0DYJ27ZNZ B0DY5S9MTV

You Said it Would Only Be Temporary

B0GDMZY83J B0GF4K4SS9

Santa's Secret Keeper: Operation "Buzz Off"

B0HD8ZJ4TV B0HDPMAGL5M

Stephen D. Lalonde

The Phoenix Gift

B07KGMSBDJ

A Palette of Verse

B01NCJ8IP7

Nathaniel Bennett

The Ant Doctor

B09QP55ZSX

A Penny for Your Thoughts

B0D7NKMYPQ6 B0D5363WX3

The Princess Who Had No Name

B0DB5ML9LS

Boxers or Briefs: A Book of Shorts

B0DG5C13RN B0DGNV19FF

Caroline's Secret

B0FTKFG5VV B0FSYF8L7J

Julie Bergman

Sahar's Creation

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Fatal Creation

B0B6LJ2NML B0B663Q9X4

The Fatal Family Affair

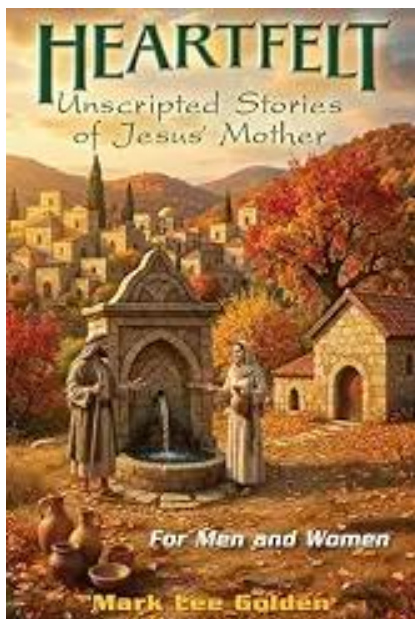
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FEATURED BOOK REVIEWS

(This review was earlier paired with another very similar book by this author.)

Heart Felt:

Unscripted Stories of Jesus' Mother



by Mark Lee Golden

Reviewed by Elena smith

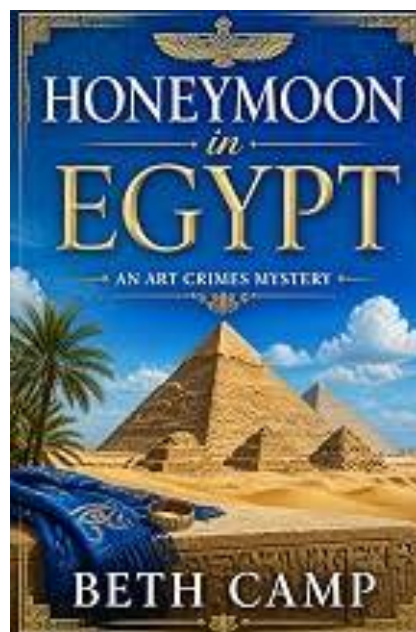
I borrowed this book at a meeting of Spokane Authors. Although I consider myself spiritual but not religious, I'm deeply curious about biblical subjects, especially interpretations that expand beyond traditional scripture. Mark Lee Golden's decision to imagine the private world of Mary—the mother of Jesus—her thoughts, routines, and inner life, immediately captured my attention.

What impressed me most was the richness of the writing. Through Golden's vivid storytelling, I gained fascinating insight into Jewish philosophy, traditions, language, and everyday life before the birth of Jesus. The historical and cultural detail adds remarkable depth and authenticity to the narrative.

I also appreciated the author's honesty in describing the book as "educated speculation" rather than an attempt to impose doctrine or religious certainty. That candor made the story feel thoughtful, respectful, and intellectually engaging and valuable.

I would recommend this book to readers drawn to the mystery surrounding the Virgin Mary, the immaculate conception, and the early life of Jesus—as well as to anyone who appreciates elegant, immersive writing.

(And now, a review that has been recently received)



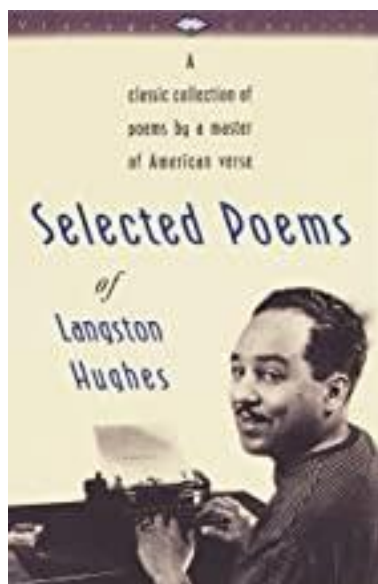
Reviewed by Kevin L. Hostbjoer

Honeymoon in Egypt is a superb continuation of the Art Crimes Mysteries that began with *The Seventh Tapestry* by Beth Camp. Investigators Sandra and Neil find themselves embroiled in the theft of Egyptian artifacts while on their honeymoon in Cairo. Due to the size and quantity of missing artifacts and numerous unexplained deaths invading their not-so-peaceful getaway, the stakes have never been higher. Until – Sandra is kidnapped and buried alive in an Egyptian tomb.

The settings and characters captured me from the first chapter. Brilliantly told and marvelously described, the story of the two newlyweds' honeymoon cruelly interrupted by their own personal Moriarty, Cochrane, is a must read.

Pack your bags, grab your passport, and be prepared for a scenic transport to Egyptian pyramids and cultural museums. When you arrive, take a quick moment for a cup of tea and a croissant. Excitement and adventure await.

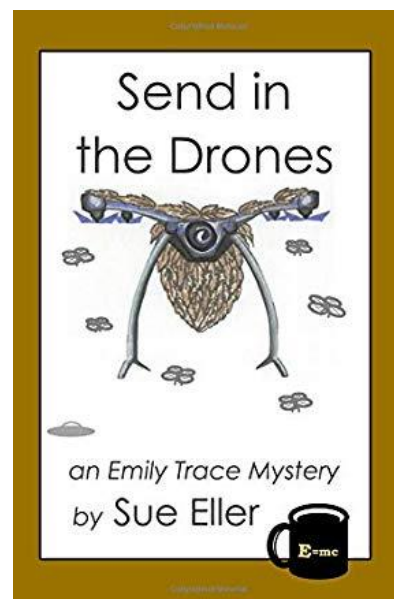
(Now we resume or normal rotation through those reviews we have on file.)



Reviewed by Esther J. Hildahl

When I was in college many, many years ago, I took a Black History class and was introduced to various Black writers. One of my

favorites was Langston Hughes. I loved his poetry and short stories. He wrote over thirty books during his lifetime. First published in 1926, he died in 1967. Recently, I was in Barnes and Noble and purchased two of his books. This particular book, *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* tells of the experiences of Black men and women in America. He expresses through his poetry the soul of slaves, of musicians, of the poor. He writes about religion, humor, love, hopelessness, despair, dreams, freedom, and much more. It's a wonderful collection of poems written by a very talented poet. Although depressing at times, I enjoyed reading it and highly recommend it.



Reviewed by Joyce Caudel

E.T. Investigations, some think the E.T. stands for Extra Terrestrial, therefore Emily Trace's client list consist of some strange creatures from outer space and some strange creatures from right here on earth.

Emily, high on caffeine, is told she has two days to vacate her office. The new owner wants to make the building into condos. That alone is enough to keep her whole staff and all her friends busy.

Control freak bully, Charley Russell, wants Emily to close her agency and marry

him. Emily's house erupts in flames while she is sleeping, she escapes with her life. Later her car is totaled by a runaway driverless semi-truck. Detective Burton decides Emily needs protecting. Of course, there are all those drones!

Emily finds the key to unlock the mystery of who killed her husband. I hope she can relax for a while, but I'm sure Sue is busy writing the next book in the Emily Trace Mystery series. I thoroughly enjoyed this story as I did the first two in the series. Sue's characters are very believable, in an out of this world sort of way. If you enjoy a good mystery with a Sci-Fi edge to it, you will *enjoy Send in the Drones* by Sue Eller.

Reviewed by Esther J. Hildahl

Send in the Drones is the third book in Eller's Emily Trace Mysteries series. Like her other books this story is about Emily Trace's detective agency called E. T. Investigations and the current case they are trying to solve. This time it's about tiny drones that attack and then disappear in thin air.

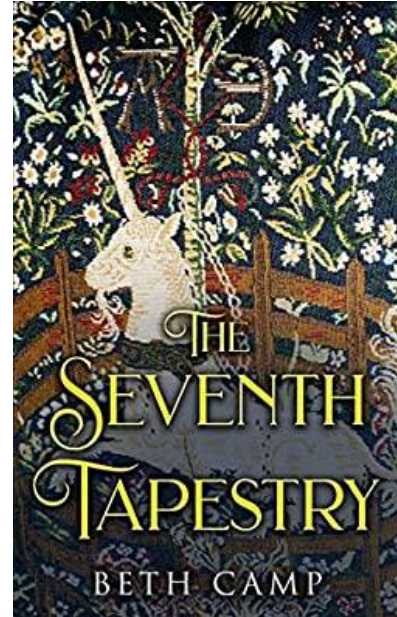
Emily and her employees and friends, three of whom are from outer space, are interesting and well-defined characters. One character is Jake, her former beloved teacher; another is Darla, her trusty secretary; and Detective Burton, who becomes her very good friend. And then there's her wannabe fiancé, Charlie Russell, who turns out to be a control freak and not a very nice person.

Plus, there are a few things stressing Emily out like having to move her agency in just a few days, her house catching on fire while she is sleeping, and her car being totaled by a driverless semi-truck. Who wouldn't be stressed? And I loved the descriptive way she described her beloved car, Silver Bullet, after it was hit, writing that it sat like a giant silver turtle, resting on its roof with its tires up in the air.

This book is a good read with a surprise ending that calls for another Emily Trace Mystery. I enjoyed reading this book and if you like a mystery with quirky characters, you will too.

Reviewed by Fred Jessett

Send in the Drones is a worthy successor to *Meadowlark Madness* and *Taming of the T-Bird*, the first two books about Emily Trace and her unwittingly named detective agency, E.T. Investigations. As with the first two books, her goal is to find who killed her late husband, but she is constantly called on to look into unearthly matters. In doing so she has gained some important allies from another world. Now her friends help her close in on the murderer, while trying to protect her. No spoiler here, but Emily does have a serious coffee addiction. Read the book, her characters are real and the story is a most enjoyable read.



Reviewed by Kevin L. Hostbjoer

This is a wonderful story of a young American museum curator who unexpectedly finds herself caught in the web of a ruthless stolen art ring centered in the Edinburgh area. Thousands of dollars of medieval artifacts are missing. Teaming up with a dashing member of Scotland Yard's Art Crimes Unit, the two must weave their way through clues and dangers to expose the thieves and recover the artifacts. When a priceless tapestry goes missing and bodies of people close to the museum begin to pile up, their investigation takes a critical turn. The Edinburgh and local castle locations are written so vividly, you can't help but want to

visit these places. Through the entire story, I imagined how perfectly *The Seventh Tapestry* would fit into the British crime drama mystery television series, *Midsummer Midsomer Murders*. It went for 24 seasons. I think it is time for the 25th season.

The Seventh Tapestry is an easy read and well worth your time. I recommend it highly and can't wait for the sequel.



By Stephen Lalonde

Reviewed by Esther J. Hildahl

Sinon of Kirra begins in 612 BCE (Before the Christian Era), the last year of the 41st Olympiad in Ancient Greece.

Sinon, age sixteen, and Mentu, his Nubian servant and best friend, decide to leave their village of Kirra and embark on a journey to find a golden fleece at the end of the Black Sea. Soon they join Captain Aristomachos and his crew on the ship *Amphitrite*. When the wind doesn't blow enough to fill the sails of the ship, they spend their time rowing, which builds up their arm muscles and makes them strong. But first, they had to learn to oar together in rhythm with the rest of the crew.

On the ship they meet Strymon who is a storyteller and becomes their friend. Often, they and the crew enjoy listening to Strymon tell exciting stories about their Greek gods and goddesses. Sailing from island to island they have many adventures, including learning how to get a golden fleece, which was very

interesting, and experiencing the devastation of being shipwrecked.

When I was in high school, I enjoyed reading books about Greek and Roman mythology, so this book was a fun read for me. Local author Lalonde has created a well-written story with believable characters that is never boring and has a great ending. I liked that the author included an appendix that listed the characters in the story. And I liked the glossary that tells about the gods and goddesses and other interesting facts about Greek mythology. I recommend this book to anyone who likes to read about long ago, the age of sail, and adventures into the unknown. Also, if you like this story, you can continue reading about Sinon and Mentu's adventures in *Mentu the Nubian*.

Reviewed by Sue Eller

The setting is ancient Greece, before the time of Christ. With the blessing and encouragement of his father, 16-year-old Sinon sets out alone on a pilgrimage to Delphi. He desires to ask, "What does my future hold for me?" He walks the road from Kirra to Delphi, leading a sacrificial goat and wondering if he will even be allowed to ask his question of Apollo. He is successful in gaining an audience in the temple, but the answer comes out in a strange language and needs to be translated by the priest. Through the translator, Apollo asks questions in reply to Sinon's query. "What will you find at the end of the Black Sea? A Golden Fleece?" the Pythia (priest) says.

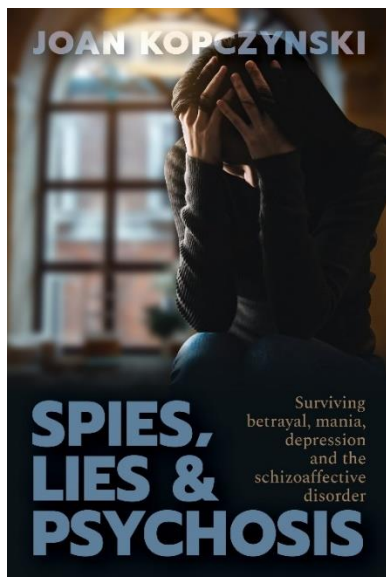
Puzzled, Kirra leaves the goat as payment and walks back home. He ponders along the way what he should do, and his father offers to arrange passage for him and Sinon's servant Mentu on a ship which is to sail to the Black Sea. Thus begins the adventure of Sinon and Mentu, and the cementing of their relationship and their friendship.

Lalonde masterfully weaves the culture and practices of the time into this coming-of-age tale. It is full of adventure, family, challenges, love, and loss. It is steeped in the traditions of the time, yet it is also a timeless tale of how a boy becomes a man and finds his way in the world.

Reviewed by Elena S. Smith

Stephen Lalonde's book transported me to Ancient Greece, a distant era and land that initially promised an exploration of exotic customs and mythological influences. At the outset, I anticipated an immersive journey into a world shaped by legendary gods and heroes. And that was all there. However, as I delved deeper, I experienced a poignant realization—both uplifting and disheartening—that despite the passage of 2,600 years, human nature and society remain strikingly unchanged. Parents then, as now, loved and worried over their children, while the younger generation searched for meaning and their place in the world. Yet, the enduring struggles of humanity—ethics and morality, racism, gender discrimination, and wars driven by power—persist as grim constants, defying the progress one might expect over millennia.

Lalonde's vivid and realistic portrayal of Ancient Greece challenged my once-idealized vision of it as a beacon of freedom and democracy. Instead, it prompted deep reflection on the unsettling parallels between past and present, leaving me with a lingering question: *Why?*

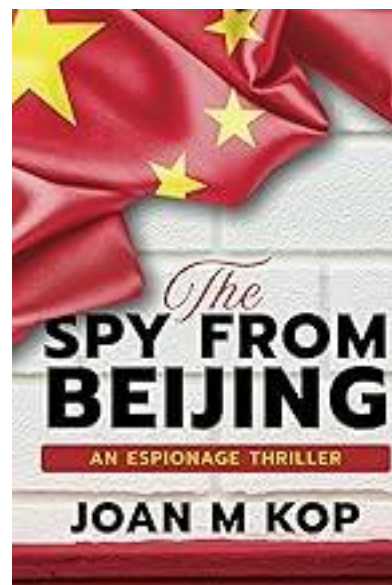


Surviving betrayal, mania, depression
and the schizoaffective disorder

By Joan Kopczynski

Reviewed by Beth Camp

What was it like to be a spy in the 1970s? Joan Kopczynski's ***Spies, Lies & Psychosis*** explores the realities of a life well-lived with humor and insight. Her experience with the CIA led her to work for an intelligence-gathering organization near San Francisco. In those early days, Joan was trusting. Her life became infinitely more complicated when she fell in love and as she became progressively more immersed in the intelligence community. Joan is frank about her stress-related spiral into mental illness. Despite a cycle of denial and delusions, Joan, with courage and perseverance, found her way back. Her courage and tenacity leads the reader to appreciate anew how mental illness affects not only the individual, but in a ripple effect, all those around her or him. Her story helps us understand how mental illness can affect us all, what it means to have a healthy life, and how important it is to have those who understand and support us.



Reviewed by Elena S. Smith

Joan Kop's *The Spy from Beijing* is a masterfully crafted espionage thriller, rich with suspense and unexpected turns. It immerses the reader in the frigid, perilous realm of international intelligence—a world inhabited by

individuals who willingly embrace a life defined by secrecy, risk, and brain gamesmanship. Kop humanizes her spies, revealing them not as faceless operatives, but as complex individuals whose extraordinary choices set them apart. Through realistic dialogue and astute narrative insight, the novel invites reflection on contemporary geopolitical tensions, the looming challenges posed by biotechnology, and the resurgence of authoritarianism. *The Spy from Beijing* is not only a gripping read, but also a thought-provoking exploration of our modern world.

Reviewed by E .J. Deuber

An only child, Jen Hae Chu, aka Jenny, the main protagonist, is a Chinese American flight attendant-turned FBI agent, who longs for a sibling.

On a flight, Dave Kamakar, an undercover FBI agent, watches her handle a difficult situation and admires her independent, confident, diligent work ethics. He thinks the young woman would make a good FBI agent. He convinces her to change careers. Later they meet in Seattle. During her FBI career, she falls in love with Dave. In her first assignment, she meets Yichen Zhang, her nemesis, who lives in Beijing and works for China's Secretive Ministry of State Security (MSS), which is China's civilian intelligence, security and secret police agency.

At this time, Yichen's father (*Bohai*) who also works for the MSS is caught spying. Unknown to Yichen, Bohai has been spying for the CIA for the past thirty years. MSS members force Yichen to watch them mutilate his father. After the mutilation, Yichen's boss tells him he can expect the same fate if they ever catch him spying. He must do as he is told, or they'll see to it that his mother gets the same treatment as Bohai. When the MSS asks him to become a double agent. He reluctantly agrees and ends up in Seattle.

Jenny and Yichen, working their respective tasks in Seattle, finally connect, and they become friends. Soon after, she becomes suspicious of Yichen activities and suspects he is responsible for the nefarious crimes that

are happening in the vicinity. Through a DNA test, she discovers Yichen is her biological twin. She had no idea she had a sibling or a biological mother in the USA or China. On one hand, she wants to help her brother and her new-found mother, on the other, she wants to stay a loyal FBI agent. She is left with the burning question: What is more important—family or patriotism?

The spy activity is well-researched from China to Seattle. The complicated twists of family, love and patriotism are compelling from start to finish. *The Spy from Beijing* awakened me to the complex web of undercover intelligence activity in Washington State.