

***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 “Love, Secrets, and Lies” in
*Where Crime Never Sleeps: Murder New York Style 4***

Catherine Maiorisi

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.

Let me start by saying that I’m a “pantser,” i.e., a writer who doesn’t do a lot of planning. So presented with the prompt to write a crime story that involves an iconic event or public place in New York City, my thoughts immediately went to a protagonist. And, no surprise, I’m sure, I thought of NYPD Detective Chiara Corelli, the main character of my mystery, *A Matter of Blood*, which will be published in January 2018.

So when I started writing “Love, Secrets and Lies,” my goal was to introduce Corelli and Parker, her sidekick, but five or six hundred words in, I realized I was getting bogged down in their backstory. With a limited word count, backstory wasn’t necessary or possible. I tried rewriting, but when I couldn’t seem to get it right, I gave up and put the story aside. A few weeks later, I tried again with a new protagonist, NYPD Detective Cappy Jones, who had appeared in a story I’d written for an earlier Sisters in Crime anthology. This second attempt didn’t go much better. So once again I put the project aside.

As the clock ticked closer to the due date, it was obvious that if I didn’t try again soon, I wouldn’t have a story to submit to *Where Crime Never Sleeps: Murder New York Style 4*. Like Goldilocks, my third try was just right. And, because NYPD Detective Jo Bradley came alive just for “Love, Secrets, and Lies,” she didn’t have a lot of baggage or backstory.

Jo is the star of my story, and so my first goal was to introduce her and the setting, the station house. I hadn’t given much thought to a partner, but as I wrote the first sentence, her sidekick Detective Ray Griffin appeared.

Responding to simultaneous pings, audible even over the wheezing air conditioner and the shouting match in the far corner, Detectives Jo Bradley and Ray Griffin reached for their phones.

My next goal was to show the reader something about Jo and the nature of her relationship with Griff.

Grinning, Bradley looked up from her screen, extended her hand, and wiggled her fingers. Griffin shook his head and slapped a five-dollar bill into her palm.

“Jeez, Bradley, are you psychic, or do you have an in with God?”

For the last three months, Jo had won every one of their wagers. Just minutes ago she’d bet they’d get called out for a possible homicide today.

So now the reader has met Jo and Griff and seen their ease with each other through the betting. The reader has also learned that the detectives have been called out for a “possible homicide.” Next I bring in Penny Park, the public place required by the story prompt and the scene of the murder.

“No visions or pipeline to heaven, Griff, just woman’s intuition.”

“Yeah, yeah. Have you bought a lottery ticket lately?” He looked at the message on his phone again. “And does your intuition tell you where the hell Penny Park is?”

She touched her forehead as if conjuring.

“I see water. I see the Statue of Liberty. Oh, there, behind Stuyvesant High School. It’s part of Rockefeller Park on the Hudson River.”

The next few sentences show us that though they spend lots of time together and have an easy relationship, Griff has no idea about Jo’s life outside of work. Nor does he or anyone else know she has a secret. And that secret ties her to the theme of “Love, Secrets, and Lies.”

“How do you know this, Jo Jo? I thought you only left the Upper West Side to come to work.”

She turned away, hoping he wouldn’t notice her flush. She hadn’t come out to anyone on the job, so he had no idea she was seeing a woman who lived in Battery Park City. Or that she and Max often walked the path along the Hudson River and sometimes stopped at Penny Park to watch the children playing. But she wasn’t ready to tell him yet.

In the following, I continue to flesh out Jo’s profile, highlighting her interest in art and her desire to be in control.

“Have you ever noticed the whimsical bronze figures frolicking on the ceiling and floor of the subway station at 14th Street and Eighth Avenue?”

He looked puzzled. “Can’t say I have.”

“I love them, so when I read that the artist had created an installation at Rockefeller Park, I went down to see it.”

Though she hadn't finished her first coffee of the day, Bradley stood and tossed her cup in the wastebasket.

“Let's go.”

Outside in the sunlight, they slipped on sunglasses and headed for their vehicle. Jo, the more confident driver, preferred to be in control, so, as usual, she slid behind the wheel.

“I didn't know you were into art,” Griff said, fastening his seat belt as Jo started the car.

Although the prompt for stories in *Where Crime Never Sleeps* was to write about an iconic public place or event in New York City, “Love, Secrets, and Lies” actually includes both. In the following section Jo describes Penny Park for Griff.

“Well, sweetheart, I do have my secrets.”

Her eyes on the road, she drove out to West Street, which ran parallel to the Hudson River and would bring them to Penny Park.

“Ooh, so mysterious.” He poked her with his elbow. “So, wiseass, is it Penny Park or Rockefeller Park?”

“Rockefeller. But neighborhood kids call it Penny Park because of the piles of large bronze pennies strewn around the cartoonish bronze sculptures of people and animals.”

In the following, I bring in Gay Pride week, the large crowds, and the Gay Pride March, an iconic event. And once again, I bring in Jo's secret, her lesbian relationship with Max.

She slowed down for a group of runners and dog walkers crossing West Street, then picked up speed, marveling at the relative quiet of the city this Monday morning. This past week, the streets in Greenwich Village had overflowed with people in town to celebrate Gay Pride Week. And yesterday, hundreds of thousands of people, gay and straight, had attended the Gay Pride March. She and Max had watched the parade from the balcony of a friend's second floor apartment on Fifth Avenue.



Catherine Maiorisi often writes under a portrait of Edgar Allan Poe in Edgar's Café, a neighborhood haunt. “Love, Secrets, and Lies” is her third short story included in a Murder New York Style anthology. *A Matter of Blood*, Catherine's first full-length mystery, will be published by Bella Books in January 2018.

