



FLASHWORDS!

New England Crime Bake™

2011



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We challenged the folks attending the 2011 New England Crime Bake to write a compelling crime story in 150 words or less, using at least ten of twenty title words from novels by our Guests of Honor, Nancy Pickard and Barry Eisler!

We received 37 official entries displaying a wide variety of styles and a depth of talent and creativity.

The winners, selected with great difficulty in blind judging, and in no particular order, are:

“@stormyweather”
By Brenda Buchanan

“Confessional”
By Lorrie Lee O’Neill

“Just Desserts”
By Betsy Bitner

Congratulations and thank you to all who participated with such enthusiasm. Enjoy!

Title Words: *Assassin, Bitch, Body, Coast, Confession, Detachment, Die, Fall, Fault, Ingredient, Killing, Marriage, Murder, Rain, Requiem, Scent, Secret, Storm, Truth, Virgin*

Murder On The Menu

By Nora Spero

I could scent a storm coming upon entering the restaurant. The victim sat, face in a bloody bowl of pasta. In a corner, the police held a sobbing girl.

I examined the body with my usual professional detachment and had to admit I'd never seen anyone die with such blood loss without a single bullet hole or puncture.

Was some sort of esoteric poison ingredient at fault here?

I walked to where the police held a girl in a waitress uniform.

"The bitch already gave us her confession." One uniform sneered. "She admits killing him with a huge dose of Coumadin in his wine. She knew he took the drug; it didn't take much more to thin the blood to lethal levels."

"Is that the truth?" I asked her.

"Yes," she sobbed. "It's no secret, he took my virginity, promised me marriage, then laughed at me!"

Ω

@stormyweather

By Brenda Buchanan

For forty of her forty-one years, Luella Remington was a bashful virgin with a secret. She made a killing writing steamy romantic novels despite an utter lack of first-hand carnal knowledge.

Then she met Storm Bernardsson, whose lessons about a body's capacity for pleasure left her purring like a contented cat. They had their first fight when Luella demanded he leave his 20-year marriage. She complained about his equivocation on Twitter, oblivious to a certain new follower.

She anticipated hot make up sex when a tweet from @stormyweather lured her to Confessional Point, clad in a raincoat, stilettos and nothing else.

No one will ever be able to prove it, but Luella didn't slip and fall from that rain-slick coastal cliff. Mrs. Bernardsson was discrete, strolling back to her idling car, inhaling the sweet scent of salt, humming a tune of her own composition: Requiem for a Bitch.

Just Desserts

By Betsy Bitner

I've cooked up a storm every fall for twenty years, determined to get a compliment out of my mother-in-law or die trying. But in truth, getting her to say something nice would be a miracle akin to the virgin birth. Each Thanksgiving she manages to find plenty to bitch about: lumpy gravy, dry turkey, sour cranberry sauce.

I'm done killing myself for her approval when all she does is rain on my parade. And I'm done with my husband defending his mother by saying, "It's not her fault she has refined tastes. You should try harder."

This year my efforts will yield more than a sink full of dirty dishes. I'm making a special dessert for the two of them: apple tarts – heavy on the cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves. Oh, and a secret ingredient. Let's see if her tastes are refined enough to detect the scent of bitter almonds.

Best Served Chilled

By Gary Braver

“Sure you didn’t graduate Dedham High?”

“Sure.”

He’d hired Stella who designed the best wine cellars around. Now done, she’d come to collect. “Love this false brick wall.”

“Separates the Margaux from lesser stock.”

They stepped inside. With the remote she closed the wall.

“Wait. You’re Gina Storm.”

“Truth is, a dumb 17-year-old virgin. A ‘body to die for.’ Got me drunk on Gallo and raped me. A secret abortion nearly killing me, left me scarred and barren.”

“Didn’t know.”

“You knew, but abandoned me, moved to the coast to become this bigtime writer.”

“But that was 20 years ago.”

“This fall.”

“Let bygones be bygones. De Grave?”

“Perfect.”

While he opened it, she pressed the remote, stepped out, and closed the wall with its one small opening.

“Joke’s over. Open up.”

“Cheers.”

“Bitch. This isn’t some rehashed Poe story.”

“Yes it is,” and she inserted the last brick.

Body Count

By Rusty Gagnon

The marriage's requiem took place the night of the storm, seven days following John's return. In truth, no one understood why he scheduled the gathering. The date would fall on Julia's first birthday. Thunder cracked as John raised his glass. "To Mary and Julia, my heart and soul."

Tears mirrored rain sliding down the restaurant windows.

Mary had been a good wife, an attentive mother, just too lonely to survive John's repeated and lengthy military detachments. Sleeping amongst the scent of his clothing wasn't enough to get through days and duties left entirely to her. The bank took the house, the loan company the car. It was no secret his military salary was half that of his civilian job. Perhaps the country needed him; she needed him more.

Her body, arms wrapped around the baby's, was found along the rocky coast. Her note said it all. "War's a bitch."

Confessional

By Lorrie Lee O'Neill

“Dead,” he thinks.

Rain peppers the church’s windows. The requiem drones in Latin. Ethel leans in, her hand like softly-plied leather on his.

“It’s not your fault.” She whispers. The storm picks up.

“I am an assassin,” he feels, but nods instead.

That priest waves a thurible over the body. There is the scent of incense.

At confession, he had told that priest he wanted her dead. This was his truth.

“She willed her entire estate to the church,” he confessed.

He drove home embittered. He argued, but her heart was as set as it was ardently failing. She called for that priest. She took communion. He endured it all with a sense of detachment.

Guilt consumed him, both then and now.

At the church he had given his secret to that priest. That priest arrived and administered her last rites, but with an added ingredient to her communion wafer.

Bad Roads

By Beth Kanell

October in a Vermont village: What could be lovelier? Steve Cray eased the van around dumptrucks and a paving machine. What scent of autumn? Asphalt and diesel fumes swamped the village and flooded his inn, killing his bookings.

Steam pans shifted behind him. Catering for the church marriage of the senator's daughter would salvage some income. But if the governor attended – “That bitch,” Steve growled. “It’s her fault.” Governor Price’s pledge to re-pave immediately after the rain damage had plugged Darlington with construction.

Steve spotted broken water lines, the final disastrous ingredient, overflowing the village green. He hummed the wedding march, fighting his mood, but it sounded like a requiem for autumn.

Another bulldozer pushed dirt into the road in front. Steve pounded the dashboard. He took a cleansing breath, almost achieving detachment, which slowed his reaction to the limp body exposed by the dozer’s angled blade.

The Job

By William Carito

The scent of jasmine rose from the body on the floor. Donovan, the assassin, stood over her with a cool detachment, heedless of the lightning and thunder from the storm outside. The bitch was still in her wedding gown; the marriage already over. The groom sat in the corner, holding his stomach where Donovan's bullet had entered. The groom's lips moved silently, probably trying to make his last confession to the priest who wasn't there. He wouldn't live to know her secrets. She wasn't the virgin he thought she was; killing husbands was her M.O.

"It's not your fault," Donovan said to the groom, "This murder was my job. Sorry you got in the way, but if she lived, you weren't long for this life, anyway."

Donovan turned and walked out into the rain whistling Beethoven's "Requiem". His client wouldn't get any money, but her son had been avenged.

Requiem for a Bitch

By Jeanne Rideout

A dead puppy's body fit inside a child's coffin.

He could have a funeral for his collie Suzie, Lila said, but why waste money when they could box the bitch like Chinese takeout for free?

The basement window to the funeral home was open to the coastal storm, and inside hulked caskets for the taking. Lightning crackled, and he heard Suzie whimpering in the back seat of the Lincoln.

Lila hooked her hands over the aluminum sill, wincing at the razor sharpness, bracing to shimmy in. She was an assassin of all things defenseless, killing their marriage, wanting to kill Suzie.

Over the death march of the drumming rain, Suzie cried.

Lila's neck hovered over the sill, her scent congealing like blood in his nostrils.

He rammed the window down.

When the choking sounds stopped, he drove Suzie home, saying a prayer as a requiem for the bitch.

Last Respects

By Jonathan Cullen

Twelve hours before his confession, the man crept along the coast like an assassin, searching in the rain for that secret spot where his wife lay dead. Luckily no one had seen her fall the night of the storm but—truth be told—killing wasn't murder if it was justified. Fifty-three years of marriage had transformed a virgin into a callous bitch and if he was at fault for anything, it was waiting for her to die naturally. But the scent of the beach roses turned his bitterness to sorrow and he began to remember the happy years. If there was one ingredient he lacked for the deed, it was detachment and by the time he reached the foot of the cliff, he was weeping. In a final requiem to his wife, the man said a prayer and peered behind the rock, only to discover that her body was gone.

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Forsaken

By Lee Robertson

The rain drummed along the coast, its percussion a requiem. In the fault of fractured asphalt lay the body - its white hand in apparent languid detachment on its head, as though to shield it from the storm. The scent of human misery had faded, replaced by sea, and salt, and rain. Greenish locks pressed to rigid lips. A clammy secret, the victim crouched as the tall man stepped away. "Bitch deserved it," he snarled as lightning lit up the back of his black, slick coat. His begrudging mouth, a confession, pursed a last time before this lively assassin stormed to his car. She'd been a virgin, he knew. She didn't want to die. But he could shut it out - this marriage to the truth. The ingredient of successful killing.

Die, Bitch

By Mary Fishler-Fisk

Rain, falling in murderous torrents, blasts the coast. Each wind-driven drop stings the few exposed patches of Simon LaCoste's bearded face. The storm fails to mask a lingering scent of decay, which hovers over the decomposed remains of a body half buried in sand and dune grass. LaCoste shifts his weight from leg to leg, checks and rechecks the time on his cell.

A figure shrouded in a soil-dinged sou'wester approaches through the gloom.

LaCoste nods a greeting. "Virginia."

"Simon."

He points at the ground.

Virginia LaCoste's hands slap across her gaping mouth.

"The truth," Simon demands. "No more secrets in our marriage."

Virginia's eyes widen. "She was a bitch. You said so." She collapses onto her knees. "It wasn't my fault."

"I'll take that as a confession."

"Take what you will."

And he does, killing Virginia where she kneels, a fitting requiem for his long lost first love.

The Fall Guy

By Jennifer Goss Duby

“Son of a bitch,” she muttered as she cut the engine and coasted to a stop. “This is his own damn fault.”

Rain pelted the muddy road, bringing down the last of the leaves. The night was an inky secret, the lake invisible behind the row of empty summer cottages. All dark, but one.

A sure thing, he’d told her. And fell for it like some kind of damn virgin.

She sidled up to the lit window. There he was, beaten and bloodied in a kitchen chair, flanked by two men the size of commercial refrigerators. Stacks of greenbacks covered the table.

Mr. We’ll-Make-a-Killing. Bad news from day one. The perfect ingredient for a marriage doomed to failure.

Her truth—and he knew it—was that she didn’t want him to die.

She checked her pistol. Time to roll.

Requiem for a Beauty Queen

By Lisa Kaplan

“I remember her. The fallen virgin. Nice body. No way to die though.” Sgt. Bunion burped out. The scent of greasy digesting meat rained down on me. “Guess she couldn’t handle the truth. Coasted along then wham! Life’s a bitch.”

“Really, you think *this* is suicide?” I looked up at Bunion.

“Got all the ingredients: failing marriage; hubby’s secret life revealed; character assassinated in the media storm. She had nothing left.” Bunion shrugged. “I mean, not her fault hubby made a killing on that Ponzi scheme, but bet we’ll find a last confession anyway.” Bunion belched up his burger again and lumbered off.

“Bunion’s wrong, it’s murder.” The M.E. commented rising from the hot tub deck. “Can’t self-inject that much botox or whatever it is.”

I studied the deformed face again with practiced detachment. The head bobbed in the steamy water. Death by botox? Perfect requiem for a beauty queen.

Poetic Justice

By Kristin Crump

The Sheriff looked at the sky, the scent of rain heavy on the wind; the storm would hit soon. With cold outward detachment he walked away from the reporters shouting questions and back toward the tragedy behind him. Dozens of bodies of exotic animals lay in neat rows beside the driveway. His deputies had covered them with tarps to prevent the media from making anymore of a spectacle out of the grisly scene than it was already.

In truth he was sickened; they had been forced to shoot the animals after they were set free to cover-up the murders of their owners. It was no secret the McGuires had money and the country setting provided all the ingredients for the perfect crime. There would be no confession though. The remains of the culprit, a former employee, had been found near his car, bloody cash trampled into the mud around him.

A Rush to the Altar

By Mary Stibal

Early this morning my mother, who's read all the brides' magazines, said rain on a wedding day is a good omen. Perfect. I'm not worried that the storm pounding the Maine coast will ruin my hand-made lace dress and veil, both "Tacky Medieval." I just want my marriage official, done, finalized, before the body, all pale and surprised, is discovered at the bottom of the cliff.

Everyone will think it was an accident, except for my fiancé Henry, who saw me and Victoria arguing as we walked toward the precipice last night.

She'd shown up unannounced at the hotel yesterday, whispering about our old secret. A murder the coroner ruled a suicide. So we went outside for a 'confidential talk.' Turns out since I'm marrying into money, the bitch wanted a cut.

Henry will wonder about the truth behind Victoria's fall. But once we're married, that's all he can do.

Hellbound

By Neal O'Connor

The soaking rain had gotten under my collar and was trickling down my back as I reached Big Tony's sedan. I had pulled off the killing with an air of detachment, but as I climbed in, I was shaking and sweating.

Tony noticed. "How's it feel? You ain't a virgin no more."

I felt a jab in my back. "You're my secret assassin now, little brother. Benny was just the first in line."

William was referring to Benny the Bitch, a rank complainer whose confession had sent them both off to Cedar Junction. William's fall had stretched out long enough to dixie his marriage. It probably killed Mother, too.

Benny had to die.

We coasted to a stop in front of St. Gregory's and I got out.

Tony smiled and said, "Be a good priest and forgive yourself. Okay, Father?"

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No Longer a Virgin

By Lisa Jackson

Here's a secret: love doesn't exist. I'm on husband number five and all I've learned are the ingredients to a stormy marriage: one part detachment, two parts untruth, no confessions, and at least one body falling from the rafters. Some couples are okay with that. I never have been.

My husband shuffles into the kitchen toward the scents of bacon and coffee. I never make breakfast, yet he is unfazed.

As I scramble the eggs, he pours himself a large mug of java.

“Good morning, husband.”

He grunts, reaches for the sugar bowl.

“I see the assassin failed last night.”

He knows I'm intent on killing him, yet he shrugs, sits at the table, and scoops two tablespoons of arsenic into his coffee.

He stirs, takes two gulps. In a few minutes, it will be his fault I'm no longer a virgin at murder.

The Secret

By Jane Ormerod

Our neighbor, a criminal lawyer, once said, “If you want to murder someone and get away with it, cover the floor in plastic and leave your cell phone at home when you drive to dispose of the body.”

My marriage had been rock solid then. But that was before that bitch, Kitty Kline, moved back to town. Kitty was my sworn archenemy. The reason: she’d sprouted breasts in 5th grade and they’d still been growing when we’d graduated. The way I saw it, I could hire a professional assassin, or...

“Honey, are you painting—”

I knocked Ken upside his head with a paint can, killing him instantly. He fell on the drop cloth.

Despite the pouring rain, I drove to the coast and, with cool detachment, heaved my husband over the cliff.

What I did with Kitty’s body is a secret I’ll take to my grave.

Requiem For Marriage

By Kate Shannon

The secret ingredient in the formula for killing his marriage, had that been his goal, was simply the truth. It truly did set you free. Confession, good for the soul, was murder on marriage. Perhaps she could've forgiven him for killing that bitch, even understood how it happened. But he had married her hiding the secret. And worse, when the body had come ashore during that storm, he had kept his secret even as an innocent man took the fall for his crime. It was only when the man died after three years in prison that his guilty conscience compelled him to tell his wife his secret. What had he expected? Forgiveness? Assurance that it really hadn't been his fault? More important, he couldn't let her tell. And she would. He hadn't thought this through. He loved her. Just not more than himself... freedom... Was there a requiem for marriage?

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Lost Abstinence

By Patrice Perrotta

The truth was I didn't want to go to jail a virgin. That was the reason I was here. A confession, to absolve the sin I was about to commit, not for the murder I had just committed. I watched as parishioners stood when the body was rolled down the aisle. A rain storm beat against the stained glass like a mournful requiem.

My fiancé's detachment from me lately wasn't my fault. I knew the minute I smelled her perfume scent on his shirt he would fall for that bitch. The most important ingredient in a marriage is trust. I can't coast through life thinking I wouldn't pay for killing her like an assassin. A shiver rippled up my spine as I felt my fiancé's hand on my shoulder. Before I turned, I knew he would die but not before I lost my virginity. Now this will stay my secret.

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That Takes the Cake

By Lewis Preschel

The twin daughters prowled the farmhouse's scentless kitchen, the red sunset killing the worst day in family history.

Jess performed a requiem over the empty cake pan. "Can't bake without Ma's instructions."

"Fair's over anyway." Angela looked upward. "Sorry Mama."

"Harriet's a thief." Jess slammed a drawer. "The bitch might as well have assassinated Ma."

"Her skanky little body stormed into the bake-off with that murderous cake."

"Losing first prize to her, Mama would've just died."

"Thank the Lord, she's gone."

"My fault, should've locked up Ma's cookbook."

"No, Harriet snuck in when the coast was clear. Couldn't have stopped that with a detachment of solders."

"Ma's recipes were a marriage of secret ingredients that rained over your tongue to fall into your stomach."

"Don't need commercials Jess. To tell the truth, Harriet and her olive oil, neither knows the meaning of virgin. How'd she win?"

No Guilt

By Peggy McFarland

Rain blurred the distant city lights, mirroring her afterglow. Miguel's scent lingered. Tessa may have discovered the secret to spectacular sex: a younger man.

Boy, she could fall for him. Not marriage, just... fodder for the confessional. The dashboard Virgin Mary bobbed.

"Don't knock it till—"

The car lurched. Tessa heard a thud. She glanced in the rearview. "Oh no, no, no."

Tessa sprang from the car. Dark liquid pooled. "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry."

The person moaned.

She tried her phone. In every direction. No signal.

Miguel had moaned... as she licked champagne from his body. Two bottles worth? Three?

She slipped back into her car. Who'd walk in this weather without reflective clothing?

"Not my fault," Tessa whispered.

She turned the key. The Madonna trembled.

"That's the truth!"

The bitch had an opinion about everything. Tessa flung the bobble-head out the window, then concentrated on driving.

The Executioner's Quandary

By Judith Green

Never seen nothing like it.

Sir Walter weren't worried about the upcoming detachment of his head from his body. No, he stood joking in the rain, then signaled me to let the axe fall. S'truth, killing him made me feel like a bloody assassin.

That Raleigh! Defeated the Spanish Armada off our coast. Started a colony in the New World. Followed the scent of gold, searching for El Dorado. Gave Ireland a new ingredient for stew: the potato.

Elizabeth, our Virgin Queen, wanted to murder him for his secret marriage to her lady-in-waiting. Sent him to the Tower with his whole household, even his favorite spaniel bitch. But it was King James who ordered Sir Walter's requiem. Stormed at him for a confession on attacking them Spaniards against orders, then sent him to be chopped.

That Lost Colony at Roanoke was Raleigh's fault. Would that make him want to die?

The Right Thing

By Richard Halpern

The storm receded from the coast leaving behind its damp scent.

Carla held the pistol at her hip and gazed at her husband's body lying splayed on the sand and recalled telling him before they were married that she was a virgin, and then going to confession and promptly lying to the priest as well.

After the wedding she retreated into a numbing detachment and turned insufferably bitchy because of her ennui in the marriage, but insisted to her husband that nothing was wrong.

And now she had promised him a picnic, but shot him instead.

Even a trained assassin would feel something under the circumstances, she thought, or they might as well be dead themselves.

And that's when she realized what needed to be. So she raised the pistol to her temple—but alas, couldn't pull the trigger. After all, when had she ever done the right thing.

The Requiem of Truth

By Nikki Bonanni

Lynette had once again befriended a wealthy widow. The superficial concern and sickening sweetness were obvious to everyone, but Evelyn reveled in it. After Evelyn's husband died unexpectedly, Lynette was never more than a few steps behind. One might think this was a caring act. The truth is we had seen it with two other widows. In exchange for her kindness, the unsuspecting widows became Lynette's cash cow.

Evelyn began spending afternoons in the library. Lynette asked what she was reading and Evelyn replied, "It's a secret; you'll be so surprised!"

Friends told Evelyn she was suffering detachment, and that Lynette was taking advantage of her. She smiled saying, "The requiem of truth lies in the ingredients." Everyone thought she was crazy, until the newspaper showed a photo of Lynette in handcuffs. The article was titled "Murder Ends Marriages: Bodies Exhumed Revealing Digitalis Killings".

Evelyn was quoted, "That bitch!"

A Simple Act of Betrayal

By Timothy Ouellette

The assassin's blade slid effortlessly through its target's throat; the body crumpled to the ground. With a detachment borne of years in Cambodia's killing fields he cleaned his weapon and waited for the man to die.

Fate, quiet determination, and a burning desire had led me from my time as an orphan on the coast of Southeast Asia to this moment as a trusted protégé. Truth be told, I'd held this secret long enough.

"Do you remember your first?" I asked, voice hoarse with emotion, dagger held out before me.

He slowly sheathed his knife; he did not turn.

"No."

A light rain began to fall.

"It was a family whose loyalties were in question. Mother and daughter were killed quickly; the father was made an example. He was skinned alive then crucified, his flayed body nailed to a tree."

He turned then; slowly, deliberately.

"I am my father's son."

Picture Perfect Murder

By Kandy Williams

Soaked from rain and bleeding, Buck stumbled into the police station. Rejuvenated from the scent of coffee, Detective Rachel Simms noticed Buck. She eased him into a chair.

Buck ignored her protests. “Don’t need a doctor! Gotta tell you everything, or he’ll get away with murder.”

Rachel listened while Buck continued.

“A guy hired me to kill his wife. Said he’d had enough of the bitch, wanted out of the marriage. Promised me money. Wanted it to look like an accident. Didn’t want suspicion or fault on him.” Buck moaned.

Rachel pressed her hands against Buck’s bleeding abdomen.

“Help’s coming,” she said.

“Killing ain’t me, but I did it,” Buck confessed. “Broke her neck. Fixed the body so it looked like a fall. Met the guy later for my money. He shot me. Oh, I don’t wanna die!”

“I need the guy’s name.”

Buck pointed to the Police Commissioner’s picture.

A Sea of Quandaries

By Deborah Redfield

I had to return to the coast as I keep thinking it was my confession that caused the end of a secret. I hadn't planned on revisiting the scene, but through no fault of my own it drew me. Was it the storm with the driving rain that reminded me of that terrible fall.

All I wanted was a walk on the shore to view the raging sea and smell the scent of the ocean. That's when I saw a rowboat with two men; one body was thrown out of the rowboat. Thank goodness he was a good swimmer, and I was able to drag him to shore. What caused one brother to want to murder the other. Killing just isn't an ingredient in our family. How could I know that through helping one brother survive that the other brother would die at sea. Did I save the right brother?

Last Time

By Lindsay Downs

Through the cold slashing rain, he unearthed the fault line exactly where the terrain map said it would be. From the distant rumble of thunder he knew the storm would soon increase, helping to weaken the boulders. With the previous day's rain, combined with the mud slide, he had all the ingredients for the perfect killing zone.

This is what made him the perfect assassin, his detachment to the job at hand. That's why he'd been assigned the task to eliminate the woman.

As he lay under the tree fall, waiting for her to drive by, he detected a familiar scent. *Her perfume. But impossible.*

The faint rustle of wet leaves brought his head around.

"The truth. I'm here to eliminate you," a soft sensual voice whispered, stepping forward.

"Bitch," he choked out, as the stiletto slid between his ribs.

Fall from Grace

By Vy Kava

Inspector Clark's secret was his love for the beaches of the Amalfi Coast. He found it so intoxicating- the warm days, the salty scent of the sea, the cool nights and a view to die for. He never expected murder to follow him.

The rain soaked body of David Clark, his nephew, was found outside the Chapel of the Virgin. The body, dressed in full army uniform, was slumped against the wall. They found no personal items-no wallet, no passport, no gun. The police did find a letter addressed to Inspector Clark tucked in the lining of his jacket. A single bullet in the back had ended his life.

Inspector Clark, delayed by recent storms, arrived to claim the body. As he walked the cobbled streets, he promised himself to find the truth.

Secret Spice

By Louisa Clerici

The truth, *marriage is murder*.

Especially for a paid assassin. A secret, tricky to hide if you live on the coast of Storm City, population ten. When I told my new husband Dwayne I had a confession to make, he feigned detachment, but was mortified, thought I wasn't a virgin. I revealed my noble profession.

“Bitch. Your fault our marriage is doomed. You live in a fantasy world. Prove it,” he said.

How? Take meathead Dwayne on an upcoming assignment to Istanbul? He'd stick out like a smirking corpse. Only one choice - a rain of killings washed across town. Dwayne still doubted. Down to population... two, Dwayne's fall was inevitable. I didn't want him to die, but his eyes held the truth. The scent of the body, a requiem of Old Spice, reminding me how exciting marriage is, with the added ingredient of murder.

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After Midnight

By Laurinda Bedingfield

One needs quiet to write: the solitude of the New England coast. I lived there in a squat granite house. It was midnight, the scent of salty rain filled the air. A bitch of a late Fall storm was hurling itself across the sea. The kind of storm that reverberates in your bones, your body, your soul. Raw dampness was the assassin tonight, killing all hopes of warmth and redemption. Detachment and ennui were the main ingredients of my mood these days. Against this psychic gravitational pull, I hoisted myself up, off the sofa, to start a fire in the stone hearth across the room. It was then that all hell broke loose. Everything the furies could muster was pummeling my world. The roof groaned, the shutters slammed, my brain reeled. Truth be told: it was the last midnight of my life.

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The Assassin Is a Bitch

By Annie Alexander

“The assassin is a bitch.”

“A woman? But who is she...she murdered over two hundred people.”

“She’s my wife.”

“Jennifer?”

“Yeah. When I met her, she was a virgin in a convent. But she found out the truth about me. It was my fault. I didn’t confess. She discovered my secret one stormy night before we were married, when she found a dead body in my car trunk.”

“My God!”

“My partner was supposed to dispose of Requiem’s body, but the practical joker hid it in my car. He knew no one ever touched my Jag except me. I could’ve murdered Jennifer, but she was the kind of woman any man would die for. My choices were to kill her, my partner or myself. So, I married her, and made her my new partner.”

“What happened to your old partner?”

“After what he did, do you really need to ask?”

My Confession

By Mary S. Barker

I didn't mean to do it. I was an assassin not a bitch; I'd flown to the West Coast, and didn't have enough detachment to know better.

"Make a killing with this chance of a lifetime opportunity." Right! I didn't expect to be the fall guy, girl. It wasn't my fault. They all say that. I can't deny pulling the trigger.

The virgin didn't plan to die that sunny California day with her blood splattered against the stonewall. I didn't know I was a good shot, and kept pumping the bullets into her. Their acrid scent still teases my mind. I hear they're giving her a requiem Mass. It'll probably rain.

To tell the truth, I didn't mean to murder her. My marriage died; I needed the swag.

My boss's secret ingredient? He set me up, and called the cops from a pay phone. Who knew they still had any?

Wedding Requiem

By Marion Maxwell

The bitch's confession to the killing cleared the way for the marriage of the virgin (hah), but the lingering scent of the murder lent a pall to the event. It seemed more like a requiem. Storm Fault would die in the rain rather than reveal her secret fall from grace.

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