



The Big Book of Female Detectives

Otto Penzler (Editor)

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Edgar Award-winning editor Otto Penzler's new anthology brings together the most cunning, resourceful, and brilliant female sleuths in mystery fiction. A Vintage Crime/Black Lizard Original.

For the first time ever, Otto Penzler gathers the most iconic women of the detective canon over the past 150 years, captivating and surprising readers in equal measure. The 74 handpicked stories in this collection introduce us to the most determined of gumshoe gals, from debutant detectives like Anna Katharine Green's Violet Strange to spinster sleuths like Mary Roberts Rinehart's Hilda Adams, from groundbreaking female cops like Baroness Orczy's Lady Molly to contemporary crime-fighting P.I.s like Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, and include indelible tales from Agatha Christie, Carolyn Wells, Edgar Wallace, L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace, Sara Paretsky, Nevada Barr, Linda Barnes, Laura Lippman, and many more.

The Big Book of Female Detectives Details

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Author : Otto Penzler (Editor)

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From Reader Review The Big Book of Female Detectives for online ebook

Linda says

This is a fascinating history of the development of stories featuring female detectives, going back to the Victorian period, and continuing through the 20th century and beyond. There are both familiar authors like Mary Roberts Rinehart and Agatha Christie, and lesser known ones. The introductory material on the authors is well researched and helps place each author in his/her historical context.

Jessi says

Wow. This is a LOT of female detective stories all in one place. Divided mainly by date published, this book includes not only selected short stories but brief biographies of the authors as well. Not all of the authors are women but all of the main characters are. I say main characters advisedly because the last section is labeled "Bad Girls" (which, "girls", really? You couldn't call it *Femme Fatales?* or *Wicked Women?*) and includes characters who may not exactly be on the side of angels.

I rarely wish books were shorter but this would have been better served to be in a few volumes. It got long slogging through the stories. And it would have been more interesting with slightly longer biographies. Or biographies of the characters. These were all too brief.

Beth Harbaugh says

It's a good idea but I found a lot of the stories not to my liking.

Literary Soirée says

The Afternoon I Met V.I. Warshawski

The air was humid, the cobblestones glistening during my lunch break as a psychotherapist the day I discovered a little bookstore I'd not seen before on the South Side of Pittsburgh, where my ex and I had just moved for his job with Capitol Records.

Libraries and bookstores gave me solace those early days in the Iron City, where I knew no one but a little-seen cousin. But I remember that day as if it were yesterday, because that's when I first met V.I.

As I picked up *KILLING ORDERS* and read the dust cover on Sara Paretsky, I found myself exhaling. It was as if I'd been holding my breath since we'd moved, but now I could finally relax. For I'd found a new friend, one I could spend hours with over a good pinot. She's been a bracing good companion for many years now.

All that to say I was thrilled when I found *The Big Book of Female Detectives* on NetGalley! In this fine anthology, Edgar Award-winning editor Otto Penzler assembles the best and the brightest of female sleuths

in mystery fiction, representing 150 years of the detective canon.

The 74 handpicked stories introduce us to the most determined of gumshoes gals, from debutant detectives like Anna Katharine Green's Violet Strange to spinster sleuths like Mary Roberts Rinehart's Hilda Adams, from groundbreaking female cops like Baroness Orczy's Lady Molly to contemporary crime-fighting P.I.s like Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, and include indelible tales from Agatha Christie, Carolyn Wells, Edgar Wallace, L. T. Meade and Robert Eustace, Nevada Barr, Linda Barnes, Laura Lippman, and my dear friend Sara Paretsky, among many more. To which Sara and I raise our glasses and say, "5/5!"

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Thanks to Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group and NetGalley for the review copy. Opinions are fully mine.

#TheBigBookOfFemaleDetectives #NetGalley

Christine says

I enjoy reading short mystery stories, so I couldn't resist this collection of 74 stories featuring female detectives. This is a robust collection of short stories ranging from cozy to hard-boiled from the last 150 years, written by both men and women. The stories are mainly grouped by era, with the exception of the last chapter called, "Bad Girls." Each story includes an introduction with information about the author and the detective.

The collection includes many authors, mostly from the modern era, who have long been favorites of mine such as S.J. Rozan, Faye Kellerman, Anne Perry, Carolyn Hart, Sue Grafton, and Jeffery Deaver. This was my favorite chapter, because I enjoyed reading so many excellent stories by authors I have frequently read.

The collection includes a story by Agatha Christie, one of my all-time favorite authors, in the "Golden Age" chapter, but I was disappointed it featured Tommy and Tuppence instead of Miss Marple. I was happy to read some of the other stories in this chapter by authors I had heard of, such as Mignon G. Eberhart and Mary Roberts Rinehart, but hadn't read before.

There were quite a few pleasant surprises in the collection. I really enjoyed a story by L.T. Meade and Robert Eustace, originally published in 1900, featuring Miss Florence Cusack, a female Sherlock Holmes. I'm not usually a fan of Pulp stories and didn't realize some of them featured female detectives. I especially enjoyed "The Letters and The Law" by T.T. Flynn even though some parts of it were very dated.

With such a large collection, readers aren't going to connect with every story, but there is something for everyone in this delightful book of short stories. It can be read from beginning to end or you can dive right into your favorite era and enjoy. I have read other collections edited by Otto Penzler, but this one is my favorite. "The Big Book of Female Detectives" gave me many hours of enjoyment and I highly recommend it to mystery fans, especially those who enjoy short stories.

I received this book from NetGalley, through the courtesy of Vintage Crime. The book was provided to me in exchange for an honest review.

Debbie says

This is a collection of 74 short mystery stories featuring a female detective. These stories were grouped by when they were written and featured stories from the first fictional female detectives in the mid-1800s up to the modern day. Some of the stories were very short while a few seemed novella length, but most could be read in an hour or two.

Some were essentially the detective telling how she solved the crime. Many told events as they happened and provided clues for the reader to puzzle out. Many of the women were competent, clever private or amateur detectives. A few were criminals intrigued by solving the puzzle or were even the one committing the crime. A whole group of stories had the woman as basically the beautiful sidekick to the real detective. This collection was interesting to read and contained many fun stories. There was no sex. There was a fair amount of bad language, mostly found in the more modern stories.

I received an ebook review copy of this book from the publisher through Netgalley.

Judy Lesley says

Thank you to NetGalley and Knopf Doubleday, Vintage Crime/Black Lizard for a digital copy of this anthology.

This is an absolutely must-have collection for any reader who wants someone else to do all the hard research work for them. Otto Penzler has collected 74 short stories featuring a woman as the chief detective in a mystery from Victorian to modern times. Not every story will appeal to each reader, but there are so, so many fabulous stories included in this collection that it couldn't help but be a success for me. Penzler has included an introduction to the collection and then a short piece before each story to give the reader a sharper focus of the times and career of each author.

I started out reading one story from the earliest collections and then one from modern times. I enjoyed having such dynamic examples of how writing in this genre has advanced, but also to once again see how good the early writing was. With 74 authors covering such a wide time period it is probable that you will find yourself reading material from authors you aren't familiar with. I found some very good mystery stories from all the time periods and highly recommend this anthology.

Brenda Freeman says

It was like following the history of women detectives in books. Some short stories were entertaining, some a little slow, but a nice variety. Found a few stories from favorite authors I hadn't read before.

Steven Kuehn says

A good read, with numerous wonderful selections of female detectives from the 19th century up to the present. Not all the stories are gems, but each reflects an important part of the overall development of the genre. Fans of mysteries will undoubtedly find some new authors to track down for further reading, while

also getting acquainted with some old (and current) favorites.

M. says

Not really rateable -- it's a compendium. A lot of great stories, a lot of mediocre but historically valuable stories; a sampler and a brick. No lesbian detectives represented (as far as I could tell), therefore inadequate and incomplete.

Jenn Conwell says

From my blog and instagram account - @livereadandprosper

Thank you Netgalley and Knopf Publishing for this read for my honest review.

Ponder has put together short stories (including a few chapters each) of multiple generations of famous women detectives. The stories start from the Victorian Era and travel all the way up to modern day "Bad Girls". Ponder starts each story with a small history of what's taking place in the story to help paint a picture in your mind of what is to come. It also describes details about the author and when the story was published. Each story includes a few chapters of mystery, suspense, and thrill to engage your mind and plop you into the world of crime.

I seriously am in heaven. This is such a wonderful piece of work! I am a huge mystery/crime buff when it comes to fiction, so this is my dream come true. I can't believe something like this hasn't been done sooner! I cannot WAIT to get my hands on the physical copy and share these stories every night with my daughter. I would highly encourage a male version of this too, just because the content is so rich and I'm sure fathers and sons would enjoy reading this together. Heck, I would LOVE to read it! Any mystery lover, short story lover, and history buff would love this book. A must read!

5/5 Stars

Annette says

OK – I am going to say something which is no surprise to most of us – Agatha Christie was truly the most amazing mystery author.

This book is wonderful.

We start out with female detectives from about one hundred years in the past. The writers are mostly men. But, there are also women authors who show how talented they were. The writing is not what one would expect from an author today. Situations and attitudes are somewhat dated. But, each story is well written and the mysteries hold the reader's interest.

The stories proceed toward more modern times. The reader moves forward through changing attitudes toward the female sleuths.

Mr Penzler went to a great deal of time and effort to find absolutely wonderful stories.

As much as I enjoyed each of the stories, I was still amazed at the fact that Ms Christie introduced a completely new level of writing and plot development.

Any reader who is a fan of mysteries, should really read this book.

The plots are varied, the characters are well developed and every author has shown the quality of their abilities.

I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to enjoy so many authors, so many stories and such terrific feminine investigators.

I received this book from the publisher through NetGalley. I am voluntarily writing this review and all opinions are completely my own.

Julie Davis says

Read the print version, just because I like big books "in person."

This is a first class collection of short stories (mostly) ranging from Victorian times to the present. I liked all the time periods pretty well except, to my surprise, the pulp era stories. However, that is clearly a matter of personal taste. Otto Penzler serves up a wonderful selection and I discovered several new authors to investigate further. There are all sorts of detectives from the young and beautiful to the old and canny. Some have sidekicks (usually male), some have a gang of admirers/assistants, and some work completely alone.

Highly recommended for anyone who likes this sort of thing as much as I do.

Donna Davis says

Well now, that was a meal. Penzler does nothing halfway, and this meaty collection of 74 stories took me awhile to move through. I read most, but not all, and I'll get to that in a minute. First, though, thanks go to Net Galley and Doubleday for the review copy. This book is for sale now.

The collection begins with Mrs. Paschal, published in 1864, who must find "the cleverest thieves in Christendom," and it concludes with a piece by Joyce Carol Oates. The stories are broken down into sections, beginning with The Victorians and Edwardians, followed by Before World War I, The Pulp Era, The Golden Age, Mid-Century, and The Modern Era, and concluded with Bad Girls. Says Penzler in his introduction:

"Seeing the Evolution of the female detective's style as it gathers strength and credibility through the decades is educational, but that is not the purpose of this book, or not the primary one, anyway. The writers whose work fills these pages are the best of their time, and their stories are among the high points of detective fiction that may be read with no greater agenda than the pure joy that derives from distinguished fiction."

And so the reader must absorb the hallmarks of the time period, and that means the earliest entries carry a

certain number of stereotypes, primarily about the nature of women, but in the end, the detective is successful nevertheless. And it's fun to see historical details written in present tense long ago, and so we know it's getting to be late out when the lamplighters come out to start the gas lights in the hallways of the manse, for example. It's also interesting to read authors that were the runaway sensations of their day, the ones that sold the most and wrote the most and were on the tongues of every mystery reader—and yet now they are completely obscure. We can never tell who will stand the test of time until it happens.

And now a confession. The first time I set out to read this tome, I read the entries in the first two sections and decided I would skip the portion devoted to pulp, which isn't my personal favorite, and I would skip forward to read an entry by one of my favorite present-day mystery writers, and then go back again to cover the sections that come after the pulp section. That was my plan. I'm telling you this because the mistake I made here could happen to you, too, so here it is.

What I did was I skipped to the last section and began flipping through it, and then I was pissed, because I thought the best female detective writers of today had been left out, and in a huff, I abandoned the rest of the book and picked up something else. It wasn't until I sat down to write a halfhearted review, in which I would explain what I read and what I skipped and why, that I reread the promotional teaser and realized I must have missed something. I went back to the galley, moved back to the second-to-last section that is clearly labeled "Modern", and there they all were, and it is the longest, most inclusive section in the collection. That changed everything. So reader, if you go for this book, bear in mind that the sections are not completely linear. The "Bad Girls" section at the end, which didn't do much for me but you may like it, is made up of stories about women criminals from a variety of different time periods. The most recent time period, the one bearing selections by Marcia Muller, Sara Paretsky, the late and beloved Sue Grafton, Nevada Barr, and a host of others, is second-to-last.

Once I realized my error, of course I returned to read the rest of the book.

The one sorrowful note here is that those of us that love these modern female detectives enough to have bought other anthologies, for example those brought to us by the Paretsky group, "Sisters in Crime," will run across selections we have already read. I have seen both the Grafton and Paretsky stories already, although the piece by Barr, "Beneath the Lilacs," is new to me. However, I see authors I haven't read and will happily watch for now. The end of the mid-century section features "Mom Sings an Aria," and although it veers a wee bit toward stereotypes, I can't say I mind too much, because this writer makes me laugh out loud. James Yaffe is on my list now. "Blood Types", by Julie Smith is likewise pithy, and "Miss Gibson," by Linda Barnes also cracks me up. And I don't know why I am still surprised by this. After reading so many anthologies, you'd think I'd realize that the greatest charms are had by finding brand new-to-me authors, but since it's a good surprise every time, I may allow myself not to absorb the lesson; this way I can still be pleasantly surprised over and over again.

If you buy a holiday gift for a mystery lover, I recommend you get this book. If you try to buy something by your loved one's favorite author, you may run up against it as I did: they've already read it. (And you probably hate returning things as much as I do.) But what are the chances she has this anthology? It's over a thousand pages of detective fiction, and last I saw, it's on sale for less than twenty bucks. There, that's one gift chosen for you, and it's not even November yet. You're welcome.

Pamela says

This book contains 74 short stories featuring women detectives. It covers 150 years of writings by some famous and some-not-so famous authors. If you're a mystery reader, you'll recognize many if not all the

modern authors. What is particularly fascinating is reading the stories from the early days to present day to see how the idea of the woman detective has evolved over the years. You also get to read how the writing evolved over that same period. At 1136 pages, it is not a book you can or should read in one setting. It deserves to be savored, one story at a time.
