

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Stephanie Jaye Evans

2012

Berkley Prime Crime

Graham Garcia is murdered on the golf course behind his house in Sugar Land, near Houston, Texas. Walker 'Bear' Wells, a Church of Christ minister has Garcia's wife, Honey, in his congregation. He goes to her home to offer condolences. He becomes privy to secrets, as Graham had visited him shortly before his death to ask a favor of Bear regarding Honey. Now Bear knows about the marriage, about a possible other woman, and the explanation, in part, of the title.

Alex Garcia, 16, the murdered man's son, may have seen his father with the other woman, whom he thinks is someone else, someone much younger. Then Honey's father HD confesses when the police think Alex killed his father. There are other suspects and tangled lives, as we learn the background of the major characters.

There are secrets in Bear's family also. Layer after layer is peeled away, until Bear discovers the murderer based on secrets he's promised not to tell. But the murderer is not going gently into the night. Superb!

Gay Tolti Kinman

THE FALLEN

Jassy Mackenzie

2012

Soho Crime

Johannesburg private investigator and bodyguard Jade de Jong's holiday at a South African resort on the Indian Ocean takes a turn for the worse when her boyfriend, police superintendent Dave Patel, reveals an unwelcome surprise. Then her scuba-diving instructor, Amanda, is murdered. When Jade and Dave begin to look into her death, they are immediately targeted by several very unscrupulous people in the nearby harbor town of Richards Bay.

After an attempt on Jade's life lands Dave in the hospital, the tough and resourceful PI pursues the investigation on her own. As Jade struggles to outwit her would-be assassins, Mackenzie weaves together the seemingly-disparate threads of a complex plot: the vicious murder of a young man in a Johannesburg suburb; the epidemic of missing persons in Richards Bay, and the mystery surrounding Jade's mother's death: Elise de Jong died in the harbor town shortly after her daughter's birth. Why can't Jade find her grave?

Switching primarily between Jade's point of view and those of the ruthless locals who have decided she's a threat, Mackenzie ratchets up the suspense with glimpses into a dangerous criminal scheme: just what is an ex-con named Bradley doing for his employers, and how does it relate to the Richards Bay harbor? Was Amanda's death a reprisal for a blackmail attempt or an accident?

Jade's superior physical and intellectual abilities are fitting for

a powerful action heroine, but it's her quick temper, shady background, and difficult relationships with the men in her life that make her such a compellingly flawed protagonist. In this third in a series, Mackenzie skillfully keeps the plot twists coming without sacrificing believability. Her careful writing and meticulously researched narrative add up to a thriller that's hard to put down.

Elizabeth Michaelson

FINAL SAIL

Elaine Viets

2012

Obsidian

I love this Dead-End Job mystery series. Viets actually works at each of the jobs, so the story includes first hand and insider information.

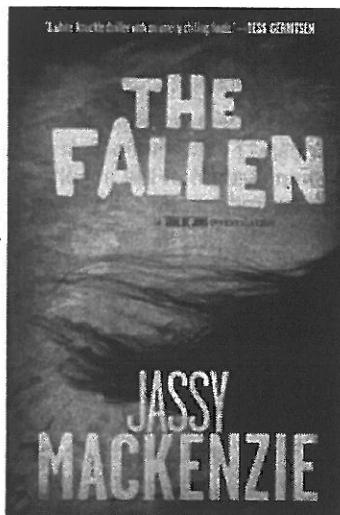
In this, the eleventh in the series, Helen Hawthorne has just married for the second time--and that's part of the continuing saga. She and new husband, Phil Sagemont, have opened a P.I. agency. They have two cases--one is from the daughter of a rich man who believes the woman her father married before his untimely death--murdered him. Phil goes undercover as the estate manager for Blossom, the not-too-bereaved and now very rich widow. The second case is to unmask an emerald smuggler, and for that Helen has to go undercover to work as a stewardess on a yacht.

The dead-end jobs Helen has had before involved long hours, hard work and not nice people. She was hoping to escape all that by being a P.I. Ha! However, there's a perk with this job that she hasn't had before--a bigger salary, and the agency's payment for the case.

On board, Helen hardly has time to look for the emerald smuggler because she's so busy on the job. One of the stewardesses disappears and Helen believes she was pushed overboard during the storm.

Wonderful descriptions of the yacht and how the crew make it all work for the comfort of the owner and his four guests.

Gay Tolti Kinman



FIVE DAYS TO DIE

Katia Lief

2012

Ebury Press

The events in the book take place, as the title implies, over a five-day period. As it opens, on September 3, 2001 [and the specific date is significant], Emily Parker, a young wife and mother, has left her children -- a one-year-old girl and two boys, ages seven and eleven -- with her mother to run a small shopping errand. She never returns from that chore, and there is no clue as to what has happened to her. Vacationing in Cape Cod, the family had been scheduled to return to New York City the following day. Her husband and mother are stunned by her disappearance, and the police are immediately called in. The following day, her car is found in the parking lot of the market, the rotting groceries inside the vehicle. The case is assigned to Detective Al Snow and a relative rookie, Amy Cardoza. In addition, joining the investigation is John Geary, former special agent and head [and one of the founders] of the Behavioral Science Unit of the FBI, now re-