

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY



Once upon a time, Sulari Gentill was a corporate lawyer serving as a director on public boards, with only a vague disquiet that there was something else she was meant to do. That feeling did not go away until she began to write. And so Sulari became the author of the Rowland Sinclair Mysteries: thus far, ten historical crime novels chronicling the life and adventures of her 1930s Australian gentleman artist, the Hero Trilogy, based on the myths and epics of the ancient world, and the Ned Kelly Award winning *Crossing the Lines* (published in the US as *After She Wrote Hime*). In 2014 she collaborated with National Gallery of Victoria to write a short story which was produced in audio to feature in the Fashion Detective Exhibition, and thereafter published by the NGV. IN 2019 Sulari was part of a 4-member delegation of Australian crime writers sponsored by the Australia Council to tour the US as ambassadors of Australian Crime Writing.

Sulari lives with her husband, Michael, and their boys, Edmund and Atticus, on a small farm in Batlow where she grows French Black Truffles and refers to her writing as “work” so that no one will suggest she get a real job.

Goodreads.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When Freddie, Whit, Cain, and Marigold get coffee together for the first time, Freddie mentions that it was the start of her friendship with a killer. Who did you suspect in that moment?
2. Thanks to the emails, we are regularly reminded that Freddie’s story is fiction. Did that change your experience of the mystery at all?
3. Freddie, Whit, Marigold, and Cain become intimate friends very quickly. Have you ever made friends in a similar way? What circumstances (besides manufactured peril) led to these types of sudden, intense friendships?

4. Marigold insists to the others, “A scream is supposed to bring help, and we heard her scream.” Do you think of yourself as being responsible for strangers? How effective is bystander intervention?
5. Describe the role of Freddie’s neighbor Leo. How does he change Freddie’s perspective?
6. Do you think the other characters took Marigold’s stalking behavior seriously? What would you do if your friend was acting like Marigold?
7. Freddie questions herself for trusting Cain several times but never really changes her mind. Where do you think her loyalty comes from?
8. In his emails, Leo insists that Hannah specify the races of her characters, pointing out that it could drastically change their experiences and perspectives in a story set in America. What does a story gain by making race explicit? What are the potential drawbacks?
9. Caroline and Whit planned to test whether they could goad Cain back into a life of crime. If they had executed their plan as they originally intended, what do you think would have happened? What does their experiment reflect about our attitudes toward convicted criminals?

readinggroupchoices.com.

BOOK REVIEWS

Booklist

Australian author Winifred “Freddie” Kincaid is writing in the reading room of the Boston Public Library when she hears a woman scream. This bonds her to her neighboring patrons, writer Cain, psych grad student Marigold, and failing law student Whit, and when they hear that a woman’s body has been discovered several days later, they work together to solve the crime. But someone is sending threatening messages to Freddie, and Cain is hiding a past that makes him look very guilty. In between chapters of the story are letters from Leo, an American offering writing advice to Hannah Tigone, the Australian author of Freddie’s story. Soon it becomes clear that Leo is no ordinary critique partner, as he collects gruesome evidence to make Freddie’s story more believable. Gentill’s latest is a departure from her historical Rowland Sinclair novels (*Where There’s a Will*, 2022). It is a mystery-within-a-mystery, with the clues in Freddie’s story becoming more intriguing as Leo’s advice becomes more sinister. The two story lines work together beautifully, amping up the suspense before reaching a surprising conclusion. — Susan Maguire

Publisher’s Weekly

This thrilling excursion into metafiction from Australian author Gentill (*Crossing the Lines*) wittily examines the writing process itself. Australian mystery writer Winifred “Freddie” Kincaid has come to Boston after receiving a prestigious writers’ fellowship. While she’s seeking inspiration in the Boston Public Library, a woman’s scream breaks the silence. Freddie seizes on this incident as the ideal start for her new opus, which involves “a group of people united by a scream.” Each chapter of Freddie’s book includes a letter written to famous Australian author Hannah Tigone by a dedicated fan, Leo Johnson, a fellow writer in residence who offers to be her beta reader. Hannah is writing the story of Freddie Kincaid, who’s writing the story of the murder in the library. Leo’s emails influence

Hannah's view of her characters and subsequently Freddie's story. Leo's emails shift from sycophantic to profoundly disturbing when his novel is rejected by Hannah's agent. The agent dies a few days later, and murders in the two realities begin to multiply. This elegantly constructed novel is intelligent, funny, and profound. Who could ask for more? Agent: Jill Marr, Sandra Dijkstra Literary.

Library Journal

Writer Freddie Kincaid studies the people sharing her table at the Boston Public Library, naming them "Freud Girl," "Heroic Chin," and "Handsome Man." They hear a scream and learn that a woman has been murdered--that's when Freddie says one of them is a killer. The subsequent story is Freddie's account of her growing friendship with those three, attacks on two of them, and the growing awareness that one is attacking the others. But Hannah Tignone, a best-selling Australian author, is actually writing the story of Freddie and her new friends. The story within a story alternates Hannah's writing with letters written to her by a wannabe author, Leo, who suggests changes to Hannah's plot and characters. Freddie's account of trying to discover which of her new friends is a killer is an engrossing mystery. At the same time, Hannah's communication from the FBI allows the reader a glimpse into the life of a writer with a fanatical correspondent. VERDICT Ned Kelly Award winner Gentill (*Crossing the Lines*) presents a complex, riveting story within a story. The fictional story of an author writing about another writer with messy, complicated friendships and suspicion is an innovative literary mystery.--Lesa Holstine

Kirkus Reviews

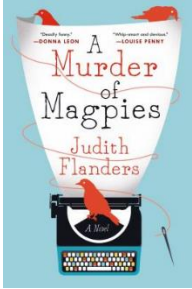
Feedback can be deadly. Sycophantic fan and aspiring writer Leo charms his way into a friendship with successful author Hannah Tigone through a series of flattering letters. In return, she shares a strange incident that happened in the Boston Public Library, where she's working on her new novel, an episode that begins with a scream and ends with this provocative sentence: "And so we go to the Map Room to found a friendship, and I have my first coffee with a killer." This, it turns out, is actually the beginning of Hannah's new novel, sent in morsels to Leo, who faithfully offers thoughts and encouragement after every chapter. Gentill mines similar metafictional territory as in *After She Wrote Him* (2020), teasing readers with the challenge of deducing which of two narrative threads presents the author and which his or her story. As the mystery unfolds, the book expands into psychological thriller territory, with Leo becoming increasingly unhinged and describing the world as a rage-filled dystopia. Winifred "Freddie" Kincaid, Hannah's mystery-writer protagonist, is as curious and resourceful as Miss Marple, and Hannah's buoyant whodunit provides a bracing contrast to Leo's dark world. Based on their appearances and their behavior in the library, Hannah gives her suspects names like Heroic Chin, Handsome Man, and Freud Girl. Lines blur. Freddie is so caught up in the twists and turns of the puzzle that she feels unable to write. Does Hannah have the same problem? Can Leo help her, does he genuinely want to, and where does he fit into the larger picture? A sharply drawn fictional hall of mirrors sure to tantalize and occasionally frustrate.

READALIKES



***Perfect Little Children* by Sophie Hannah**

Why would Beth risk dredging up painful memories about her friend Flora she hasn't seen for twelve years. She doesn't want to see her today--or ever again. But she can't resist. She parks outside the open gates of Newnham House, watches from across the road as Flora arrives and calls to her children Thomas and Emily to get out of the car. Except . . . There's something terribly wrong. They are Thomas and Emily without a doubt, but they haven't changed at all. They are no taller, no older. Why haven't they grown? How is it possible that they haven't grown up?



***A Murder of Magpies* by Judith Flanders**

It's just another day at the office for book editor Samantha Clair, with her lunch scheduled with gossipy author Kit Lowell, whose new book will deliciously dish the dirt on the fashion industry. But little does she know how much trouble Kit's book is about to cause. Before it even goes to print. When police inspector Field turns up at the venerable offices of Timmins & Ross, asking questions about an undelivered package that was addressed to Sam, she knows something is wrong. The messenger sent to deliver the package was murdered, and then Kit goes missing. Suddenly, Sam's nine-to-five life is turned upside down and she is propelled into a criminal investigation



***Everything You Want Me to Be* by Mindy Mejia**

Hattie Hoffman has spent her whole life playing many parts: the good student, the good daughter, the good girlfriend. But Hattie wants something more, something bigger, and ultimately something that turns out to be exceedingly dangerous. When she's found brutally stabbed to death, the tragedy rips right through the fabric of her small-town community.