

A TRACEY MARKS MYSTERY

MEMORY OF MURDER



ELLEN SHAPIRO

Copyright © 2021 by Ellen Shapiro
First Edition published October 2021
by Indies United Publishing House, LLC

Cover Art by irPanda Designs

All rights reserved. Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above; no part of this publication may be reproduced stored in or introduced into a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise) without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

ISBN: 978-1-64456-374-8 [Hardcover]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-375-5 [Paperback]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-376-2 [Mobi]

ISBN: 978-1-64456-377-9 [ePub]

Library of Congress Control Number:



INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

P.O. BOX 3071

QUINCY, IL 62305-3071

www.indiesunited.net

In memory of my grandfather, Joseph Beberman

A Tracey Marks Mystery

MEMORY
OF
MURDER

ELLEN SHAPIRO



INDIES UNITED PUBLISHING HOUSE, LLC

Table of Contents

[CHAPTER 1](#)

[CHAPTER 2](#)

[CHAPTER 3](#)

[CHAPTER 4](#)

[CHAPTER 5](#)

[CHAPTER 6](#)

[CHAPTER 7](#)

[CHAPTER 8](#)

[CHAPTER 9](#)

[CHAPTER 10](#)

[CHAPTER 11](#)

[CHAPTER 12](#)

[CHAPTER 13](#)

[CHAPTER 14](#)

[CHAPTER 15](#)

[CHAPTER 16](#)

[CHAPTER 17](#)

[CHAPTER 18](#)

[CHAPTER 19](#)

[CHAPTER 20](#)

[CHAPTER 21](#)

[CHAPTER 22](#)

[CHAPTER 23](#)

[CHAPTER 24](#)

[CHAPTER 25](#)

[CHAPTER 26](#)

[CHAPTER 27](#)

[CHAPTER 28](#)

[CHAPTER 29](#)

[CHAPTER 30](#)

[CHAPTER 31](#)

[CHAPTER 32](#)

[CHAPTER 33](#)

[CHAPTER 34](#)

[CHAPTER 35](#)

[CHAPTER 36](#)

[CHAPTER 37](#)

[CHAPTER 38](#)

CHAPTER 39

CHAPTER 40

CHAPTER 41

CHAPTER 42

CHAPTER 43

CHAPTER 44

CHAPTER 45

CHAPTER 46

CHAPTER 47

CHAPTER 48

CHAPTER 49

CHAPTER 50

CHAPTER 51

CHAPTER 52

CHAPTER 53

CHAPTER 54

CHAPTER 55

CHAPTER 56

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CHAPTER 1

Thoughts of the upcoming trial of Randy Stewart were on my mind when my phone rang.

“Tracey Marks.”

“Ms. Marks, my name is Lisa Kane. Would it be possible to talk with you this afternoon?”

“How is 2:00 pm?”

“That’s fine. I know where your office is. I’ll see you then.”

I was curious why Ms. Kane wanted to see me but decided to wait until we spoke in person to find out what was on her mind.

My thoughts wandered back to the trial. I shot Randy Stewart when my gun went off accidentally trying to defend myself. I was glad I didn’t kill him since I didn’t want that on my conscience, but it still haunts me. While investigating the murder of my client’s mother, I eventually figured out it was Stewart and I became a threat to him. Next week I was the prosecution’s star witness.

I never testified before and I wasn’t looking forward to it. I guess I’ve watched too many shows on television where the attorney for the defendant tries to trip you up and twist your words. I’m afraid I’ll fall into that trap.

At exactly 2:00 I heard the door open. I quickly got up from my desk.

“Lisa, it’s nice to meet you,” I said as she followed me into my office.

“Can I get you anything to drink, coffee, water?”

“No thank you,” she said, taking a seat.

Lisa looked young, maybe in her early twenties, pretty with shoulder-length red hair and large green eyes. She was probably around my height, 5’8”, dressed in jeans and a blue and white striped button down cotton shirt. She wore black flats and no socks.

Lisa was very nervous, twisting her hands over and over.

“Are you sure I can’t get you anything to drink?”

“No thank you.”

“Why don’t we start with an easy question. Who referred you?”

“You may think this is naïve of me, but I googled private investigators. There were several in the area that came up but I liked that you were a female.”

“Most people don’t know any private investigators and resort to the internet.”

“I briefly read about two of your cases and I thought you might be able to help me.”

“Well why don’t you tell me what this is about, and I’ll ask you some questions after you’ve finished.”

“Okay. When I was three, almost four, my mother was killed. I was sleeping at the time when a loud noise woke me up. I got scared and called out to my mother but she didn’t answer. I was never allowed to go into my parents’ room at night when the door was closed but I was afraid. I wanted my mother, so I climbed out of my bed and slowly walked to my parents’ room. The door was open, but when I peeked in I didn’t see my mother or my father. Everything was fuzzy after that. I must have gone back to my bed because the next thing I remembered was my father coming into my room and giving me a kiss on my forehead. At some point there was a police lady who asked me questions but I couldn’t talk. They said I must have been traumatized.”

“The police investigated but they never found out who killed my mother. At the time my father was a suspect, but they had no physical evidence against him. May I have a glass of water?”

I came back with a glass of water and handed it to Lisa.

“That must have been horrible for you. How can I help?”

Lisa took a big gulp before answering.

“Lately I’ve been remembering, though very sporadically. An image will appear and then will be gone in an instant. Maybe it’s just my imagination.”

“Well why don’t you tell me anyway?”

“I thought I heard voices from my parents’ room, but the only voice I could recognize was my mother’s. She was yelling.”

“Could you tell how many other voices there were besides your mother’s?”

“I think just one, but I can’t be sure. I’m sorry I’m not being very helpful.”

“That’s okay, anything else?”

“I think I heard a door slamming.”

“Is that it?”

I saw a slight hesitation before she answered.

“Gray coat.”

“What do you mean?”

“Again, maybe I imagined it, but I think the person who killed my mother was wearing a gray coat.”

“Have you told anyone about these memories?”

“No, you’re the only one. I need you to find out who killed my mother. Is that something you can do?”

I was hesitant about taking on the case. Not knowing Lisa at all, it was hard to know her state of mind and if these memories were real or not.

“Is your father still living?”

“Yes. He’s only fifty-five.”

“What does he do for a living?”

“He’s a patent attorney.”

“Did he ever remarry?”

“He did, about a year after my mother died. I have no illusions that my mother was perfect. My nanny was the one who cared for me. I need to know for sure who killed my mother.”

“Why don’t we do this. I’ll see if I can get your mother’s police file, and after reviewing it, I’ll decide whether to take your case.”

“Thank you, but you won’t have to go to the trouble since I already have the file.”

“Well that makes things easier,” I said. “Why don’t I stop by your place later and pick it up.”

“I’m going back there now. You can come by any time.”

As I walked Lisa out, she gave me her address. She lived in Soho, a fairly expensive area in Manhattan. I wondered how she could afford to live there.

I didn’t know what to think. Was Lisa really remembering things or did she imagine them? It seems her father married pretty quickly after the death of his wife. I was definitely eager to see what was in the police file.

I decided to call it quits for the day and headed to my apartment on the Upper West Side. It was a beautiful September day, and I walked the fifteen blocks to my building. My doorman Wally was outside.

“Hi Tracey, you’re home early,” Wally said.

“It’s too nice out to spend it inside. I thought I would go for a run.”

“My shift is finished in a few minutes, so I’ll see you tomorrow.”

“Have a nice night,” I said to Wally, waving goodbye as I walked to the elevator.

Wally is one of my favorite people. He’s been my doorman as long as I’ve lived in the building, almost twelve years. Looking at him you would never know he’s around seventy. He’s tall and hefty with a velvety brown complexion.

When I got upstairs I changed into a tee shirt and shorts. I looked at

the long scar on my arm and was glad to see it wasn't very noticeable. A few months back someone sliced my arm with the intent of killing me. I was fortunate I was able to get away before any more damage was inflicted. Lucky for me it happened near my building. Wally had the good sense to call an ambulance right away and stayed with me in the hospital.

At the park I did my usual three mile loop. When I got back I showered, and ran a comb through my straight, light brown hair that I keep cut to my chin. I slipped on a pair of jeans and a long sleeve cotton pullover and went down to my building's garage to get my car.

I drove to Lisa's apartment in Soho. I was able to find a tiny spot my little Beetle could fit into—one of the perks of having a small car when you live in the city.

The doorman let me in and I took the elevator up to the fourth floor. Lisa waved to me as I got off the elevator.

"Thanks for coming by," she said as she led me into her living room.

"You must be wondering how someone my age can live in such an expensive area."

"It did cross my mind."

"My mother was very wealthy, well her family was. I guess you can call me a trust fund baby, though I do have a profession. I'm a fashion designer. Please sit down."

I sat down on a beautiful light blue couch and Lisa sat opposite me on a blue and beige upholstered high back chair. The walls were painted in a light beige tone. There were several abstracts hanging up. Her taste seemed to be very eclectic.

"Do you have your own company?" I asked.

"Yes. I design women's sleep wear."

"I have no fashion sense. I basically wear the same thing every day. It makes life a lot simpler when I don't have to figure out what to wear when I get up."

"Well that's an interesting way to look at it."

"Are your mother's parents still living?" I said, changing the subject.

"My grandmother is. I spent a lot of my childhood at my grandparents' house in Bronxville. I always had the feeling my grandparents blamed my father for my mother's death, and they certainly were not happy when he remarried so soon after she died."

"Are you close to your father?"

"I am. I know he loves me and would do anything for me."

"Do you have a good relationship with your stepmother?"

"Yes. We're fairly close. Since I was so young at the time she married

my father, she took over the role of mom. She never treated me like a stepchild.”

“Lisa, do you have any thoughts on who may have killed your mother?”

“I really have no idea. Though the police suspected my father, I can’t imagine he had anything to do with my mother’s death.”

I wasn’t quite sure if she believed her father was innocent.

“I’ll read through the file and get back to you.”

“Thank you, and whether you take the case or not, I will pay you for your time.”

On the way out I noticed a photo, sitting on a glass table, of a woman and a child.

“May I?”

“Yes. It’s me with my mother.”

“She’s beautiful.”

“She was. I have her red hair and green eyes,” Lisa said with sadness in her voice.

I left still not sure about Lisa. But one thing was certain, someone killed Lisa’s mother and this person has never been caught.

CHAPTER 2

After parking my car in the garage, I walked three blocks to the Chinese takeout place. I'm probably their best customer. I guess you can say cooking is not my strong suit, though I do have my moments, but they are few and far between.

I was digging into my Shrimp Lo Mein and watching the news on my little TV I have in the kitchen when the phone rang.

"Hey there," I said to Jack when I answered. Jack and I have been in a relationship for about a year and a half. Jack comes from a bi-racial family; his mother was black and immigrated from Jamaica and his father was white and came from a Protestant family from Massachusetts. I met him on a case that took me to Massachusetts where Jack lives. He owns a small brick house in the town of Lee which he remodeled. Downstairs is completely open and the upstairs is where his bedroom and office are. Jack is also a private investigator and works for an attorney who does only criminal work.

"Did I catch you with your mouth full?"

"Shrimp Lo Mein."

"Well as delicious as that might be, I'm in the middle of grilling swordfish."

"Show off. By the way I had a very interesting day." I went on to tell Jack about my meeting with Lisa Kane. "I'm staring at a box full of police reports and documents. It's going to take me hours to go through everything."

"It will. Look over the interviews first and write down what you think may be important. This way you can go back and look over your notes."

"That's why I keep you around."

"Not for my good looks and other amenities I have to offer?"

"Bragging is not becoming," I said, smiling. "What's going on there?"

"The usual. Locating witnesses for an upcoming trial and getting them to talk."

"Which reminds me," I said. "Stewart's trial starts next week. Friday I'm going to the assistant district attorney's office so they can prep me."

"They're going to tell you that when you're on the witness stand to keep it simple. Tell the truth and just answer the questions the attorney asks. Don't elaborate."

“Aye aye sir.”

“I think my fish is burning. I’ll talk to you soon. Sleep tight.”

“Ditto.”

The following morning I was up bright and early ready to tackle the police reports. I decided I would work from home. I turned on the coffee maker. While the pot was filling up, I sat down and had a bowl of Cheerios and milk.

I brought my coffee into the living room and began sifting through the files. As I was reading I took down notes of anything that I thought was significant. I learned that Lisa’s mother, Rebecca, had a life insurance policy taken out two months prior to her death. Her husband Jason was the sole beneficiary.

It seems that the reason the police couldn’t make a case against him was that Mr. Kane had a solid alibi. He was at a dinner meeting with a client while Mrs. Kane was dying.

The police interviewed several people, including family members, friends of Rebecca, and other people involved with the case, including the person who was Mr. Kane’s alibi for that night, an Eric Jordan. According to Mr. Jordan’s statement, he and Jason Kane met around 8 pm for dinner and then went to a nearby bar for a nightcap. They both left the bar around midnight and parted outside of the bar.

Looking into Rebecca Kane’s life, the police found nothing that pointed to any other suspects. Though their marriage appeared to be solid, a neighbor who lived in the brownstone next to the Kane’s said that on a few occasions she heard loud shouting, but no one else the police spoke with thought the marriage was in trouble.

My phone rang as I was pulling out the crime scene photos.

“How about dinner later? I’ll meet you at Anton’s at 6:00,” Susie said before I even had a chance to say hello.

“See you then.”

Susie is my best friend. Actually she’s probably my only friend. When I was young I never reached out to make friends with other kids. I’m not sure why. I met Susie in high school. She sat next to me in one of my classes and annoyed the hell out of me. I couldn’t seem to get rid of her, and somehow we wound up becoming good friends. I think we mesh because we’re complete opposites. Susie is outgoing with a positive attitude, while I’m reserved with a cynical attitude.

I took out the crime scene photos and laid them on the floor. I had never seen a dead person in a photo. It was kind of weird. Her body was found in the bathroom connected to the master bedroom. Blood had

seeped out of the back of her head, where she hit the side of the tub. From the angle of her body it appeared she fell backward, probably from a struggle. Her white satin nightgown was stained with blood. There was a partial fingerprint from a smear of blood found on Rebecca's neck, which led the police to believe someone else was in the room.

The toxicology results showed no signs of alcohol or drugs in Rebecca Kane's system. The coroner's report confirmed that she died from hitting her head against the tub. The police did not find any proof of a break-in. Does that mean Rebecca Kane knew her killer?

I wondered whether Lisa actually witnessed the attack or just a fleeting moment when the killer was leaving the house.

My stomach started growling. When I looked at my phone it was after 1:00. It was definitely time for a break and something to eat. I made myself a peanut butter sandwich and more coffee and went back into the living room to continue reading the police file.

What I can't understand is why someone would kill Rebecca Kane and not one person the police questioned had any knowledge why she was targeted.

According to the coroner's report, her death occurred between 8:00 pm and 12:00 midnight. Would a business meeting last that long and that late? I had no clue.

While munching on my sandwich, I went through the police interviews. They seemed to have been pretty thorough. I made a note to ask Lisa if there was anyone she could think of that was not interviewed by the police during that time period.

Rebecca Kane owned a dress shop on Madison Avenue at the time of her death. Maybe Lisa inherited her fashion sense from her mother. I was curious if the shop was still in business and who owns it now?

This was a good point to take a break and go back to reading the police reports when I could look at it with fresher eyes.

It was after 4:00 when I called it quits. I went for a quick run before meeting Susie for dinner.

When I arrived at Anton's, Susie was talking to Olivia, the hostess. Normally Susie would be at the bar waiting, but she's pregnant.

"Hi guys," I said when I walked in.

Olivia, as always, looked fabulous. She could have been a model. Susie and I are jealous of Olivia's long legs that seem to go on for miles.

"Are you sure you're pregnant?" I said smiling, as we were seated at our table. "You are still flat as a board."

"Not sure how to take that but I guess it's a compliment. I'm only two months pregnant."

The waiter came over and I ordered a Sauvignon Blanc. I hated drinking knowing Susie couldn't, but she gave me her blessing and it eased my guilty conscience. I ordered my usual linguini and clams with the house salad and Susie ordered the eggplant parmigiana, also with the house salad.

"I started having morning sickness. I was tempted to call in sick today but decided against it. You never know when I might really need to play that card."

Susie is a matrimonial attorney at a small law firm in the city. She's a wealth of information, and I pick her brain all the time when I need advice on any of my cases.

"I might have a new client with a very interesting case." I went on to tell Susie the conversation I had with Lisa Kane, and what I had found out so far from reading through the police reports.

"On the surface it appears the police did a thorough investigation, but the fact remains someone killed her mother. My guess is that some people were lying to the police," Susie said.

"But why would they?"

"Maybe they had something to hide at the time and weren't willing to reveal the truth for their own reasons."

"That's interesting. I see your point."

"Not to change the subject but Mark and I want you to be our child's godmother."

"I would be honored as long as I'm not named in your will as guardian if anything happens to you guys."

"I promise," Susie said laughing, "but I know you would be a better mother than you think. And Jack would be a super father."

"Well you're probably right about Jack, but don't forget we're not married and not even living together."

"It'll happen one day."

"Wishful thinking on your part."

After dinner and dessert I said goodbye to Susie outside the restaurant and I walked the few blocks back to my apartment. I thought about what Susie said. My relationship with Jack is the longest I've ever had. I have always shied away from committing to marriage. I know how quickly you can lose people you love and I'm afraid to go through that pain again. Jack and I have had conversations about moving our relationship forward. He's very patient for the moment, but I don't know when his patience will run out.

CHAPTER 3

The following morning I went to the gym and did my usual workout with weights and some cardio on the bike. I finished up with stomach crunches and push-ups.

I stopped on my way into the office at the Coffee Pot, a place where I buy my coffee and muffin most every morning.

“Hi Anna. How are the kids?” Anna is the manager and has known me since I started coming in more than five years ago. I always look forward to opening up the bag to see what kind of muffin Anna has surprised me with.

“They’re staying out of trouble for the moment.”

“Always a good thing. I’ll see you soon.”

The first thing I did when I got into the office, besides taking out my coffee and my surprise Cranberry Nut muffin, was to open up my computer and check for any articles on the murder of Rebecca Kane. Since it was over twenty years ago, I wasn’t sure if there would be any references to the crime.

It turned out there were a few articles but no information in them that I didn’t already know about. I looked up the telephone number for the precinct that handled Rebecca’s case. I picked up my phone, called the precinct and asked to speak with Detective Stanley Cooper. He was the lead detective in charge of the investigation back then.

“Detective Cooper retired a few years back. Can anyone else help you?”

“Would it be possible to get in touch with him?”

“I’m sorry we can’t give out that information.”

“What if I give you my name and telephone number and ask him to get in touch with me?”

“I can pass on the information to him but I can’t guarantee he’ll call you back.”

“I understand.” I gave the officer my name and telephone number and the reason I wanted to speak with Detective Cooper.

My next call was to Lisa Kane.

“Hello.”

“Lisa, it’s Tracey Marks. I decided to take your case though I have

some questions before I start my investigation. Would you be able to come by my office at some point today?"

"I could be there around 12:00 if that's okay with you."

"Fine. I'll see you then."

I was working on some administrative paperwork when Lisa arrived.

"I'm happy to hear that you're going to be investigating my mother's death," she said as she sat down in my office.

"I went through most of the police reports. I made a list of the people the police questioned. I'd like you to take a look at it and see if there may have been anyone who is not on the list that they could have overlooked," I said, handing her the names I typed up.

While I waited for Lisa to look over the list, I offered her a cup of coffee.

"Thank you," she said as I placed the coffee down in front of her.

"Offhand, I can't think of anyone else."

"Keep the list. Someone might occur to you later on. By the way, do you know what happened to the dress shop your mother owned?"

"Yes. The woman who managed it kept the store, though I believe she's no longer there."

"You had a housekeeper. Would you happen to know where she is now?"

"Celia was my nanny and she also took care of the house. She still comes in a few days a week at my father's place and one day a week at my place."

"Would you happen to have any addresses or telephone numbers for any of these people?"

"Yes, some of them. I'm not sure about my mother's friends but you can ask my father. He might be able to help you."

"Within the next day or so can you please send me that information. Also can you provide me with a photo of your mother? I'm going to email you my retainer letter. Just sign it and return it with the retainer. You can email me the other information I'm requesting."

As I was walking Lisa out, I said: "Does your father know you're planning on hiring a private investigator to look into your mother's death?"

"He does, though I don't think he's that happy about it."

"Why do you say that?"

"He says it's to protect me, but I'm not so sure that's his main reason."

I left it at that.

My phone rang just as I was about to leave the office to pick up some

lunch.

“Tracey Marks.”

“Ms. Marks this is Stanley Cooper. You called the precinct asking for me.”

“Yes. Thank you for returning my call. I was told that you’re retired.”

“I put in my twenty years and I’m doing some security part-time. How can I help you?”

“I was hired by Lisa Kane. She’s the daughter of Rebecca Kane, who was murdered about twenty years ago. She wants me to investigate her mother’s death. Do you remember the case?”

“Yes, it was one that I never solved, unfortunately.”

“Could we meet?”

“I guess that would be alright. I get off at 5:00. There’s a coffee shop on 26th and Lexington Avenue. I think it’s called Stella’s.” He gave me a brief description of himself before we hung up.

I recognized Detective Cooper as he was heading in my direction. He was tall with a beer belly. He looked around sixty though he may have been younger. He had a ruddy complexion. I wondered if he drank.

“Detective Cooper,” I said as he approached me. “Thanks so much for meeting with me.”

The waitress seated us at a booth in the back. We both ordered coffee.

“What do you remember about the case?” I asked.

“At the time I was pretty sure it was the husband, but unfortunately he had an airtight alibi.”

“Is it possible the person he was with that night was lying?”

“It is, but we couldn’t prove otherwise.”

“I’ve been looking through all the police reports and the crime scene photos. It looks like you did a very thorough job. If it wasn’t a robbery and she was targeted, something was going on in her life that got her killed.”

“I agree. We just couldn’t make a case.”

“Is it possible the coroner was off on the timeline of her death?”

“If he was, it still wasn’t enough time for the husband to kill his wife.”

“Do you remember if you thought anybody you interviewed may have been lying?”

“Funny you should ask. I thought the woman who managed the clothing store may have been hiding something.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Just a hunch. Nothing concrete.”

“Besides the husband, was there anyone else you were looking at for Rebecca Kane’s murder?”

“Not really. There was circumstantial evidence against the husband. Unfortunately the smear of blood found at the crime scene wasn’t enough for fingerprint analysis, and again he had an alibi that we couldn’t shake.”

“That’s too bad. Anything else you can think of?”

“Not that I can recall at the moment. If I do, I’ll let you know.”

“Do you remember if you spoke with anyone at the restaurant where the husband was having his business meeting?”

“I’m sure we did. If I recall correctly, they left the restaurant and continued their meeting at a bar not far from there,” Detective Cooper said.

“What about the insurance policy his wife took out two months before her death?”

“I asked the husband and he said he didn’t even know about it at the time.”

“That’s interesting,” I said. “And you believed him?”

“Again, we couldn’t prove otherwise.”

“What about the fact that he remarried only a year after his wife’s death?”

“It did look suspicious. He may have been cheating on his wife but so do millions of other men. That in itself is not a crime. We just had no evidence against him. Can I ask why Ms. Kane is looking into her mother’s death?”

“It appears she has started to remember a few things from that night.”

I had no reason to tell him that Lisa might be imagining these details.

“I see. Well I can certainly understand why she would want to find out exactly what happened to her mother.”

“One last question. If I remember correctly from your interviews, you checked out the bar where Mr. Kane and his client went for drinks. Did anyone remember seeing them?”

“I believe the bartender said they were very busy that night and couldn’t identify if Mr. Kane was there or not. Since Mr. Kane told me he paid cash for the drinks, there was no way I could prove he wasn’t at the bar.”

When we were leaving the coffee shop I asked Detective Cooper to contact me if he thought of anything that would be helpful to the investigation.

It was after 6:00 by the time I finished talking with Detective Cooper.

I took the train back to my apartment and stopped at the takeout Italian place near me and picked up a veal parmigiana sandwich for dinner.

When I got home I changed into my sweats and made a salad. I poured myself a glass of Merlot and sat down to eat. While I was eating I made a list of people I intended to speak with regarding Rebecca Kane's murder. I was really interested in speaking with Eric Jordan, Jason Kane's alibi for the night of the murder, as well as a long list of other people. I'm hoping most of them are still in the area. Twenty years is a long time.

As I was contemplating who to speak with first, my phone rang.

"Hey Jack. Guess who I met with today?"

"Can I get a hint?"

I can envision the smile on his face.

"Okay. It is someone regarding the case I'm working on."

"Well that really narrows it down."

"You give?"

"Absolutely."

"The detective that was investigating the death of my client's mother. He retired about five years ago and works security now."

"A lot of retired police people wind up getting security jobs. Brings in money on top of their pension."

"It must be nice to get a pension."

"So what did this detective have to say?"

"He suspected the husband but couldn't prove it. He had an airtight alibi."

"What was his alibi?"

"A client he was having dinner and drinks with."

"Maybe this client had a reason to lie."

"Apparently this person stuck to his story."

"Did the detective suspect anyone else?"

"Not that he mentioned, and no other suspect was mentioned in the police report. I made a list of people to contact. I think I'll start with the husband."

"I'm wondering if you might be better off waiting and talking to him after you've gathered more information. Maybe talk to other people that were questioned at the time."

"That's a good idea."

"Would you like to come up this weekend, or would you rather me come down?" Jack asked.

"I'll come up. Us city gals sometimes like the tranquility of the country life."

Jack laughed.

“I think you like the fact that I have a barbecue and a patio.”

“Though that is very true, I also like the owner of the patio and barbecue.”

“Good to know. I’ll see you Friday. Sleep tight.”

“Don’t let the bed bugs bite.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I wrote my first mystery novel, *Looking for Laura*, I could not have imagined I would write three more books in the Tracey Marks Mystery series.

Though the main character, PI Tracey Marks is fictional, there are many facets of her life that are similar to mine. Foremost, we are both private investigators. I attribute my love for writing the series to the main characters I have created.

Because this book was written during Covid, it helped me through a terrible time. It gave me purpose and filled my days. During this period my friend Ann Spadafora and I spent hours together walking, having coffee and sitting outside having lunch or dinner in the cold weather with the heat lamps going. She was a captive audience and listened to me while I went on and on about my book. I am grateful for our time together.

Thank you to all my friends for their love and encouragement.

Many thanks to my publisher, Lisa Orban, and my editor, Jennie Rosenblum. Without all their assistance I would be lost.

My gratitude to Susan Greene who has never failed me when I needed her. All of her contributions and insights have helped me to write the Tracey Marks series.

And always a huge thank you to my biggest fan, my daughter Carrie.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ellen Shapiro is a private investigator and the author of four novels of the Tracey Marks Mystery series. Acting on her passion for writing, Ellen enrolled in the Sarah Lawrence Writing Institute where she took courses in creative writing. Her professional experience led her to create the storylines and develop the characters for her novels. In addition to her novels, Ellen has written articles related to her field for both local and nationwide newspapers. She is a member of Mystery Writers of America. When she is not writing or working, you can find Ellen on the golf course yelling at her ball. Ellen resides in Scarsdale, New York.