

# The Crime Cafe with Lynn Slaughter

Presented By:



Debbi (00:54): Hi everyone. My guest today had a long career as a professional dancer and dance educator before becoming a fiction writer. The recipient of many writing awards, her latest book is a young adult crime novel called [DEADLY SETUP](#), and her first mystery for adults, MISSED CUE, will be released this summer. It's my pleasure to introduce my guest, Lynn Slaughter. Hi Lynn. Thanks for being here with us.

Lynn (01:26): Hi, Debbi. Great to be with you.

Debbi (01:29): I'm so glad you're here, and I'm so glad we were able to connect.

Lynn (01:33): Yes, that had a set of challenges.

Debbi (01:37): Yes. Love your Christmas lights in the background.

Lynn (01:41): Oh, well, thank you.

Debbi (01:43): Yeah, they're so pretty, so nice. Let's see. I noticed on your website that you mentioned that you particularly enjoyed teaching teenagers to dance. I sense a kind of natural affinity perhaps for teenagers, and was this what led you to write to young adult and coming of age books?

Lynn (02:05): Excellent question. Definitely. I think that fed right into it, Debbi. Teenagers have always been my favorite age group to work with. I taught at a performing arts high school, and I also spent seven summers as the counselor at a residential program for teens who are gifted in the arts. So that was a pretty major experience for me. And in addition to that, I just always loved young adult literature. I read books that were young adult books way into adulthood, and have always loved that literature. So probably a combination of all those things.

Debbi (02:50): Yeah, same here. I think that young adult literature appeals to people of all ages, frankly.

Lynn (02:58): Yes. You know, it's interesting because research has shown that over half the people who are buying young adult books are actually adults, and of those close to 80% are actually buying them for themselves. So this morning I got a call from someone who I hadn't heard from in years and years who said, oh, I just love this book of yours that I just read. Well, she's 85, so I was reminded again that, yes, young adult is not just for young adults, so.

Debbi (03:39): Absolutely, yes. So tell us about DEADLY SETUP. What inspired you to write this story?

Lynn (03:47): Well first off, the story is about a young woman who is a daughter of a New England heiress, and her life really implodes when she gets accused and goes on trial for the murder of her mother's fiance. She is very sure that someone has set her up for this, but she doesn't know who. And of course, she's determined to prove her innocence and uncover the identity of the real culprit. But the story isn't just about that, like all mysteries, it's about more than that. And this character is having a lot of challenges in her life. She has a very difficult mother-daughter relationship. Her mom is really not there for her emotionally or in terms of acceptance and support and even just basic interest. And that's very hard on her, and she is missing, I think, having a sense of family. So what inspired that was actually growing up in a very

wealthy community in Connecticut, Greenwich, Connecticut. I lived there between sixth grade and 12th grade. And whereas my family lived in a pretty modest apartment in the downtown area, I hung out with all of these kids who lived in mansions and had every possible material advantage. But many of them actually had parents who were more or less missing an action. Their parents were involved in a lot of stuff other than parenting their children. And looking back, I didn't know what it was called at the time, but looking back, they were emotionally neglected.

(06:00): So I think to some extent, that inspired this. The other thing that inspired the premise of this novel was that many, many years ago, an actress named Lana Turner had a daughter named Cheryl Crane, who was accused of shooting her mother's boyfriend. And this was splashed all over the movie magazines and the tablets. This, of course, was way before the internet. And that story stuck with me and I'm sure was in the back of my mind of, oh my goodness that would be something for a family to go through. So those are a couple of the things that inspired DEADLY SETUP.

Debbi (06:47): That's really interesting. What struck me when I started reading your book was how much a parent, their lifestyle choices can affect a child, sometimes to devastating effect.

Lynn (07:02): Yes, yes. I think that that's true. I really do.

Debbi (07:06): Mmm.

Lynn (07:07): One of the things about [DEADLY SETUP](#) is that this character falls in love for the first time, and her boyfriend actually has a very supportive family. So she keeps going over to his house, and she becomes terribly aware of the lack of genuine family at her house in part because she's seeing what a supportive family looks like.

Debbi (07:42): Yeah. Yes, indeed. What do you think are some of the key differences between writing for young adult for that category and writing adult?

Lynn (07:55): Oh, holy guacamole. That is such a hard question. You know that Michael Cart, who is an expert on young adult literature, wrote a book about it, and he says that defining young adult fiction is about as easy as nailing jello to a wall,

(08:15): How he describes it. So I think it's very difficult. I do think that young adult literature has a very common theme of coming of age, that the character during the story is literally growing up and is trying to deal with some of these really big issues that you go through during adolescence of defining, gee, who do I think I am? Who do I wanna be? Where do I wanna go? How am I the same? And how am I different from my parents or my peers? So it's a very intense, intense period of life, and it has a lot of angst in it. It has a lot of joy, a lot of humor, but also a lot of angst. Young adult literature is written from the point of view of a teenage protagonist. So if you're going to write young adult, it's very important to try to get it into the headset and the mind and the feelings of a teenager. If you are writing from the perspective of an adult looking back at your youth, then you're writing adult fiction. So that's one of the differences.

(09:43): But this spring, for example, I have an adult mystery coming out, and those issues are just different because the protagonist is at a developmentally much different stage of life. She's already in a career, she's in a relationship. She's trying, of course, to sort out her life and next steps, but it's very different than being a teenager. So that's some of the differences. But in terms of subject matter, I think used to be that people would say, oh, when you're writing for young people, this subject or that subject would be off the table. That's no longer true. Our young people are exposed to everything, especially with the internet and [crosstalk]. So isn't a lot of difference in that way. And I just think too, that there's a lot of crossover. And sometimes I honestly think it's a marketing decision in terms of, oh, is this going to be a young adult book? Or is this going to be a new adult book or an adult book? So it's hard to define.

Debbi (11:13): Yes, yes, I agree. So what was it that prompted you to write MISSED CUE? Your first adult mystery?

Lynn (11:27): That's a great question. It started out as a short story. It was a challenge from a friend of mine who said, oh, Malice Domestic is doing this anthology called Murder Most Theatrical, and let's make a little critique group with our other friend, and we're going to work on short stories that have a theater background. And so I tried to explain, I wasn't a short story writer, but I thought, oh, well, what the heck? So I decided to do it, and I came up with this premise that this ballerina dies on stage. In the third act of *Romeo and Juliet*, she fails to awaken. And that was the premise. So then there's a homicide detective and the homicide detective is trying to figure out first off, how she died, because the autopsy doesn't show any apparent cause of death. And second, she's trying to figure out who offed her because she recognizes there are all these people close to the ballerina who had a reason to wanna harm her.

(12:42): So she has this very difficult case. But after I finished writing the short story, I didn't feel I was done because I didn't really get a chance to explore the personal life or private life of this character, really develop this character in depth. And this particular homicide detective is very good at her job and is a complete and total mess in her private life. So I worked on the novel, and of course, in the course of working on the novel, the murderer turned out to be somebody entirely different than the short story, which is fine, but that's how it came about. It was almost an accident that I wrote a book for adults, but there you go,

Debbi (13:33): <laugh>. Funny because it was almost an accident that I wrote a book for young adults and actually middle graders,

Lynn (13:42): <laugh>

Debbi (13:43): Technically, if you're going to talk about marketing aspects of it

Lynn (13:49): Right. Right. Yes. It's true. It's true.

Debbi (13:53): Let's see. Are there books or authors that have inspired your writing, and what are you reading now that you particularly like?

Lynn (14:03): Oh my goodness, so many people have inspired me. In the young adult area, I love so many people, Chris Crutcher, Sarah Dustin, Gayle Foreman, Judy Blume, Richard Peck. I could go on and on. Angie Thomas I could go on and on. So all of those people inspire me, and I still love reading literature, adult literature, young adult, middle grade. I just finished reading a

middle grade book by Kyle Lukoff called [TOO BRIGHT TO SEE](#), and it's a wonderful book. It's all about a young girl who realizes that she's transgender and what this will mean for her life, but it's just beautifully written. So people like that who are dealing with major character, major issues inspire me. But I also love humor. And M. C. Beaton has a wonderful mystery series, the late M. C. Beaton. Amish McBeth Mysteries. I love Amish McBeth. He's this just hysterical policeman, a Scottish policeman, and I just love his voice and I love the humor. So my tastes are very eclectic. That's all I can say,

Debbi ([15:43](#)): <laugh>. Very cool. What do you find is the most effective way to reach your readership?

Lynn ([15:52](#)): Oh, I I wish I knew. <laugh>

([15:59](#)): I'm probably the world's worst social media person on the planet. But I do try to take advantage of any opportunities I have to do public speaking or meet people, or especially young people, writing conferences. I'll often give talks. This past year, for instance, I was at a book festival called the Heartland Book Festival, and I did some workshops with teens called Cooking Up a Mystery. And it was really fun to get their ideas and talk with them about what are some of the basic ingredients of a mystery and have them have a chance to invent their own stories. So.

Debbi ([16:56](#)): That's great. I think doing those talks and actually meeting people is an excellent idea.

Lynn ([17:04](#)): Yes.

Debbi ([17:06](#)): Let's see. What advice would you give to anyone who's interested in writing for a living?

Lynn ([17:15](#)): Oh my goodness. Well I don't think you should initially quit your day job.

Debbi ([17:22](#)): Amen to that.

Lynn ([17:24](#)): <laugh>For sure, or expect or go into it expecting to become rich and famous, cuz I don't think that happens to a lot, very many writers. It happens to a few. But I would say in terms of pursuing writing seriously, that the biggest element is perseverance, is continuing to be very committed to growth and openness to learning and working on the craft. It's not an overnight, it's just not an overnight thing. It takes years to get good at something, including writing, and I would say and being willing to put up with a lot of rejection because I just don't know very many writers who avoid getting rejected even the very best ones. So I would say perseverance is huge.

Debbi ([18:26](#)): It is all of that, what you said. Yes, totally. Alright, I totally agree. Is there anything else you'd like to add before we finish up?

Lynn ([18:38](#)): Oh, I just wanna say what a pleasure has been to talk with you Debbi, and I would love to know more about your work. You mentioned that you write, and so.

Debbi ([18:49](#)): Oh yes, very much so. <laugh>

Lynn ([18:52](#)): I would love to know more about your books. And I think one of the lovely things about doing these things is just getting to know other writers. And that's one of my favorite things about writing festivals, book festivals, and writing conferences is just writers are so such interesting people and it's a wonderful community. So.

Debbi ([19:18](#)): It is a wonderful community. That's why I love doing this podcast, actually. Because I get to meet so many people and everybody has a great story to tell <laugh>.

Lynn ([19:29](#)): Yes. I bet. I bet.

Debbi ([19:31](#)): Wonderful. Great. Well, I just wanna say thank you so much for being here and wish you the happiest of New Years.

Lynn ([19:39](#)): Oh, well thank you. You too. Debbi, I hope 2023 is a great year for you. What are you working on writing wise right now?

Debbi ([19:48](#)): I've got some screenplays I'm working on as well as coming up with ideas for my next novel and also working on a Sam McRae story. Sam McRae is my first, my first series of books was around a protagonist named Sam McRae, who is a lawyer, who solves mysteries.

Lynn ([20:13](#)): Oh. So, that's wonderful. Well, you know, we're going to get off here. I'm going to look you up.

Debbi ([20:19](#)): Well, we'll do a bonus round at some point and we can talk about it then. <laugh>. Sound good?

Lynn ([20:27](#)): Okay. That sounds good.

Debbi ([20:28](#)): That's a little teaser for anybody out there who wants to listen in on the bonus round. You have to become a patron, but oh, well, it's not much. It doesn't cost much. Well, thank you so much again, Lynn.

Lynn ([20:44](#)): Thank you.

Debbi ([20:46](#)): Sure. So by the time you hear this, everybody, it's going to be 2023. We are recording this in 2022 technically, but it will be 2023. So happy New Year everyone! And thank you for listening. I would like to send a special thank you to all my Patreon patrons. You guys are great. Thank you so much. Here's hoping for good things to come in the new year for everyone, and my next guest will be Maria Marotti. Until then, take care and happy reading.