

***Where Crime Never Sleeps: Murder New York Style 4* (Level Best Books, September 2017) is the fourth crime fiction anthology by members of the New York/Tri-State Chapter of Sisters in Crime.**

**First Two Pages of “I Gotta Be Me” in
*Where Crime Never Sleeps: Murder New York Style 4***

Lindsay A. Curcio

This month, The First Two Pages continues to feature posts by some of the authors who contributed stories to *Where Crime Never Sleeps: Murder New York Style 4* (Level Best Books, September 2017), the fourth anthology of crime and mystery short stories by members of the New York/ Tri-State Chapter of Sisters in Crime.

The New York/Tri-State Chapter of Sisters in Crime initially discussed an anthology theme of New York City landmarks. I immediately thought of the main US post office in New York City, the James A. Farley Post Office on Eighth Avenue. It’s a big Beaux Arts style building, covering the area from 31st to 33rd Streets. I like the building for several reasons. Its staff lovingly processes letters to Santa. (Think of *Miracle on 34th Street*—Macy’s is just a block away.) It’s open 24 hours a day. (As an immigration lawyer, I have made many trips to this post office over the years, at all hours, to meet deadlines.) And it serves as a base where the homeless can claim their mail.

Later, the theme of the anthology changed from landmarks to New Yorkers and what makes them unique. But I still wanted to explore this post office or, at least, someone who might collect his mail there. That character became Stein. The area near that post office is a busy one including major transportation hubs, the Macy’s flagship store, my favorite diners, and Madison Square Garden. Everyone comes to this crossroads, whether tourist, commuter, or native New Yorker. That is why I located the studio where Johnny Monroe of “I Gotta Be Me” tapes his popular national radio show in the nearby Hotel Pennsylvania.

When we first meet Johnny, he is wrapping up an episode of his talk show dealing with a “hot topic,” illegal immigration.

“And what I’m sayin’ is,” Johnny Monroe spits out, “if they don’t want to obey the law, then they most go! That’s it for today. Be careful my friends, there are a lot of crazies out there.”

This year, there has been a tremendous debate about real news and fake news. I am obsessed with the idea of talk radio and the people who host these programs. I often wonder if the show hosts really believe all the themes and statements they put forth, or if they do it for the ratings. The station owner tells Johnny that his ratings are high.

“Latest numbers show you leading again in the Arbitron ratings.”

“What can I say, Red? I just seem to know what America is thinking.”

While Johnny is gruff on air, we see some warmth in the conversation between him and his long-time producer, Masha, a Russian immigrant, who, with her husband and son, are a surrogate family to Johnny.

Masha gives Johnny a note that Stein dropped off during his show. Johnny dismisses the note and leaves for a festive evening event while taking time to greet his fans in the lobby. He is in high demand as a radio personality, author, and motivational speaker. Manhattan is his playground: tables at the best restaurants, the best seats for the games at The Garden, and the most beautiful women. Johnny Monroe’s brand is built on decades of hard work as well as an impressive military record.

The note is key to the story because Johnny has a secret. A life-changing secret. As someone who moved to New York City more than 20 years ago and who calls it home, I do believe that while New York is the place we go to reinvent ourselves, it’s a heck of a difficult journey even to begin to live here. (I’m just thinking about how hard it is to find an apartment, much less begin a career.) Imagine, now, what’s at stake for a man who might lose everything if his reinvention is known.



Lindsay A. Curcio is a writer and an immigration lawyer living in Brooklyn and Niagara Falls, New York (where she can see Canada from her window). She loves the intersection of immigration law and pop culture. Her short story, “We All Have Baggage,” was included in the previous Murder New York Style anthology, *Family Matters*.