

## First Two Pages—Too Many Women in the Room

Joanne Guidoccio

While deciding whether or not to start with a prologue, I recalled advice I had received from a workshop facilitator: “Use only if the prologue adds an interesting and integral layer to the narrative.”

Interesting and integral...Definitely a challenge and one I decided to tackle in my new release, *Too Many Women in the Room*. Having written the rest of the novel in the first-person POV, I wanted the reader to be privy to the thoughts and feelings of the victim in his final hour.

In the first two paragraphs, the reader is introduced to a married man, who is hounded by eight annoying women. While it isn't clear if his wife is one of the eight, the reader does learn that the man is a player. Several questions arise: Where did he meet these women? Are the ex-lovers scorned women seeking revenge? Why are the untouched four hounding him? Who is the wealthy woman?

*He couldn't believe he was following his wife's advice. After fourteen years of paying lip service to deep yoga breaths, mindfulness, and all the other New Age crap she espoused, he had finally found a use for it. His evening run often sorted out the stress, but tonight was different. He still couldn't shake the venom that had been directed his way.*

*To make matters worse, it had come from eight women, eight very different and very annoying women. He had bedded four, but right now he couldn't imagine having sex with any of them. As for the untouched four, well, only one interested him, and it had nothing to do with her feminine wiles, and everything to do with her healthy bank account.*

A healthy runner who has been able to effectively deal with stress, the man must now search for another solution. Thoughts of an old Percocet prescription are quickly replaced by the possibility of a romantic encounter.

*He would have to take something to get through the night, something a lot stronger than his wife's herbal teas. The remnants of an old Percocet prescription came to mind. Two capsules might do the trick. Hope of a panacea, albeit a chemical one, calmed his racing thoughts. A good night's sleep would make a world of difference. And tomorrow, he would sort it out.*

*The light patter of feet distracted him. Definitely a woman's gait. Her breath was even, neither shallow nor panting. Younger, maybe in her thirties. His pulse quickened, and a smile spread over his features. A welcome distraction. Just what he needed to erase the built-up stress. To hell with deep breathing, affirmations, and Percocet.*

While the prospect is tempting, he is reminded of his aging body. And the reader learns that he has been unfaithful during his marriage.

*He forced himself to slow down and hoped she would catch up, maybe even overtake him. Before making a move, he wanted to get a lay of the land. No point putting on the moves if she didn't measure up. Though lately, he'd been less discerning.*

*Twenty years ago—heck, even ten years ago—women in their twenties and thirties returned his winks and smiles, with no qualms about what followed. But turning fifty-five had brought those encounters to a virtual standstill, and he had tired of the chase. Was this a harbinger of what old age would look like?*

The first annoying woman appears. And the man isn't happy to see her. The reader learns that she is in his age group and, more than likely, one of his ex-lovers. She's also a murderer. Several details emerge: middle-aged woman, toned body, passive-aggressive, green/hazel eyes, possible contact wearer.

*Within seconds, a flash of black appeared at his side. He counted to ten and then gave her a sideways glance. A frown replaced the smile.*

*Definitely in shape, but she had always taken care of herself, not allowing an extra morsel of food to cross her lips and sticking to a daily exercise regimen. Her face...well her face, showed the passages of time. And tonight, without a trace of makeup, she appeared older than her years. Forty-five. No fifty. More than fifty. He struggled with the math and gave up.*

*Head-to-toe black did nothing for her. Once upon a time, he would have volunteered that information, but tonight he hesitated. He couldn't be sure how she would react, especially after the debacle at dinner. He tried to recall what she had said, but nothing came to mind. Perhaps, she had said nothing at all. It would be like her to hide behind her passive-aggressiveness. He forced a smile. "I didn't expect to see you."*

*No response, just a constant gaze and an expressionless face that was starting to worry him. He tried to look away but couldn't escape those odd-colored eyes. A muddy green with hints of amber. Had she worn contacts in her younger days?*

Note: Two more pages of Prologue follow.

### **Blurb**

When Gilda Greco invites her closest friends to a VIP dinner, she plans to share David Korba's signature dishes and launch their joint venture—Xenia, an innovative Greek restaurant near Sudbury, Ontario. Unknown to Gilda, David has also invited Michael Taylor, a lecherous photographer who has throughout the past three decades managed to annoy all the women in the room. One woman follows Michael to a deserted field for his midnight run and stabs him in the jugular.

Gilda's life is awash with complications as she wrestles with a certain detective's commitment issues and growing doubts about her risky investment in Xenia. Frustrated, Gilda launches her own investigation and uncovers decades-old secrets and resentments that have festered until they explode into untimely death. Can Gilda outwit a killer bent on killing again?

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In 2008, Joanne Guidoccio retired from a 31-year teaching career and launched a second act that tapped into her creative side. 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 cozy mysteries, paranormal romance, and inspirational literature from her home base of Guelph, Ontario.

## Where to find Joanne...

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