



A Corpse in the Soup

Manicotti's face turned beet red. "He's where? He's what? But that can't be. He's a Gourmet Gladiator. He's due on stage at the Kitchen Coliseum in ten minutes. We can't hold up the show for him."

"You don't understand Mr. Manicotti," he squeaked. "The man is dead as a mackerel. D-E-A-D. He can't come to the Kitchen Coliseum, he can't cook on your show, and he's not goin' anywhere except the morgue."

Large patches of sweat appeared on the producer's shirt. His eyes bulged and his mouth opened and closed like a carp out of water. "You're sure? You touched him? He's dead?"

"Yes, Sir. I'm still on his set. I'm about to call the police, the medics, the SWAT team, the FBI, I don't know what all. I've never seen a corpse in a soup bowl, ya know."

Manicotti's massive jaw went slack. "Wait, Hal," he shouted into the phone. Then, looking around, he cupped his hand over the receiver and lowered his voice. "I've got an idea. How would you like to make a cool ten grand? Under the table, right now?"

"What are you talking about, Boss? I gotta get off the phone and call the cops. What do you want me to do?"

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Bradner**

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Reviews

St. James and Bradner give us a well crafted and cleverly written story that should be read in front of a warm fire. It is engaging and keeps the gentle reader going page after page with a good mix of humor and intrigue. I give it an 8 of 10 on the Weaver Meter.

~Sid Weaver, Mainly Mysteries,
www.mainlymysteries.com

This fun mystery romp will keep the reader guessing while enjoying the antics of Goldie and Godiva, along with their quirky family. The characters are amusing and endearing, and even the dog Waldo has his humorous moments. The plot moves along crisply, offering plenty of red herrings, and is twisty enough to provide a good whodunit. *A Corpse in the Soup*, first of the Silver Sisters Mystery series written by sisters St. James and Bradner, is a refreshing addition to the mystery world.

~Christy Tillery French for Midwest Book Review

A Five Angel Review. This delicious recipe of entertainment is scrumptious. I look forward to more remarkable stories from these two authors! The character names are to die for! Stand up and cheer, this reader loved, loved, loved this book!

~Linda L.
Fallen Angel Reviews, www.fallenangelreviews.com

Fast-paced and laugh-out-loud funny, this was a quick and satisfying read. Morgan St. James and Phyllice Bradner are sisters in real life, so that might explain why their cooperation worked out so well in a book. I certainly hope this was not the last book they've written together. Silver Sisters rule! I would highly recommend "A Corpse in the Soup" to any mystery lover, particularly those who enjoy the Cooking Channel and love a good, funny read.

~ Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson, www.readerviews.com

What fun! An over-the-top romp through the culinary world in TV Land. Murder and merlot pair well in this fast-paced mystery with the irrepressible Sisters Silver.

~Carolyn Hayes Uber, Publisher

This book is funny. An easy read and kept my attention. We, the readers, are gently led to the culprit.

~L. Rigod "avid mystery reader"

This is a book to discover and enjoy! The Silver sisters made me laugh. Serious murder... very amusing... characters from Alaska to LA. Set around the theme of a cooking contest with renowned Chefs, it gets ugly. You'll meet characters by the name of Sterling Silver, Godiva, Goldie Silver, Candy, Chili Pepper, Red Pepper, Caesar Romano, Sam Ziti, Mr. Manicotti, Biff Wellington, get it? A fast moving, light, exceptionally humorous, who-done-it. A very good read.

~David J. Gerson, Las Vegas Now Magazine

Godiva has been smitten by the chef's good looks, and when he is accused of stabbing to death his program's nasty, 'bad boy' competition, Biff Wellington with his very own kitchen knife, Godiva and Goldie vow to prove Caesar innocent. Being identical twins has its own advantages when the entire family and a fistful of friends become involved in sleuthing out the facts they suspect the police may have overlooked.

~JoEllen Conger, Conger Books Reviews

I'm pleased to highly recommend this tale to any mystery buff who enjoys a tongue-in-cheek style of storytelling with lots of fun characters who take you by the hand and lead you a merry chase after a killer. Guaranteed to provide many smiles and even provoke some laughter as you read. Enjoy. I sure did.

~Anne K. Edwards, Reviewer

Who can resist hearing about characters with names like Caesar Romano and Biff Wellington? The mystery may be light,

but it has action, suspense, multiple suspects, and surprises--all marinated in a rich sauce of humor.

~M.S.W. © AudioFile 2007

Morgan St. James and Phyllice Bradner's delightful novel, *A Corpse in the Soup*, is a delicious cook's tour through what can only be called a smorgasbord of murder and mayhem in the wacky world of professional chefs.

~Gayle Bartos-Pool, Author – Johnny Casino Casebook series

Books by Morgan St. James and Phyllice Bradner

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Terror in a Teapot (Late 2014)

Vanishing Act in Vegas

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Dedication

To our mother, Rosetta, who almost made it to 97 years old and believed her girls would succeed at anything they tried. She also taught us the power of laughter as detailed in her own book, "Can We Come in and Laugh, Too?"

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following people for their contributions to *A Corpse In The Soup*: Our manuscript consultant Jen Henderson, our wonderful family and friends for unknowingly providing us with the models for some of our wacky characters, and all of our family members for encouraging and supporting us, astrologist Carol LeVeque for her help with Goldie and Flossie, our first-look readers Judy Deutsch, Jerry and Susie Huey and Joyce Peck for valuable comments and suggestions and the Henderson Writers Group and Sisters in Crime for knowledge gained at their writers' conferences.

~Chapter 1~



Godiva Olivia Dubois held the paper at arm's length, squinting to read the jagged script without her glasses. "You know, on days like today I think I should have stuck with my little column in the *Beverly Hills Blabbermouth* instead of becoming syndicated." She finally put on her glasses when even the squinting didn't help, and read out loud.

Dear G. O. D.,

I've prayed to The Lord for guidance, but he doesn't answer. The longer I stand by and watch, the more I know my mission. Time is running short now, so I'm turning to you. I have to know. Is it a sin to kill a monster?

Please tell me I won't go to Hell if I rid the world of this human piece of garbage. I don't do well in extreme heat.

~Mr. Clean

She read it again, digested every word, then shuddered, and pushed it over to her mother. *Maybe some joker is pulling my leg.*

"Mom, this letter is really spooky. Read it and see what you think."

Flossie picked up the creased ivory sheet. She glanced up and down the page clicking her tongue, as the letter wobbled in her veined hand.

"You see, Godiva?" She shook the paper under her daughter's nose. "That's exactly what I've been trying to tell you. When you write a column called *Ask G.O.D.*, don't be surprised if you get letters from nutcases."

Godiva snatched the letter back. "I should have known you'd

say that.” She marched across the room and plunked it down on the table. “You read this one, Unk. Mom thinks it’s from a crank, but I’m afraid it might be real.”

Sterling Silver dropped the mail sack he was emptying onto the mahogany library table. He held the sheet like a dead skunk and his eyes crinkled as he strained to read. “Forget about it, Honey. Sounds like a crank to me. Just stick to the funny ones. Remember, the audience loves a good laugh.”

“Yeah, I know, Unk, but something feels weird about this. I’m just not sure what to do.” Godiva retrieved the letter from him, put it back in the envelope and slipped it into the pocket of her embroidered silk jacket.

She scooped up another pile and started to plow through it. “What would I do without you guys? I feel like I’m swimming upstream.”

Flossie rolled her eyes. “Well you’re up to your neck, all right. Since the beginning of time people have asked God for advice, so what does my daughter do? She gives them an address! Did you listen to what I told you? Of course not. So our poor mailman’s getting a hernia schlepping letters from all these—” She made a sweep of the room with her hand. “These wackos.”

“Wackos sell papers, Mother. How do you think those tabloids can afford to pay out millions to settle libel suits?”

After slitting open a few more envelopes, Flossie waved a piece of pink paper at her. “Now, here’s a dilly. This woman’s husband dresses up like Mae West and wants her to go shopping for lingerie with him.”

A smile lit Godiva’s face. “Hmmm. Might have potential.”

“Hah! Listen to this. She wants to know if it’s all right for him to use the ladies’ dressing room if she goes in with him!”

Sterling let out a belly laugh. “You know, your goofy Uncle Lester used to dress up like a woman. Of course it was part of his vaudeville act, but he really did look a lot like Mae West.”

Flossie’s gray eyes glazed over, “Mae West, some gal! You know her mother made my Mama’s corsets. But Sterling, you’re all wet about Lester. He looked more like Bette Davis with a

mustache. My beautiful girls are the real Mae West lookalikes. Strike a pose for me, Darling.”

Godiva put her hand on her generous hip and pursed her lips.

“You see, Sterling? If that gorgeous silver hair was phony platinum blonde, what would you have? Another Mae West!”

“You know, Flossie, you’ve got something there. And look at me.” He mimed an imaginary top hat and cane. “Rosy cheeks, a few pounds and I’m Maurice Chevalier.”

“Yeah, and I’m Marilyn Monroe!”

“Well, Old Girl, I’d say you’re more like Estelle Getty. You know, those Golden Girls on the TV.” Flossie flung a satin pillow in Sterling’s direction as he began to hum a few bars of “Thank Heaven for Little Girls.”

Godiva waved her arms, “Hey, back to business, you guys. The letter you’ve got there is a winner, Mom! Throw it in the red basket.”

Uncle Sterling dug through another canvas bag. “At the rate this stuff is rolling in, what we really need is two of you.”

“Well if you’re thinking about Goldie, I don’t think she’d help even if she lived near enough.”

Flossie looked up from the letters she was sorting and threw up her hands, palms out. “Such twins I’ve got! One daughter calls herself G.O.D. and tells people how to run their lives and the other one lives in Alaska and chases bears out of her garbage.”

Sterling scooped the newest batch of envelopes into a yellow laundry basket. “Flossie, you sound like a crabby old Jewish mother. You know Goldie’s happy up there in her one-horse town with her husband, Red, her beautiful daughter, Chili and the whole goofy Pepper clan. She loves selling all that old crap she calls antiques. Isn’t that all that really matters?”

“I guess you’re right.” Flossie sighed. “But I sure do miss my little Chili. I wonder if she plays with that doll I gave her for her last birthday. Remember, it had red curls just like hers?”

“Flossie old girl, there you go losing track of time again. You gave her that doll over ten years ago.”

“Yeah, Mom. She’s not little any more. Remember, she’s a

sous chef on her dad's cruise ship now."

Flossie's eyes brightened as she tapped her forehead with her fingertips. "How could I forget? She's sailing around Alaska with Red."

Sterling chuckled. "Not at the moment, Flossie. Tourist season just ended."

Godiva grabbed at the pile of mail sliding off her lap. Of course, Chili. I could sure use that girl. Now how can I get her down here?

She fingered the creased ivory envelope in her pocket and pulled it out, but even touching it gave her the creeps. *Oh Hell, I can't deal with that now. Mom's probably right. Just some nutcase.* She shoved the letter back into her jacket where it smoldered for several hours before it was forgotten.

~Chapter 2~

Chili shined the Georgian silver tea set while she told her mother about the elderly cruise ship passenger who dropped his glass eye in the clam chowder. Goldie laughed. "That reminds me of your Grandma's friend Hymie Kaplan. He would take out his glass eye and set it on the table. 'Here's lookin' at you, Kid,' he used to say."

She pointed to a set of tarnished silver goblets that needed attention and Chili attacked them with her polishing cloth. As she began another story, the little hammer vibrated against the metal bell on the old fashioned telephone.

Goldie sprinted to the back of the store. Even before she answered the phone, the prickle at the base of her neck told her who was calling.

"Silver Spoon Antiques. Hello, Godiva."

"Goldie, I'm so glad I caught you. Is Chili there with you by any chance? I've got some wonderful news for her."

Goldie gritted her teeth. "Caught me? Where did you think I'd be the last week of the tourist season? And yeah, Chili's here, but every time you say you've got wonderful news, it's only *wonderful* for you. So, what are you after?"

"Goldie, how could you say that? Do you really think I'd take advantage of your daughter?"

"You certainly would," she snapped back.

Goldie rested the phone against her shoulder and called for Chili. "It's your Aunt Godiva."

Chili abandoned the silver polish and slid the phone beneath her mass of copper ringlets. "Auntie! How are things going down in California?"

Goldie fidgeted with a display of silver-plated hand mirrors and hairbrushes wondering what Godiva was up to now.