



Stilettos & Scoundrels

Laina Turner

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Re-edited as of 10.17.2012!!

Gently touching the handle of the front door was all it took to make it swing wide open. It was late, after midnight, and everyone in the house except Tom was asleep. As usual, Tom was in his study working late. Walking carefully and quietly through the foyer, the adrenaline began to kick in. The intruder confidently walked into Tom's study. Tom was concentrating so hard on the papers in front of him that he was unaware of anything else. Raising his hand, the intruder hit a stack of books sitting on a side table, sending them crashing to the floor. Tom spun around with a look of shock on his face as he recognized the person swinging a sharp object toward him. Tom raised his hands to protect himself but he wasn't quick enough. The spiky end of the stiletto heel punctured his neck instantly, sending a spray of blood over the papers on his desk. He tried to cry out, but all that sounded was a gurgling noise as his lungs filled with blood.

The intruder set the shoe down next to Tom and backed out of the room softly, closing the door to the study and hoped no one would come looking for Tom until morning.

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B003...>

Stilettos & Scoundrels Details

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From Reader Review Stilettos & Scoundrels for online ebook

Kathy Davie says

First in the Presley Thurman Mystery series revolving around an idiot woman I would prefer to see die. *Gee, Kath, tell us what you really think...*

My Take

Omigod, the woman is oblivious...what am I saying? She's not a woman, she's still an immature girl who has got so much growing up to do yet. At age 33. Her whining about having to actually listen to Brian is a major indicator. Grow some balls, girl. She's overly obsessed with accessorizing and, yeah, I know a lot of other books have had characters who are too focused on shallow material things. However they've done it well. I suspect Turner is channeling *Sex and the City*. It's not working.

Pres sees nothing wrong with pushing, pushing, pushing at everyone else to talk about their issues, but the first two sentences about her own issues has her running for the door. And being upset that they would have the nerve to push! Oooh. Gag. Turner has worked hard to find every possible cliché about women and then worked even harder to fit them in whether it's consistent with Presley's character or not. Presley is truly flexible. And so is any concept of continuity.

There weren't even any cute agents, so the entire thing was a waste of my time.

Consistency in her character would be a treat. One minute she's thinking she's a lousy lay and the next she thinks she's God's gift. Then there's the "only the senator and Tobey know about the gambling" when she already knows that other people know. Does she even read her own story? She *knows* she's smarter than everyone else. Which only proves what an idiot she is. If Turner is trying to be snarky, it ain't workin'. She's got enough savings to last a couple months and now she says the bill collectors will be calling in a week. *Hey, what the heck? Let's go shopping.* Presley already knows how much Helen despised Tom and now she's asking if Helen didn't care for Tom? I swear to God, the woman is not reading what she's writing.

I was sure he had to be incredibly busy, or he would have jumped at the chance to spend more time with me.

Plus, who wouldn't want me? In fact, he should feel lucky to be this close to me.

At her age, why is she still allowing her mother to nag her every single minute of the day? Why not just sit down with her and point it out? Explain that if she cancelled the nagging and guilt tripping, she would be back to visit more often. Duh.

What's with the jumping back and forth between points of view? Sure, I know it's done, but with A LOT more skill than is shown here. It's just confusing. Y'all need to read up on the basic rules about formatting dialog.

I'm shocked. Just shocked. Presley owns flip-flops? I do so hope they're at least designer. She moans and groans so much about designer this and designer that, I would have expected her to have better taste than thinking Pottery Barn is the height of sophistication. She barges into Tony's place and then gets pissy because he's not being a good host?

I am struggling to read this. Christ, I feel as though we're still in high school with all the self-centered angst. When did we learn that Simon was Palazzo's son? Okay, it's pages later, but we do find out that, yes indeedy, Simon is Palazzo's son.

No, actually she's still single because she's too freaking self-absorbed to notice anyone else in the room. Poor thing, she keeps having to wait, what, five to fourteen minutes for people. I don't know how she survives.

She actually believes she can tell Cooper that she had a run-in with an employee of his, Katy throws coffee at him and then Cooper'll just be satisfied with that? If she's the epitome of smart, I am desperately worried for the rest of the planet.

Oh, she *thinks* she's just been threatened? Oh Lord, please see to it that Presley Thurman gets knocked off by the end of this story. If only for purposes of genetic selection and to preserve the rest of us from having to ever read about her again.

Omigod, Toby just told them that Chris' life is in danger and Presley wants to know what the hurry is. Oh, yeah, and then she hits Cooper while he's driving at 90 miles-per-hour.

I was going to beg Turner to get herself an editor, but I notice in the preface that she's thanking an editor. I'm not sure if I should be appalled at how it ended up or more appalled to wonder what the editor started with! This desperately needs a content editor who hopefully will finish cleaning up the spelling and grammar.

The Story

It's amazing how lighthearted Presley Thurman feels about losing her job. She's always loved writing...*I can only hope Pres is better than Turner*; maybe losing her job is a sign to pursue the job offer Trevor made her just days ago.

It's just that her first assignment sends her back to the hometown she fled all those years ago to interview Senator Daniels. She'll have to endure her mother! Ick. As well as no access to Starbucks and decent shopping.

Well, her mother's welcome is as expected, but the senator's fate is not and Presley finds herself caught up in a murder investigation. *I'd like to say there was tension and drama, but the only emotions I experienced were how soon can I get out of this!*

The Characters

Presley Thurman is a vain, self-centered twit who doesn't notice anything happening around her except in relation to herself. **Sue and Clark Thurman** are her parents. Her mother is a whiny, nagging bitch more concerned with appearances while her dad is a sweetheart. **Jesse** is her drifting younger brother. **Katy Smythe** is her best friend through high school and now runs Katy's Klassy Kuts, a beauty salon in town. **Rick** is her loser ex-boyfriend who is too hardheaded to get the message. **Trevor Jameson** is a friend and editor of *Our World*; he's with Doug.

Senator Tom Daniels is a typical politician---a jerk and a womanizer. It seems he has other problems as

well. His long-suffering, *rich* wife, **Helen**, has been busy on her own behalf. And what a bitch she is! Whoa. *Turner starts by saying Daniels is an up-and-comer who may run for president in the next election and later on Presley wonders why he needs security. Um, just how out of touch with reality is Turner?* **Tobey Stone** is the senator's assistant; his brother, **Chris** is very protective of him. **Simon Atkins** is part of the senator's security team. He's got one heck of a past. **Garrison Palazzo** is one of the owners of the Blue Royale Casino where the senator has lost a lot of money.

Brian Ames is her old high school boyfriend whom her mother insists on inviting around. Good thing his girlfriend, **Barbara George**, doesn't find out. **Derrick "Dirt" Robinson** is the sheriff now and another old schoolfriend. **Cooper Sands** is the proverbial bad boy from school. Now he heads up his own security company, Sands Security Solutions, and he's currently in charge of the senator's security. He's got a thing for Presley. *Must be a masochist.* **Ruth Johnson** is the town librarian, a closet gossip, Helen's friend, and tight with Presley's mother in the Junior League. **Bobby** is her loser son whose marriage has broken up. Naturally, it's his wife's fault. **Betty** runs Betty's Baked Goods and *I'd love to visit if only to taste that peach cream cheese muffin!*

David Ritter is the chauvinistic jerk of a boss at McLaughlin Industries and he switches between being the vice-president of sales and the CEO. **Tonya** is her best work friend who keeps meaning to quit smoking. **Gary** is Presley's boss and the vice-president of human resources; he's spoken to Ritter in the past about his sexual harassment.

The Cover

The cover is cute with its stiletto shoes in the middle of a pool of blood.

The title is accurate enough for it's the combination of *Stilettos & Scoundrels* that this story revolves around.

Gayla Glass says

The basis of the story is good. Presley is a bit annoying. The author tells the story from Presley's point of view but strays every now and then she throws in thoughts from Cooper or another character. The editing was bad. Lots of mistakes. Presley mentions Simons parentage before she actually discovers the truth!

Cheryl says

Presley is a Senior Human Resource Manager at McLaughlin Industries. Right in the beginning of the book, she gets fired from her job. She definitely has to find some kind of work since she loves shoes and shopping! As you can see from these quotes:

"Enough reflecting, she said to herself, unlocking her door. There were more pressing things to worry about-like finding a new job. The bills wouldn't pay themselves, and she didn't have a sugar daddy in her back pocket. Stepping on the foyer, she kicked off her Jimmy Choo's (she had a weakness for shoes and would rather not eat than go without her favorite shoes), and dug her toes into the thick, cream shag carpet as she hung her coat in the front closet. I'll have to cut back on the shoe shopping now that I am unemployed, she thought to herself. That was going to be more difficult than anything. A girl had to have her priorities." p.14

"Shoes, bags and accessories of all kinds were just as important as food; actually, they were probably more important than food. Right after coffee and before food was probably the perfect priority for accessories." p. 34

She was thinking about what she would like to do for a job. The two things she always wanted to do was be a writer and work at Kentucky Fried Chicken (her favorite restaurant when she was little). Her friend Trevor had talked about her writing for his online magazine. Since she loves to write, she thought maybe she will try that. Her first assignment is to interview the Senator who is from Alkon, her hometown. She decides to go there and do the interview. She figures it will be a good chance to spend time with her friends and family too.

Within a few hours of the time that she interviews the Senator, he is murdered. She finds herself immersed in trying to figure out who murdered the Senator. This is when the book really picked up for me! I am surprised at how good of a detective Presley is, and this really made the story!

Presley's mom still treated her like a little girl, and that was really annoying. If I was Presley I would have told her that she is a grown girl and stop treating her like a child!

Overall, I really enjoyed this book! The story really picked up for me after the murder, and I was turning pages to see what was going to happen next! I hope Presley comes back in another book! I definitely recommend this book!

D says

I don't normally pay attention to editing as I work with social media and forget not to shorten everything anyway (ie texting). However, I found myself re-reading paragraphs when the wrong pronoun was used. I had to think about what the author was trying to say when "they" was used instead of "we".

The second thing I failed to understand was how the main character (Presley) worked as a Human Resource Manager and managed to get fired from her job when she was the victim of sexual harassment. Isn't being able to handle situations such as this a main factor in being a HR Manager? These problems were just the beginning of the book. After that, the story bogged down in details.

The murder victim is killed with a shoe. I was halfway through the book and the shoe was never brought up again. The same happens when Presley sees her father out at 1 am with no explanation. If you mention details in the beginning, there should be a point to it. I understand a good book leaves you guessing until the end, but the story couldn't hold my interest long enough to get that far.

LuAnn says

Never start reading a novel when you are feeling contrary. I did so with Stilettos & Scoundrels by Laina Turner, and for that reason, had trouble getting involved in the story. For instance, I thought Presley should have had a tape recorder running in her pocket when she went in to talk to her boss, who basically told her to 'put out or get out'

Luckily a good night's rest brightened my mood considerably and I have literally just 'turned the last page' in

my Kindle reading app, and the more the story progressed, the more I was drawn in.

I can appreciate the ambivalence Presley had about going back to her home town. On the one hand, It was a great place to go to recharge her batteries after she was fired, and she needed to find another job. On the other hand, seeing all those people whom she had known before she left for college was probably somewhat strained. Especially the townsfolk of the 'old boyfriend' variety.

Most cozy mysteries start with a main character who is not a professional investigator. Presley was head of HR at a big corporation in Chicago before she was fired. She talked her way in to an interview with a US Senator, which led to Presley being one of the last people to see him alive. So, the Feds wanted to talk to her, the local LEO's wanted to talk to her, and Cooper, the Senator's private security wanted to talk to her.

Well, Cooper happened to be an old boyfriend. They hadn't seen each other in years, but it was obvious there was still a lot of sizzle. The author held back just enough to have just about anyone become a suspect at one time, but in the end, all the various storylines were drawn together and things made sense.

The revelatory scene made me think of a story where a hostage was describing the moment the soldiers burst into the building to take down the bad guys. She said, "He said, "Get down!" in a voice that said he meant business (so everyone did), and they were subsequently rescued.

I did really enjoy the way Presley and Cooper's increasing interest in each other was written. They didn't just see each other for the first time in years and then fall into bed. They teased each other here and there and they fought 'the inevitable'. It was like they were mad at themselves that something was still there. The progression of their relationship was as fun to 'watch' as it was to read.

Eman says

Stilettos & Scoundrels by Laina Turner is about *Presley Thurman*; a 30-something shoppaholic/coffeeholic HR manager who got fired after blocking her boss's repeated attempts of sexual harassment. She recently broke up with her cheating bf, too. Having nothing else to do in the big city, she agrees on a friend's offer to work as a freelance editor for an online magazine which required her to make an interview with Senator Tom Daniels in her hometown. The Senator was found murdered with a stiletto shoe briefly post the said interview. So, Presley determines to solve the mystery behind the murder.

I think the author invested too much unnecessary space and details on unrelated topics to the core of the story. I'm a fan of details when they add up to the story, but I felt that omitting those details and cutting the size of the book in half won't change anything.

I felt sick of Presley's annoying character as I progressed in this book which gave me pains to go on reading, but I did go on eventually because I hate leaving a book unfinished. I don't see myself reading the rest of this series in the future.

I got this book for free but even though, that doesn't justify the glaring typos, they were a complete turn off. What bugged me too was the narration which shifts suddenly to describe the other character's feelings, wouldn't it be better to make the narrator a third party to save the trouble of confusion? This book could have turned out much better with some efforts.

Franci says

Yes, I am reading a mental 'junkfood' mystery. I do this a lot when I find the kindle versions free on Amazon. A lot. Seriously, I 'spend' more on free books than I do any other kind, heh.

At least this one isn't a paranormal mystery, those are like crack to me. So sad...

ETA Okay, this book blows. I tried to muddle my way through it, but only made it about 35% before the crappy writing and unlikable characters got to me. I will read some serious trash too, so you know this one had to be pretty bad.

Metatron says

My father got this book for free from the author herself in 2010 while he was visiting New York for work. He was appreciative, but he didn't read much anymore by then, so the book just gathered dust in one of our house's shelves by the time he got back. For years I saw the book and I never thought anything of it, until midst of 2013 when I started reading. I saw it in the aforementioned shelf and the cover always drew my attention. Since then I always meant to read the book but never got to it, until two days ago that I read it because I was curious and had the time and want of finally reading it. I only read five pages but yesterday I actually sat down (lay down more like) and actually read it.

For the first hundred pages I actually enjoyed the book. I enjoyed the main character, Presley Thurman, even though she's not the type of personage I'd usually enjoy. She's too chic—too girly, obsessed with clothing. Yet she was fine, I was enjoying her because she was just a girl with her own tastes and pleasures, I thought nothing of it. But after the hundred pages mark, I just started to feel put off by her. She became annoying, and she became the stereotypical diva I just tend to dislike. She became way too chic, caring too much about superficial things in the midst of a murder, she was incredibly gossipy and just in overall deeply annoying, while also being completely contradictory, claiming she's the queen of rationalisation while saying she thought it was fine to buy the expensive designer shoes she loves instead of paying rent every once in a while, feeling very offended in page 107 when Chris was discouraging Presley and her friend Katy from sticking their noses in the whole Senator Daniels' murder situation because he called them "you girls", claiming they were women and the term "girls" was downright insulting (*specially coming from men*), but on the next page she tells Katy "you're a big girl". On page 189 this is repeated as she tells her mother "I'm a big girl", and once again says this on page 279 to Cooper and Dirt. What's with the hypocrisy or double standard?

One of the things that bothered me the most from the book was the writing. It wasn't bad but it didn't feel quite right at the same time—it's rather odd to explain. I just felt that given the theme of the book, the conversations between the characters were just quite unprofessional at times. One of the senator's security guards, Simon, who also has a military background, speaks to his superiors in the most informal way, replying "Sure, boss" when Cooper decides to handle Presley, who by the way, has been ridiculously unprofessional at her writing job. It's quite a petty complaint, but "Yes, sir" or "Yes sir, Mr. Sands" would have felt more appropriate given the political position of his boss and Simon's profession and his military background, where titles or ranks (e.g. *Corporal, General, Captain*) are quite important or just common to

mention as a sign of respect to someone who is in a superior position to you. Moreover, the Senator was completely unprofessional and disgusting during his “interview”, calling Presley a “*pretty little thing*” and “*little lady*”. However, given how Daniels was shown as a womaniser, it’s natural to believe the author intended him to be this... unprofessional. Besides this, however, Presley was given time and an opportunity by the Senator himself to interview him, and she literally accomplished nothing. She got no information, she made no questions—she was just completely awful at her job.

Another thing that bothered me: some of the characters. The protagonist (Presley) and one of the deuteragonists (Dirt) are just so frustrating I contemplated leaving this book unfinished many times. In the midst of the murder of a very important political figure, Dirt is **so** unprofessional at his job as a sheriff that he refuses to cooperate with Cooper just because he has a petty grudge, even though Cooper, as the head security of the Senator, has useful information that could bide invaluable to the investigation. Presley, though, she’s just the worst. Not only is she unprofessional enough to the point I ponder how she got her HR manager title at McLaughlin industries to begin with, but she’s also a gossipy, immature, snoopy, privacy-invading bitch. She thinks she’s entitled to everyone’s private lives just for the sake of gossiping and all confidential information in an investigation she has NO legal role in. She constantly pesters the guy she so claims to like just because she wants to play hard-to-get, because she wants him to chase her and constantly does things to piss him off, just to prove to herself he cares, and that she is so desirable he should feel lucky just for witnessing her presence alone. It’s exasperating.

The story is interesting and I think the book itself is promising and has potential, but there were just too many factors involved that made the book very frustrating to read at times. Moreover, I believe Laina Turner Molaski requires a serious editor. I found at least five grammatical and/or spelling missteps in just the first twenty pages, and there were more mistakes scattered throughout the chapters, sometimes repeated in a same page. While I don’t have a particular problem with this since it doesn’t affect my personal reading experience, I do believe that if you’re going to publish a book, it must be neat in all or most respects, just for presentation and professionalism. A great deal of people may have a problem with it, an assumption well asserted by reading other reviews which complain about the same issue. Furthermore, you can find the same complaints by reading reviews from the second book, meaning that this is an issue that prevailed and shouldn’t have.

All in all, the storyline was interesting, and the book shows promise when reading the synopsis. But the protagonist’s personality, some of the dialogue between the characters and certain events just made this book almost unbearable to me at times. These complaints may seem to head the book towards a negative rating, however, towards the end, the book was becoming a little bit as enjoyable as it was in the beginning, so it redeemed itself, in a small way. I believe the book was okay and I liked it at the beginning, and enjoyed the last couple of chapters as well, though Presley with her entitled attitude and stupidity almost ruined it, but the other characters cloaked her frustrating behavior quite a bit. Still, I didn’t quite like it that much as a whole, so I believe a 2.5 rating is quite fair in terms of my general enjoyment. However, two stars seems too harsh, so I believe rating it a three, “I liked it”, is fairer. A couple of annoyances, though quite poignant during my reading experience at times, don’t justify judging the book so harshly as a whole, since it was an enjoyable read for the most part.

Kristine (A Cozy Booknook) says

I couldn’t finish this book. I didn’t find the main character likable at all, she seemed immature to me. The

author chooses to spend a lot of time going into detail about the main character's clothes and accessories that became annoying. I have read other series where this is done but is handled much better. The other thing I was having difficulty with was the change from first to third person at random times which throws off the flow of the story. Unfortunately, I probably won't be reading any more in this series.

Jason says

Presley is an intriguing protagonist in this mystery, but her mother is someone this reader can do without. Some slight continuity issues, but other than that, a good mystery.

Cheryl says

A wonderful gem found amid the dross that seems to becoming the norm for cosy mysteries these days. The author provides a wonderful protagonist, Presley (Pres), who finds herself smack dab in the middle of the murder investigation of a senator with wandering hands (and unzipped trousers!) I seriously enjoyed this tale (enough to download the second book and follow the author) and unlike a lot of cosies it wasn't dripping with sugary sweet romance, just the perfect amount of "will they or won't they?" This is going to be one of my new "go to" series.

Kathleen Kelly says

Stiletos & Scoundrels gave me a chuckle in a lot of the spots. The main character, Presley, yes her mother had a fondness for Elvis, is a zany type of character. She gets fired from her job in the big city of Chicago where where she lives. She loves the windy city and lives just blocks away from the busy downtown shopping area. She has a passion for shoes, Starbucks and snooping. I think it was a good thing she got fired because she is wasting her talents in my opinion being a HR director. She takes on a job that requires her to write a piece on a Senator, for a friend of hers who has an online magazine. The Senators wife is from Alkon and they maintain a home in Presley's hometown. What could be better? A paying job and visiting family and friends. In her attempts to the get the goods on the Senator, she becomes embroiled in the investigation of his murder. Nope, she didn't do it, but his death puts her in the path of old high school flames, town gossips, the police, and some mobsters. Plus she is staying in her childhood home and with her mother drives her crazy with her attempts to find her a mate. As the story goes on it just gets crazier and crazier and she no longer knows who to trust and someone is out to harm her because she will not stop digging to find the truth as to what has happened to the Senator. Time is running out and the bad , guys are getting closer. I think Presley has a future in being a private investigator. I enjoyed this book and hope to read more about Presley and her shenanagins...

Rebecca Graf says

I originally was going to tackle these stories separately, but I would be repeating myself too much. Maybe if I hadn't read them all so soon after each other I could have done it successfully. So, I'll review the Presley Thurman Mysteries as one.

All of these stories are centered around one person, Presley Thurman. She is an outspoken woman who acts before she thinks many times. She is not afraid to take a chance and will despite the consequences. She also seems to be a magnet for trouble. Murder follows her everywhere starting a senator from her hometown who gets it right after seeing her. Through the stories, you follow Presley from one deadly adventure to another and finding a little romance as she goes along.

I did enjoy the stories and the plot the author wove. Nothing was black or white or what it appeared to be. There were many twists and turns that kept you reading to find out what was going to happen next.

The characters were very unique and lively. None of them were boring or bland. A few were over the top, but I've met a few in real life just like that. So, in that sense they were pretty real.

I will say that the scene shifts were very confusing at times. The transition from one scene to another was too quick or not there at all. That had me going back to read sections over again to get my bearings. Dialogue would continue and I wouldn't know for a few paragraphs that I was in another scene. That slowed down my reading.

Over all, a good read, but the scene transition really hurt my enjoyment. If you like mysteries, give it a try. The stories are very good.

Note: This book was received as part of a book tour with no expectation of a positive review.

April says

STILETTOS & SCOUNDRELS by Laina Turner-Molaski is an interesting chick lit/suspense/mystery/romance. It has a large cast of characters each one with their own insight into the problems, and their own way of thinking. It is well written with details and style. This is a quirky tale of murder, mystery, fashion, chick lit spin, climbing the corporate ladder, sensual harassment by an employer, scandals, and adventure. Presley has adventures abound, is fired from her job after refusing to sleep with her boss and finds a dead senator. Cooper, is to protect a senator, who of course of found dead, had an attraction to Presley in high school and must find a killer before any harm can come to Presley. Presley and Cooper's high school attraction is still there after all these years. This is a fast paced story with plenty of adventure, action, mystery, suspense, scandals, with a little chick lit spin. Murder by shoe what is there not to enjoy... I would recommend this story to any and all chick lit, suspense, romance, and mystery fans it will keep you on your toes. This book was received for the purpose of review from Nurture Your Books and the author and details can be found at Five Seas Ink and My Book Addiction and More.

Jaidis Shaw says

Stilettos & Scoundrels by Laina Turner-Molaski is a quirky tale with all of the essentials: murder, mystery and great fashion! Presley Thurman is just your average single female trying to make her way up the corporate ladder while looking the best she possibly can. So when her boss fires her after she refuses his advances, she naturally prepares thinking of ways she can have a career and her shoe collection at the same time. Quickly being offered a job for a newspaper, Presley heads to her small hometown where she is to write an article about a local Senator. Dressed to impress, she sets off on what she expects to be an easy

endeavor, only to have the tables turned when the Senator is found murdered. Presley quickly takes advantage of the situation in hopes of writing the piece of a lifetime.

Cooper Sands is not only extremely charming and sexy, but he happens to be in charge of protecting the Senator while he is in town. When his job brings him face to face with Presley, the connection that sparked to life in high school is back and hotter than ever. Cooper must find a way to solve the murder and keep the stubborn Presley out of harms way.

Stilettos & Scoundrels is written in third person and is mainly from Presley's point of view. There are only a few paragraphs throughout the book that are from the perspective of other characters and I feel as though this prevented me from getting to know what some of the other characters were really about. Although this did add to the mystery in some ways so it works out well with the story line. And there is plenty of mystery to go around! Just when I was getting comfortable thinking I knew who the murderer was, new scandals and clues were thrown in to throw me off of the trail.
