

### First Two Pages: A Season for Killing Blondes

Bestselling author Louise Penny does not mince words. In a recent article, she offered the following advice: “If you’re writing your first work of crime fiction, place the body near the beginning of your book—preferably on the first page, perhaps the first sentence. In later books this won’t be as necessary, but agents and editors like it established early, so readers know what they’re getting.”

Excellent advice, but not always possible, as I discovered during the writing of my first novel, *A Season for Killing Blondes*. After much deliberation and experimentation, I was able to introduce the dead body on Page 3, close enough to the beginning of the book.

As for the first two pages, I decided to highlight the Italian flavor of the cozy mystery.

I set the date as Thursday, October 20, 2011 and started with the following paragraph:

*Three thousand euros worth of pastries. Can you believe it?*

I imagined many North Americans doing the quick math and gasping at the thought of spending well over \$3000 on pastries. And then asking themselves who could afford to throw away that kind of money in 2011 or even later.

In the next paragraph, the protagonist shares her own mixed feelings and reasons for this extravagance:

*When I agreed to import the pastries, I had no idea I would be subsidizing the failing Italian economy and helping Silvio Berlusconi stay in power for a few weeks longer. Left to my own devices, I would have gone down the street to Regency Bakery, picked up some pastries and just walked them over. But my mother and Aunt Amelia were adamant. The open house for my new career counseling office needed a proper launch, one that could only be achieved with pastries from a Sicilian bakery.*

In the third paragraph, the reader learns that both older women are equally horrified and worried about the possible reaction of the Italian community.

*To be fair, both of them were horrified when they saw that final four-figure amount on the invoice and swore me to secrecy. While conspicuous consumption is valued in the Italian community, being taken for a ride is not, and we would never hear the end of it from Uncle Paolo who is still complaining about the ten cents he has to pay for a shopping bag at No Frills.*

The focus then shifts to the present and a description of the pastries:

*I watched my mother rearrange the amaretto cookies, stuffed figs, biscotti, and other delicacies that had arrived yesterday. She and Aunt Amelia had brought in their best silver trays and carts and spent hours—according to Uncle Paolo—creating a colorful Italian corner.*

At the top of the second page, a conversation takes place between mother and daughter and the first hints of tension/wrongdoing are introduced:

*“Everything is perfect. Maybe too perfect.” My mother made the sign of the cross and mumbled a Hail Mary.*

*“Relax, Ma. I’ve got everything under control. Nothing bad will happen.”*

*“Things have been going too well, Gilda. This lottery win. Your new career. This beautiful office. I’ve had one of my dreams, and you know what that means.”*

*Not today. Please not today. For once, I wanted to get thought an event without my mother’s doom and gloom predictions. Was that even possible? I wondered. Any other day, I might have made more of an effort, but I couldn’t risk any energy drains today. I plastered a smile on my face and hugged her. “Maybe we’re in for a lucky streak. Don’t you think we deserve it?”*

Before Ma can respond, Cousin Sofia enters the room. To the readers who have questioned the introduction of five characters so early in the narrative, I counter with the following argument: Italian events—showers, birthday parties, anniversaries, open houses—are family events and everyone is involved from start to finish. And each Italian family has a “fixer,” someone who knows exactly what to do and say in any crisis situation.

*“What’s up?” Cousin Sofia caught the tail end of the conversation as she entered the room.*

*“What’s all this talk about lucky streaks?”*

*“Ma had one of her dreams,” I explained.*

*Sofia glanced at her watch. “It’s eleven thirty, and we’re ready, way ahead of schedule. We could have an early lunch.” She winked at me.*

*My mother’s face brightened, and she licked her lips in anticipation of the luncheon feast that awaited her. Capicola, mortadella, prosciutto, and provolone from Giacomo’s. Fresh buns from Regency. And, of course, the pastries. I saluted Sofia who smiled and shook her head.*

The second page ends with a sign that something is definitely amiss.

*As we headed toward the small kitchen in the back area, we heard a familiar scream coming from outside. My mother shook her head. Sofia rolled her eyes. Aunt Amelia again. A hypochondriac well known for exaggerating, over-reacting and fainting whenever she was on the sidelines of an event.*

## **Blurb**

Hours before the opening of her career counseling practice, Gilda Greco discovers the dead body of golden girl Carrie Ann Godfrey, neatly arranged in the dumpster outside her office. Gilda’s

life and budding career are stalled as Detective Carlo Fantin, her former high school crush, conducts the investigation.

When three more dead blondes turn up all brutally strangled and deposited near Gilda's favorite haunts, she is pegged as a prime suspect for the murders. Frustrated by Carlo's chilly detective persona and the mean girl antics of Carrie Ann's meddling relatives, Gilda decides to launch her own investigation. She discovers a gaggle of suspects, among them a yoga instructor in need of anger management training, a lecherous photographer, and fourteen ex-boyfriends. As the puzzle pieces fall into place, shocking revelations emerge, forcing Gilda to confront the envy and deceit she has long overlooked.

### Trailer

<https://youtu.be/OURgFbybQVw>

### Bio



In 2008, Joanne took advantage of early retirement and decided to launch a second career that would tap into her creative side and utilize her well-honed organizational skills. Slowly, a writing practice emerged. Her articles and book reviews were published in newspapers, magazines, and online. When she tried her hand at fiction, she made reinvention a recurring theme in her novels and short stories. A member of Crime Writers of Canada, Sisters in Crime, and Romance Writers of America, Joanne writes paranormal romance, cozy mysteries, and inspirational literature from her home base of Guelph, Ontario.

### Where to find Joanne...

Website: <http://joaneguidoccio.com/>

Amazon: <https://is.gd/M4B2Ai>