

Finding the Truth in a Fictional World

We read to learn, to enjoy, to escape and to reflect. Some may think that genre fiction—like mystery, sci-fi or romance— is simply for enjoyment. I disagree. In my private investigator series, *The PI Angelina Bonaparte Crime Thrillers*, I aim to capture all those aspects. Allow me to engage in an interview with myself and to interview readers regarding some themes in my stories.

What's the first thing you want readers to appreciate about your books?

I hope they experience the pleasure of submerging into a world that is not their own, but which seems real to them. That includes savoring the characters and their development in the stories, and being able to discover aspects of themselves or people they know within the diverse population of Angie's world. I also hope they enjoy Milwaukee, sometimes called "the other city on a Great Lake." To that end, many of the city's landmarks and neighborhoods are highlighted in the series.

Do you consider mysteries to be fluff reading?

Some are, and that's okay. But because injustice (murder or the threat of murder) underlies all mysteries, I find plenty of room for themes like the redress of injustice, fanaticism in attacking wrongs, and social attitudes toward women and especially women "of a certain age." I include characters who are ethnic and members of the LGBTQ community, and I reflect in the stories about how their experiences impact them and the other characters.

Some questions that reading groups may enjoy discussing:

1. Some readers have mentioned an "ick" factor in my writing about a 50-something grandmother's choice of undergarments and lingerie. Can women be unapologetically sexy at that age? Are they judged according to a different standard from mature sexy men?
2. Angie finds it easy to disguise herself and disappear in a crowd, stating that younger people look through her, older men look past her and older women look at her to assess her as competition. Is that your experience as a mature woman? Have you become invisible?

3. In the first book, *Truth Kills*, Angie unexpectedly becomes involved on the fringes of the gay community in Milwaukee when a gay man assists in her investigation. Bobbie Russell goes on to become a friend and partner through all the books. How do you react to this inclusion in a mystery?
4. Angie has rejected her upbringing in the Catholic church, but, when she's in a dangerous or upsetting situation, she pauses to pray to a God she isn't sure about. Do you think that reflects a common sense of spirituality in society today?
5. Homicide Detective Wukowski thinks that PI work is unsuitable for a woman (nod to P.D. James) and that women should be protected from dangerous situations. Angie realizes her own limits but will not be defined by his concept of "woman's work." Have you ever encountered a time when someone thought you were getting in over your head simply because you were a woman? How did you handle that?

I'd love to hear from you and would be happy to join your book group discussion via a video link. Shoot me a request at:

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Happy reading, and may all your mysteries be good ones.

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