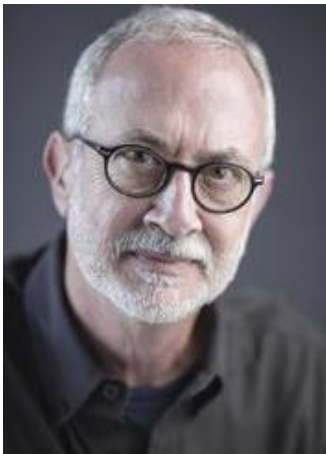


## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

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Bruce Goldfarb is an award-winning writer whose work has appeared in the *Baltimore Sun*, *Washington Post*, *USA Today*, *Baltimore* magazine, *American Archaeology*, *American Health* and many other publications. Since 2012 Bruce has served as executive assistant to the Chief Medical Examiner for the State of Maryland. He is public information officer for the OCME and curator of the Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death. His first book of popular nonfiction, *18 Tiny Deaths: The Untold Story of Frances Glessner Lee and the Invention of Modern Forensics*, was released by Sourcebooks in February, 2020.

- [Author's website](#)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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1. What is the central idea discussed in the book? What issues or ideas does the author explore? Are they personal, sociological, global, political, economic, spiritual, medical, or scientific?
2. Do the issues affect your life? How so—directly, on a daily basis, or more generally? Now or sometime in the future?
3. What evidence does the author use to support the book's ideas? Is the evidence convincing...definitive or...speculative? Does the author depend on personal opinion, observation, and assessment? Or is the evidence factual—based on science, statistics, historical documents, or quotations from (credible) experts?
4. What kind of language does the author use? Is it objective and dispassionate? Or passionate and earnest? Is it biased, inflammatory, sarcastic? Does the language help or undercut the author's premise?

5. What are the implications for the future? Are there long- or short-term consequences to the issues raised in the book? Are they positive or negative...affirming or frightening?
6. Talk about specific passages that struck you as significant—or interesting, profound, amusing, illuminating, disturbing, sad...? What was memorable?
7. What have you learned after reading this book? Has it broadened your perspective about a difficult issue—personal or societal?
8. What did you like best about this book? What did you like least about this book? What questions do you still have?
9. What else have you read on this topic, and would you recommend these books to others?
10. Did the author attempt to take a stance on this issue, or was the book relatively impartial? Why do you think this?
11. Was this non-fiction book fun to read, or was it a little dry? Did the author need to "spice it up" or "tone it down"? How could they have managed that?
12. How did this book change your views on the subject matter it presented? Are your opinions different now than they were before reading the book?
13. What made this book different than other books on this subject? Do you think it is better or worse than other books on this subject matter?

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### **Publisher's Weekly**

*/\* Starred Review \*/* Journalist Goldfarb takes an eye-opening look in his fascinating biography at the crucial role played by heiress Frances Glessner Lee (1878–1962) in the development of U.S. scientific crime examination. Goldfarb puts Lee's achievements in perspective by showing how, as recently as the early 20th century, there were no requirements of expertise on the part of the officials in charge of death investigations, who were often inept and sometimes corrupt. In 1929, Lee decided to use her financial resources to reform the system after reconnecting with an old friend, George Magrath, who had studied legal medicine in Europe. In addition to funding Magrath's research, Lee used her skills at making miniatures to recreate crime scenes in exquisite detail as a teaching tool. Lee became a forceful proponent of death investigations becoming the responsibility of trained medical examiners, in a sustained campaign that included a 1935 meeting with J. Edgar Hoover to educate him about legal medicine. By making use of primary sources, including Lee's own unpublished memoir, the author more than makes the case for his astonishing proposition that this "decorous grandmother with a preference for brimless Queen Mary hats... was nearly single-handedly responsible for the establishment of legal medicine" in the U.S. Goldfarb's storytelling gifts will lead readers of insightful true crime to hope he will write more in the field.

Devotees of TV's CSI will have their minds blown. Agent: Tamar Rydzinski, Context Literary. (Feb.) --Staff (Reviewed 12/23/2019) (Publishers Weekly, vol 266, issue 52, p).

### Library Journal

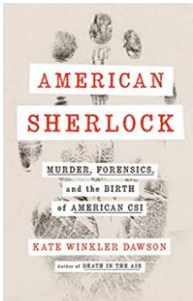
Goldfarb (Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, Maryland Dept. of Health) pays tribute to Frances Glessner Lee (1878–1962), the patron of medical examiners. In 1929, Lee, a wealthy Chicago native, became reacquainted at age 51 with the Suffolk County, MA, medical examiner when both were hospitalized in Boston. At that time, legal medicine, while established in Europe, was still in its infancy in the United States. Goldfarb covers Lee's life chronologically, showing her devotion to forensic science. At the same time, the author addresses the national development of death investigation science. As Goldfarb points out, there are continuing problems with nonmedical death investigations in the United States. Lee's funded Harvard's Department of Legal Medicine, became the first female police captain in the United States, and built meticulous miniature models of death scenes for investigators to study. VERDICT Goldfarb's clearly written and well-researched book is recommended for history and legal studies audiences. For further reading, suggest Corinne May Botz's *The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death*. --Harry Charles (Reviewed 12/01/2019) (Library Journal, vol 144, issue 11, p96).

### Kirkus Reviews

The eye-opening biography of Frances Glessner Lee (1878-1962), who brought American medical forensics into the scientific age. As journalist and former paramedic Goldfarb (*Health Care Defined: A Glossary of Current Terms*, 1997, etc.) explains, coroners, responsible for investigating unexplained deaths, originated in the Middle Ages; in America, they often paid little attention to medical progress. In the 1800s, all were political appointees, often the local undertaker or a party hack who needed a job. Incompetence was universal, and scandals and corruption were commonplace. Observers complained that "the cause of death certified by coroners was so untrustworthy that health department officials testified that the city's vital statistics would be more accurate if death certificates signed by coroners were excluded altogether." Worse, sloppy investigators allowed criminals to escape and often ensnared the innocent. By 1900, only a few large cities required a medical examiner with medical training. The daughter of a wealthy Chicago industrialist, Lee showed little interest in good works until, in her 50s, she spent a long period in a luxury convalescent hospital with George Magrath, an acquaintance and a medical examiner in Boston. A dedicated investigator, he regaled Lee with gruesome tales—generously recounted by Goldfarb—and made no secret of his despair over the state of his profession. Inspired, Lee took up the cause. In 1931, she approached Harvard's president, offering to pay for a chair in legal medicine, the first in the U.S. For the rest of her life, Lee lobbied energetically and spent liberally to reform the coroner system and promote education in death investigation, sponsoring seminars that continue to this day. She died with many honors—Erle Stanley Gardner wrote an obituary—but her battle is far from won. Coroners still serve about half the U.S. population in less than 30 states, and less than a third of those require scientific training. A genuinely compelling biography. (Kirkus Reviews, November 15, 2019).

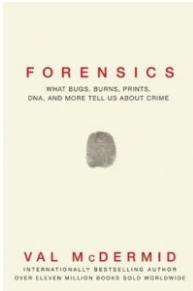
## READALIKES

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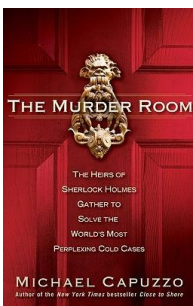
### ***American Sherlock* by Kate Winkler Dawson**

Berkeley, California, 1933. In a lab filled with curiosities sat an investigator who would go on to crack at least two thousand cases in his forty-year career. Known as the "American Sherlock Holmes," Edward Oscar Heinrich was one of America's greatest--and first--forensic scientists, with an uncanny knack for finding clues, establishing evidence, and deducing answers with a skill that seemed almost supernatural. Based on years of research and thousands of never-before-published primary source materials, *American Sherlock* captures the life of the man who pioneered the science our legal system now relies upon--as well as the limits of those techniques and the very human experts who wield them.



### ***Forensics* by Val McDermid**

Explores the history of forensic science, drawing on interviews with top professionals, cutting-edge research, and the author's firsthand experience at crime scenes with forensic scientists.



### ***The Murder Room* by Michael Capuzzo**

Documents the efforts of the Vidocq Society, an elite trio of gifted investigators, to solve such notorious cold cases as those of JonBenet Ramsey, the Butcher of Cleveland, and Jack the Ripper, and details their work with the world's top forensic specialists.