



"Bob's Interview"



By Crime Writers of Canada Associate Bob Harris
Published by Crime Writers of Canada in "Author Interviews with Bob Harris"
www.crimewriterscanada.com

Meet the Second-Act Sleuths

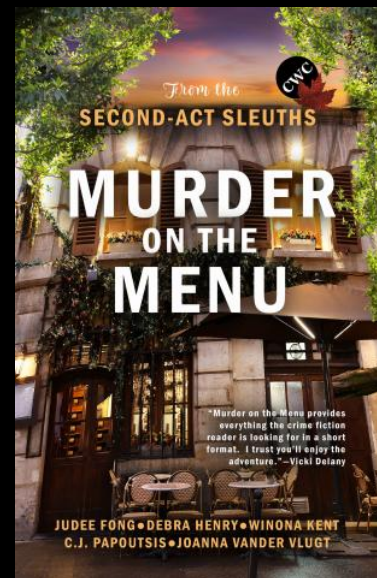


Founder - Joanna Vander Vlugt

Joanna introduces the BC author collective, the Second-Act Sleuths, and their first mystery publication, ***Murder on the Menu***—a humorous anthology of short stories with a Foreword by **Vicki Delany**, one of Canada's most prolific and varied crime writers.

Bob Harris resides in Vancouver's West End. He is a writer, book promoter, publicist, and event producer.

His background is in the music industry, professional sports entertainment technology (televised baseball pitch tracking analyzer), and corporate governance of private and public companies.



"I'm grateful for the work you do, Bob. We live in a time when creativity is under attack for the sake of convenience and easy money. Instead of relaxing on a beach, sipping a techno-coloured drink, you're promoting authors and keeping our industry alive. Thank you." — Joanna Vander Vlugt

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Murder on the Menu

The Writers:

**Judee Fong, Debra Henry, Winona Kent
CJ Papoutsis, Joanna Vander Vlugt**

The Content:

Murder on the Menu begins with **Winona Kent's** short story, *Between Stations* which whisks the reader back to 1973 and seventeen-year old Lucy, who moves to London in need of real-life experiences. Lucy, a budding writer, gets more than she imagined when she boards a slam-door train.

The anthology finishes with **Joanna Vander Vlugt's** previously published story *The Lady in Pink*, from the Sisters in Crime Capital Crimes chapter, which touches upon early onset Alzheimer's, a cold case file involving a senator's son, and three teenage girls, who may, or may not have committed murder.

Between these two stories are six more pieces of short fiction.

- From **Judee Fong**, *Death With Chocolate*, featuring Detective Newton Figby's search for a killer who leaves decadent dark chocolate clues beside his victims' bodies.
- From **Debra Henry**, *Winging It*, in which Polish immigrant Zosia seeks justice when criminals conduct their activities from outside her food truck.
- From **CJ Papoutsis**, *Murder at the Acropolis*, featuring Nick "The Bookie," owner of a Greek café in a sleazy part of downtown Victoria; and *Mother Always Kept a Gun*, in which Maxi Mandeville inherits her deceased mother's home—and a skeleton in the wine cellar.
- From **Winona Kent**, *Angostura Bitters*, where Taylor Feldspar and three of her cozy mystery writer friends are invited to stay with celebrated author Bertie Caroway. And then Bertie ends up dead.
- From **Joanna Vander Vlugt**, *Mr. Buffed and Buttered*, where Gabrielle's hopes of keeping her mother's memory alive are dashed when her father's new trophy wife has other plans.

Vicki Delany describes the anthology in her foreword as, "*Well-drawn characters, interesting and varied crimes and motives, a range of time settings, moods, styles, and locations, Murder on the Menu provides everything the crime fiction reader is looking for in a short format.*"

Published by Joanna Vander Vlugt and her publishing proprietorship, Ozzy Imprint.

Available in e-book and paperback formats on:

Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Google Play, Apple Books and Kobo

Released: October 6, 2026⁰²⁶

The Second-Act Sleuths



Founder and Publisher

Joanna Vander Vlugt

Joanna Vander Vlugt is an author and illustrator. As a teenager, she drew charcoal portraits and wrote mysteries. Now, she uses Copic markers to illustrate motorcycles and graphic novels. Joanna's short mysteries have been published in a variety of mystery anthologies, and her motorcycle illustrations have been purchased worldwide.

Joanna was born and raised on Vancouver Island. She currently lives in Chemainus. She has her Creative Writing certificate from Simon Fraser University, and she is working towards her editing certificate. She is the BC/Yukon rep of the Crime Writers of Canada.

Mr. Buffed and Buttered

- Gabrielle Maisonville's memories of her deceased mother are tied to the espresso cups and Italian espresso machines found in her mountainside café. Gabrielle's hopes of keeping her mother's memory alive are dashed, when her father's new trophy wife decides to turn the café into a tanning salon. Young Peter Murray, a man with a dodgy past, shows up at the café looking for a chance to turn his life around. His loyalty is challenged when the new wife gives him an ultimatum: get rid of Gabrielle, or she'll expose him to a vengeful criminal gang. Who will Peter save? Himself, or Gabrielle?

The Lady in Pink

- Will the elderly lady in pink share with Sorcha Lewis, an ambitious podcaster, a long-withheld secret from June 1988 when three young women, with Joan Jett in their hearts, did the unspeakable? What really did happen to the politician's son? Are the women guilty of murder, or did they have an accomplice?
- Inspired by a road trip Joanna and her husband took to California, when at 2:00 a.m. they really did assist a broken-down driver pulling a trailer, only to discover something *in* that trailer....

What inspired the Second-Act Sleuths project?

I have written two novels since *Spy Girls* in 2024. They've been structurally edited, but they still need a lot of work done to them. I knew it would be a few years before I had anything published. So, in December 2025, instead of

making a New Year's resolution that I wouldn't keep, I decided that in January 2026 I would create an anthology.

I had a short story published in the U.S., and I had the rights back. I thought let's bring that story home. I reached out to the author who's believed in me since day one—Winona Kent. When she said she'd love to be a part of my project, I knew the anthology would happen.

I also wanted to pay-it-forward and include a story from a writer who hadn't been published before, and I remembered hearing Judee Fong read her short story involving a chocolate-loving detective. What I didn't anticipate was that this anthology took on a life of its own.

Winona, Debra, Carolanne, Judee, and I became acquainted with each other. We encouraged each other and shared personal stories. It's hard to define the experience of working on the anthology. I made mistakes and could have done things better, but the experience of being a Second-Act Sleuth was special.

How long did it take to complete the anthology from concept to publication?

It took 10 months to publish the anthology. I wanted to keep it small—it's novella sized. This was my first attempt at this sort of project, and I knew in the fall, I'd be continuing my education towards obtaining my editing certificate. Better not to bite off more than I could chew.

I approached authors about stories. We twice pushed the publication date back, because the anthology wasn't ready. I've already told the Second-Act Sleuths that I've come up with a theme for a second one, but that's top secret.

Read Joanna's CWC October 2025 interview with Bob Harris:

https://crimewriterscanada.com/library/interviews/Joanna_Vander_Vlugt_interview-final.pdf

Listen to her March 20, 2025 interview with CWC's Marketing and Communications Manager Erik D'Souza:

<https://crimewriterscanada.com/index.php/en/page/podcasts/permalink/joanna-vander-vlugt-spy-girls>



Judee Fong

Judee Fong took a writing class on telling a good story and fell into a world of crime, murder and food. *Death With Chocolate* is her first published crime cozy.

She says, "I was born, raised and educated in Victoria, BC—I'm supposedly a rarity as most people move away and maybe return. I traveled but always call Victoria my home."

www.chocofigbee.com

Death With Chocolate

- Why would a killer poison his victim, steal his ugly ornament and leave a piece of decadent dark chocolate beside the body? Soon-to-be-retired Detective Newton Figby is hot on the trail. Because his last case is personal. This victim is family.

What influenced you to write a crime fiction story?

I started reading Agatha Christie and Ellery Queen at a very young age and it was when I was a working adult that I took a writing class from Nicola Furlong. Her assignment was to start a murder mystery and read it to the class the next week.

Well, I'm not great at doing homework immediately so the night before, I was munching my way through a package of fig newtons when I had my ah-ha moment. I could picture a chocoholic cop named Newton Figby solving terrible crimes. It took me a while as I had done a chat with Erik D'Souza a few years ago with Winona and Debra Purdy Kong and talked about Newton.

I also did a reading at Magnus Skallagrimsson's "Noir at the Bar" with Joanna. It wasn't until Joanna invited me to join her Second-Act Sleuths that the story finally reached a conclusion.

Where was Nicola Furlong's writing course held and long was it?

Nicola's writing course was held at Camosun about 20+ years ago? I think it was called, "How to Write Mysteries" because she was a mystery writer herself back then. The classes were 8 weeks. I'm embarrassed that it took me this long to finish Newton Figby, who began as a book but ended as a

short story. Even Nicola changed careers from writing to artist to her current Radio Sidney and her talk-show, "About the Peninsula."

Taking Nicola's class was an eye-opener and got me started in writing more crime fiction—even though, at the time I was a freelance reporter for Senior Living magazine, meeting fantastic and energetic seniors doing what they loved.

What was the most difficult *Death With Chocolate* scene to write?

Reaching the conclusion. I was convinced by Joanna and Winona that a fourth body wasn't necessary and I didn't need to shoot a corpse. When those parts were eliminated, the rest came much easier.

What are you currently reading?

I'm currently re-reading Ian Hamilton's final book that ended his series with forensic accountant Ava Lee, *The Fury of Beijing*. I especially like Ian's understanding of an Oriental mind.

What is your favourite food and beverage?

Coffee and dark chocolate desserts or just dark chocolates!

List a memorable book from your childhood.

My Mom got us library cards when I was 8 and my brother was 10, but books for boys and girls were separated.

Girl books were too tame and mild, except for the Anne of Green Gables series—so I always read my brother's books that were far more exciting.

There was one author he and I both liked, Howard Pease and his books were thrilling enough to satisfy two blood-thirsty kids.

Then my Mom passed over her Ellery Queen and Agatha Christie books for me to read and I was hooked.



Debra Henry

Debra Henry is an award-winning author of literary fiction. Her short mystery stories, like *Winging It*, take on themes of social justice. She is a member of Sisters in Crime, Crime Writers of Canada and the Victoria Writers' Society.

When not writing, Debra competes in triathlons and is national age-group champion in the sport. A retired anthropologist, Debra lives in beautiful Sidney by the Sea on Canada's west coast with her husband and labradoodle, Quinn.

www.debrahenry.com

Winging It

- Zosia, a Polish immigrant living in Sacramento, drops out of college when her older brother is shot and killed during a convenience store robbery. She buys a food truck and sells chicken wings to support herself but making ends meet is a challenge. Angry when a customer appears to be conducting criminal activity at one of the tables she sets out, Zosia decides to investigate. But taking on foul play proves a dangerous game. Can she bring the culprit to justice or will she become a victim like her brother?

Briefly describe the setting, lifestyle, ethnic and personality profile of your main character.

Zosia dreams of owning her own restaurant someday. In the meantime, she spends her busy days cooped up in her food truck in Sacramento frying up spicy chicken wings for her hungry customers. As a Polish immigrant, living with her hard-working aunt and uncle, she doesn't shy away from work. She's quick to anger, though, when someone tries to take advantage of her, like the beanie-wearing punk in *Winging It*.

Please share a few "light bulb" moments and accomplishments that you have experienced as a writer.

I had a light bulb moment when I switched from trying to publish stories for children to focusing on writing what I read...crime fiction. I have three unpublished novels waiting for a home so I then decided to try my hand at short mysteries.

I'm proud of the short stories I've published that often take on a theme of social or environmental justice. I also appreciate the recognition I've gained in winning several awards and contests for my short literary fiction.

What is your favourite food and beverage?

I find all fruit delicious, especially sun-warmed blackberries just picked from the vine and apricots freshly plucked from a tree. To be honest, though, my secret obsession is with ice-cream. I go through buckets.

As for my favourite drink, I enjoy a glass of smooth white wine in the evening while plotting a murder.

Describe an unexpected and thrilling moment you experienced as an anthropologist.

As an anthropologist I worked in several museums. While in Calgary, I had the privilege of reorganizing the Glenbow Museum's ethnology department storage area.

Every day there was the thrill of opening a new cupboard that housed artifacts from around the world. The beauty and skill of Plains bead and quillwork always took my breath away, as did the intricate traditional basketry of First Nations peoples around the globe.



C.J. Papoutsis

Carolanne "C.J." and her husband live in a crooked old building on a crooked old street near the ocean in Victoria, B.C. where squirrels skitter up and down trees, sea lions bark, and a herd of town deer munch their way through the garden.

Writing has always been C.J.'s obsession in spite of being a captive of the Civil Service for thirty-five years and a couple of cancer skirmishes. Her essays, short stories, mysteries and poems have been published in magazines, local newspapers and anthologies. She is a member of Sisters in Crime and Crime Writers of Canada.

Murder at the Acropolis

- Nick, "The Bookie," owns The Acropolis Café in the sleazy part of downtown Victoria. Vasilios Sideris knows too much about his past and demands that Nick cover his gambling debts. He refuses. Two days later, Sideris is found dead in the alley behind the café. Nick is arrested for murder.

Mother Always Kept a Gun

- When Maxi Mandeville inherits her deceased mother's home, she also inherits a skeleton buried in the wine cellar, a peeping Tom, and more information than she ever wanted to know about her family. The police get involved and she meets gorgeous Detective Rossi. Maxi goes to the house to retrieve her mother's fur coat and the gun she always kept in her lingerie drawer before the police find it. The coat and gun are gone and another surprise awaits.

When did you realize writing was your calling?

I realized writing was my calling when I was four and my mother taught me to read by underlining letters of the alphabet in her "Penny Dreadfuls."

What time of day or night is your creativity at maximum flow?

My ideal writing time is early morning, like 5:00 a.m.

Briefly explain your writing method and style. Are you a plotter or a pantser?

I'm definitely not a plotter. I'd like to be, but I'm scattered and disorganized by nature. Stories pop into my head, I scribble or type them and revise until they're fit for human consumption. Sometimes I make notes on the back of shopping lists or if I'm at home and I can find it, a gorgeous leather journal my son gave me.

What is your favourite food and beverage?

My favourite food is bubbling-hot Moussaka topped with a super-thick layer of Bechamel sauce. My most consistently (I'm not very consistent) favourite drink is hot coffee with almond milk.

What is your favorite Victoria landmark?

My favourite Victoria landmark is Craigdarroch Castle. thecastle.ca



Winona Kent
Co-Editor

Winona Kent was born in London, England, and immigrated to Canada at age three, growing up in Regina, Saskatchewan. She holds an MFA in Creative Writing from UBC and a screenwriting diploma from Vancouver Film School.

Her writing career began in 1989 with the spy novel *Skywatcher*, a finalist in the Seal Books First Novel Awards. She has since published numerous short stories and eleven novels, including three time-travel romances and the Jason Davey Mystery series. A Past Chair of Crime Writers of Canada, Winona lives in New Westminster, BC with her husband and a concerning number of disobedient houseplants.

www.winonakent.com

Between Stations

- London, 1973. Seventeen-year-old Lucy is a naive young writer desperately in need of real-life experiences. One late night, aboard a slam-door suburban train, she witnesses something terrible. Fifty years later, she's back in London on a publicity tour—and a cold case unlocks a memory she didn't know she'd buried.
- *Between Stations* was inspired by Winona's own summer in England when, as a naïve teenager from Saskatchewan, and with a killer loose in London, she decided it would be a good idea to ride alone on a late-night train.

Angostura Bitters

- When Taylor Feldspar and three of her cozy mystery writer friends are invited to stay with celebrated author Bertie Caroway, it seems like the perfect literary getaway. Then Bertie ends up dead...leaving Taylor to use her plotting skills—and her better judgment—to figure out what—or who—dunnit.

As the co-editor of *Murder on the Menu*, please describe your editing process.

I should be a much better editor than I actually am. I was taught "on the job" by several of my peers when I helped edit stories in anthologies put out by Sisters in Crime-Canada West.

My job as editor is to troubleshoot, to identify places where a reader might notice a hole in the plotting, troublesome dialogue, a weakness in the storytelling, contrivances, inconsistencies... But I always struggle because I

want to tell an author, I think there's a better way to do this, and here's how I'd write it! But that's NOT the way to be professional editor.

My job is to make suggestions so that the author can agree or disagree (but hopefully agree!) and then work with them to incorporate changes using their own words and their own style. And I also hope that along the way, they can learn a few new skills.

As a short story writer, are you a plotter or a pantsier? How many drafts does it usually take to ready a manuscript for publication?

I'm definitely a plotter. I think I always have been, but I didn't embrace it fully until I went to film school and learned how to write screenplays.

Scripts tend to be developed following a strict process, starting with a beat sheet and an outline, progressing to a treatment and then finally emerging as a first draft.

I discovered that process lent itself perfectly to short stories and novels, and it's particularly useful if you have a busy life with diversions and interruptions. You never lose track of where you are. And the main rule, of course, is that it's not written in stone.

I often start out with a perfectly good outline that changes considerably as I work through my various drafts. And the ending often changes, too.

What is your favourite food and beverage?

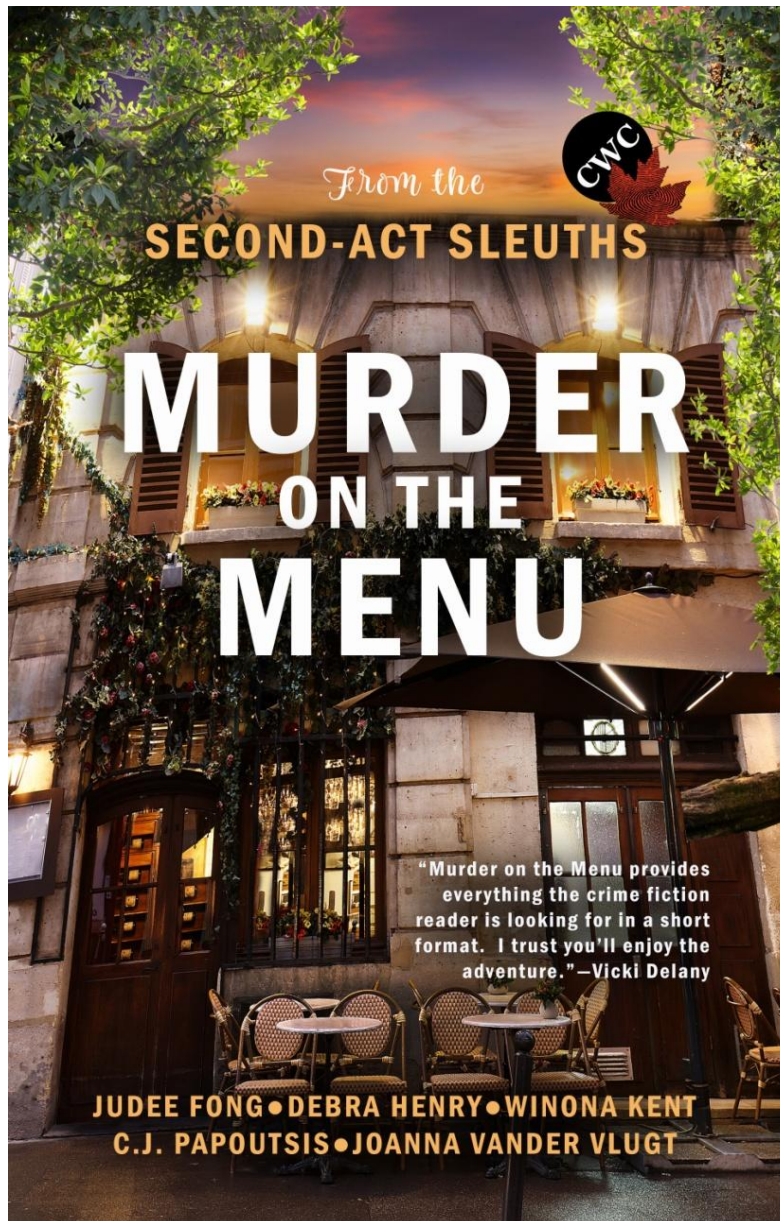
Sushi and SodaStream sparkling water.

Read Winona's CWC October 2024 interview with Bob Harris:

https://crimewriterscanada.com/library/interviews/Winona_Kent_CWC_Oct_2024_interview-wk.pdf

Listen to her September 25, 2024 interview with CWC's Marketing and Communications Manager Erik D'Souza:

<https://crimewriterscanada.com/index.php/en/page/podcasts/permalink/winona-kent-author-of-the-jason-davey-mystery-series-the-2024-2025-chair-of-the-cwc>



Foreword by Vicki Delany

Vicki Delany is one of Canada's most prolific and varied crime writers and a national bestseller in the U.S. She has written more than sixty books: clever cozies to Gothic thrillers to gritty police procedurals, to historical fiction and novellas for adult literacy. She is a past chair of the Crime Writers of Canada and the recipient of the 2019 Derrick Murdoch Award for contributions to Canadian crime writing.

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Writing professionally as Robert H. Harris and working as a consultant to writers, Bob accepts email inquiries at: harrisbobh@hotmail.com (Profile and publicity photos available on request.)