

A large, faint silhouette of a person in a dark suit, holding a rectangular sign with both hands. The sign is the central focus of the cover, containing the title and author information.

GARAGE SALE

Riddle

Garage Sale Mystery Series

SUZI WEINERT

No part of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the author, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in a review. For information regarding permission, please write to: Bluewaterpress LLC.

Text and Illustrations copyright © 2016 Suzi Weinert
All rights reserved.

International Standard Book Number 13: 978-1-60452-124-5

International Standard Book Number 10: 1-60452-124-4

Library of Congress Control Number: 2016955242

BluewaterPress LLC
52 Tuscan Way Ste 202-309
Saint Augustine, Florida 32092

<http://www.bluewaterpress.com>
This book may be purchased online at

<http://www.bluewaterpress.com/GSR>

Editing by Carole Greene

This is a work of fiction. All characters, organizations, and events portrayed in this novel are either products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously.

To Denise Weinert
for opening the portal to
Katy Garretson, Jonathan Axelrod
and Hallmark's Television
Garage Sale Mystery Series

LETTER TO MY READERS

Historical fiction uses imaginative reconstruction of historical events and personages. Like my earlier mystery thrillers, this book and its characters are fictional.

Upon hearing two conflicting accounts of an auto accident, you may begin to wonder about history. Each person brings his own subjective prejudice to whatever he “sees.” Civil War eyewitness testimonials often hinged on observations of terrified men rather than dispassionate objective reports. Thus, history we accept as “true” may reflect combinations of verifiable facts and eyewitness “truths” plus the myths and legends growing around such information in generations of slanted retelling.

Confederate Captain John Singleton Mosby, Union General Edwin Stoughton and General Jubal Early were real people and the raid on the village of Fairfax Courthouse, a real event. However, Mosby’s “treasure” reflects legend and myth and my accounts of all these people and events are historical fiction.

While Birdsong’s a real, fine old name dating back to the 1600s in Virginia, my John and Raiford Birdsong characters are fictional, as are William Early, Ellwood, Hanby and all the others.

Because I’m personally drawn to the relevance and impact of current issues, I like to weave them into my mystery thrillers. As with child abuse in *Garage Sale Stalker* and terrorism, human trafficking and spousal abuse in *Garage Sale Diamonds*, this novel explores another compelling national topic: the challenges facing our country’s burgeoning senior population. This group, plus baby

boomers (born 1946-1964), have created unprecedented economic, social and practical issues for older individuals, their families and their federal, state and local governments.

While more options exist for seniors than ever before in American history, not all have prepared for this stage of life, financially or otherwise. Nor do they realize criminals target them for exploitation, scams and other crimes that could wipe out their life savings.

To face this, states and counties scramble to create senior support systems, including prevention efforts to increase crime awareness for elders and their communities. I felt it was high time for my Garage Sale novel series to address this topic.

If you'd like to comment on my story, please e-mail me at: Suzi@GarageSaleStalker.com.

Thank you for choosing my novel.

Suzi Weinert

www.SuziWeinert.com

CHAPTER 1

Glinting fangs ringed the elongated, gaping jaws. Reptilian scales armored the sinewy body. The partially unfolded wings readied for flight as the talons flexed with anticipation. One claw clutched a sphere. The glittering eyes shimmered with intensity. Did this penetrating stare reflect deep knowledge of universal wisdom? Or did the stare reflect a predator's focus riveted on prey?

Lightning-fast, the dragon fired a telepathic barb directly into Jennifer Shannon's brain. The hook pulled tight as she gazed, hypnotized, at the creature in her hands.

A human voice intruded upon her concentration. "Do you want it...the item you're holding?"

"What...?" Jennifer asked, startled.

"Do you want to buy it – the statue?"

"Do I want...yes, yes I do."

"Thirty dollars, please."

Jennifer jerked herself back to garage sale reality.

"I...how about fifteen?"

"Twenty."

"Sold." Jennifer clutched the statue in one hand and produced money with the other. Then she pointed to the statue. "What... what do you know about this piece?"

"It belonged to my parents," the garage sale Seller said. "They told me they got it before I was born, back when they lived in the Philippines. Lots of Asian imports/exports pass through that

country, so impossible to guess its origin. The statue means nothing to me except I remember my mother valued it and now I'll never know why. Just another question I didn't ask my folks back when I thought they'd live forever."

Jennifer nodded as her own mother's cherished face crossed her mind. "Point taken," she said.

Back in her van, she studied the dragon from different angles. However she positioned it, the eyes watched her. Even with its face pointed away from her, the rear of each shiny, bulging eye held her in peripheral vision. Reluctant for it to leave her hand, she finally laid it carefully in the wide, shallow box she kept on the passenger seat to prevent items from tumbling around as she drove. The dragon watched her start the car.

This wasn't the first time a garage sale object "called her name." Skilled craftsmanship creating this compelling piece of art was reason enough to buy it, but she had a second motive. Maybe this would make a suitable gift for husband Jason's birthday in a few months. Might it amuse him if she compared life's challenges to fighting dragons, and he the family's protective dragon slayer?

But two other messages came with this impulse purchase: the reminder to tell her five children the stories about some of her own belongings while she still could, and also to learn more about possessions her mother had collected over the years.

Though smug about this unexpected find, what she really shopped for today and had hunted for over a year was a picture frame for a painting she'd bought two years ago at another garage sale. And not just any frame of the right size, but something unusual with a primitive look. Besides estate and garage sales, she'd searched stores and the internet. Maybe what she coveted didn't exist, but she'd know it if she saw it. She didn't give up easily.

She pulled the car to the safety of a curb, shifted into park and studied her notebook. Garage and estate sale listings from her newspaper's classified section were taped in a neat column down the page's left side. At the bottom, she'd written additional addresses from Craigslist.

She'd started at 7:30 this Saturday morning, and would add a few more sales before heading home by noon to prepare lunch. Her fingers moved down her notebook list, hovered and entered the chosen address into her car's GPS.

Fifteen minutes later, she pulled up in front of a property near the border of McLean and Great Falls. A phalanx of parked cars snaked

along one side of the road outside a stone fence. She maneuvered skillfully into an empty space and walked up the driveway of the graceful plantation-style house. Huge old trees cast welcome shade across the lawn.

Merchandise filled the veranda and large front yard. Her pulse quickened as she did a quick "overview" for any stunning item inviting immediate claim. Spotting none, she wandered from table to table, past linens, luggage, floor lamps and furniture. Pausing at a table with antebellum era merchandise, she examined old quilts and embroidered linens, a worn but serviceable churn, wooden rolling pins, well-used cutting boards, crocks, tole-painted tin ware, enameled bowls and ladles.

Beside old kitchenware stood weathered leather boots, insignia, canteens and military buttons. Not likely valuable if still here. Antique dealers typically took early first-looks. She could buy them all in hopes of selling them later to a dealer, but realized she didn't know enough about Civil War relics to distinguish rare from common.

Several teenagers wearing "Helper" T-shirts roamed the yard among shoppers. Signaling one, she asked, "This collection of old things, do you know where they came from?"

"From the attic. You might learn more from my aunt. She's in charge."

"Would you point her out so I can talk to her when she isn't busy?"

"Over there at the checkout table."

"Thanks. Say, some of these things look like they date way back," she pointed at some insignia, "maybe to the Civil War. Is that possible?"

The teen smiled. "Gee, no idea. They remodeled the house a few times from that really old stone farmhouse. This seedy stuff lived in the attic. Now my aunt's emptying everything to sell the place. Hauling all that stuff down the three flights of stairs to the yard nearly wasted my friends and me. It better sell so we don't have to lug it back again."

Jennifer flashed a commiserating smile. "I appreciate the info."

"Let me know if you need help carrying something to your car."

"Double thanks."

Moving through the sale, she collected an armful of intriguing small items. About to pay for them, she arrived at the last table before checkout, where the sight of something unexpected stopped her short. Her eyebrows rose and her mouth formed an O.

CHAPTER 2

Jennifer stared at an odd frame with a weird picture mounted inside. The frame's crafter had twisted thin branches and fastened them onto a rectangle of wood, leaving protruding errant twigs. Unlike conventional plain or baroque frames, this primitive folk art seemed alive, as if leaves might sprout any minute. The crafter's clever use of simple materials created a one-of-a-kind original.

But if the frame wasn't arresting enough, the haunting picture inside revealed a circle of trees through which one glimpsed a large flat-topped boulder with other big rocks atop it. Thrilled to find the frame she'd sought so long, she felt equally drawn by the amateur painting's mystique—the way the light filtered through the trees and played upon the glen's stones. Together, the frame and picture formed a stunning combination. Suddenly oblivious to all else, she stared at this item much as her dragon had stared at her. She edged her way through the elbow-to-elbow browsers pressed around this display table to reach for her quarry.

When a stranger's hands closer to the frame lifted it up, Jennifer felt a pang of acute distress. To search this long, at last find a frame she wasn't even sure existed and then have it plucked away so near her fingertips...

She swallowed hard, remembering the unwritten rules: at estate sales like this one, whoever picks up something has "walking rights" until he puts it down again, and whoever pays for something first

owns it. She watched the other set of hands rotate the frame front and back before lifting it away from the table.

Panicking, Jennifer followed, willing this person to discard the painting. But it didn't happen. She followed the buyer to the checkout line, desperately shaping a strategy. After the purchase, she'd make this new owner an offer. She'd double or triple the purchase price, anything to own it herself. But if the buyer refused to sell, then what? Karate?

Buyer stacked her purchases for Seller to total and fished money from her wallet, her purse and her pockets before discovering she hadn't enough to pay for all she'd chosen. Seller might let Buyer take it all for the money produced. Jennifer held her breath.

"If you leave out this framed picture, you'll have just enough," Seller suggested instead.

"Or I could take the picture and leave the other things," Buyer thought aloud. "Or would you hold the picture for me until I return with the rest of the money?"

How would Seller respond? Jennifer bit her lip.

Seller pondered Buyer's request and appeared to make a decision. Jennifer feared the worst.

"I don't think so," Seller apologized. "But it'll probably still be here when you come back with the money."

Jennifer felt a wave of relief. Buyer fussed over what to buy or leave until Seller mentioned the long line of other customers. Buyer appeared to decide, picking up the frame. Jennifer blanched. Then in a sudden, last-minute move, Buyer put down the frame and took the other items.

Next in line, Jennifer grabbed the framed picture so fast the Seller looked surprised. "I'll take it, thank you. I've looked for this for a very long time and was inches away from losing it."

"That's \$30 for the picture and..." she totaled the other purchases, announcing the sum.

As Jennifer paid Seller, she realized this woman was the only link to this picture's history. Once away from this sale, she'd sever that link forever.

She smiled at Seller. "You're busy now, but when you have a moment, may I ask some questions about the painting?"

"Actually, I'm about to take a break." She called to another woman. "Your turn, Sis."

Folding Jennifer's money into a pocket, Seller stood, untied her money apron and handed it to her sister. "Over here," she motioned to Jennifer.

"Do you know anything about this frame or the picture?"

"We found it in my mother's attic."

"Could I ask your mother where she got it?"

Seller grimaced. "Not any more. She died last month. That's what triggered this sale."

"Any idea how she happened to have it?"

Seller glanced around, making sure the sale ran smoothly before turning back to Jennifer. "My family's been in Virginia since the 1700s and my mother was proud of that heritage. She belonged to the DAR and the UDC."

"DAR? UDC?"

"Daughters of the American Revolution and United Daughters of the Confederacy. To join, you must prove your ancestors participated in those wars. You're accepted or rejected based on those credentials. My mother loved it and was a shoo-in, but it doesn't interest me at all. Those old wars are long over. The South lost and for me, that closed the Civil War book. But not so for Mama."

"So you found this in the attic with other items of similar age?"

"Everything in her attic looked and smelled old. This picture was with those old things. Because I'm forward-looking, I don't dwell on the past, but I imagine the attic stuff was mostly antiques. Whether my mother inherited them or bought them or they're from her family or my father's, I don't know. Still, I loved her and wish now we'd looked through the attic while she was still alive so I could learn more about that side of her—what she remembered and why she cherished these old things."

Seller glanced away. Her eyes moistened. She blinked back tears. "After all, I'm named for her and her mother and her mother's mother, so there's a link after all."

"Oh? What name?"

"Selby."

"Unusual..."

Selby nodded. "Rare, in fact. It's from the Old Norse branch of Old English in the Germanic language family. Selby means 'from the willow farm' or 'from the willow manor farm.'"

Jennifer got a better hold on the items she carried. "You seem to know about the past, after all."

Selby laughed. "Only because my mother told me this many times, having the same name. In grade school, kids teased me about it, so my mother told me what to say back to them. She'd faced the same thing when she was little. But it didn't help me."

"Why?"

"Then they called me Old Norse or Willow Farm."

"Kids!" Jennifer looked down at her new frame. "Where in Virginia did your mother grow up?"

"Right here in Fairfax County. Our ancestors owned a thousand-acre farm once. Back then I guess McLean and Great Falls were mostly farm land." Seller paused, remembering. "I do know one Civil War story Grannie drilled into us when we were young. She said a band of Union soldiers gunned down my great-great-grandfather on his farm during the Civil War. Without him the family couldn't make a go of it, and in time they sold off all but twenty-five acres. About sixty years ago, they sold more, reducing it to five acres surrounding the original homestead here. My mother redid the house beautifully, adding wings, patios and a five-car garage. But times have changed and my sister and I just can't afford to keep it. Heartbreaking. Really. We all grew up here. It's the end of an era for our family."

"I'm sorry to hear that." Jennifer pulled paper and pencil from her pocket. "If you think of anything else about the picture, would you please phone me? There's something about it." How could she explain? "Feels like it has a story to tell." She handed Selby her contact info.

"Sure," Selby said. "Oh, wait a minute. I do remember something. Let me look at the picture again. Yes, before this went to the attic, it hung near my grandmother's back door when I was little. I remember her saying this place in the picture really exists—somewhere in this area, I think. But if she told me where, I don't remember."

"You have my number in case you do. Thanks for my purchases and thanks for talking with me. Good luck with your sale."

Jennifer hefted her newest treasures into her car. She'd intended to visit more sales this morning, but excited about finding the frame at last, she smiled triumphantly and pointed her car toward home.

She glanced at the dragon watching her from the passenger seat box. Was it her imagination or did he give her a knowing smile?

CHAPTER 3

As her car approached her house in a quiet McLean cul-de-sac, Jennifer pressed visor buttons to open the driveway gate and lift the garage door. Her watch read 9:02am. With her husband playing golf and her just-graduated-college-daughter sleeping late, she expected no interruptions as she examined the startling framed painting she'd just bought. Her other garage sale "finds" could wait in the car until later—except for the dragon. She put him in her large purse, as one might tuck a small dog into a carrier.

On the way into the house, she probed a garage shelf for the painting she'd saved for this frame and tucked it under her arm. Inside, she lay her own painting atop the framed one. Yes, the right size, but not the effect she'd envisioned. Disappointed the frame didn't compliment her own painting as well as did the one mounted there, she'd erase any doubt by substituting hers.

She put the dragon on the table before studying her other purchase again. Besides the unusual frame, something about the painting's haunting scene again gripped her attention. She might end up hanging it as-is.

Turning the frame upside down on the kitchen counter, she pried aside the small rusty nails fastening the backing to the wood. She eased away the cardboard backing, but instead of the rear of the painting, she found cloth padding. She pulled it aside, discovering a second cloth underneath. Was that writing on the fabric?

She spread the cloths open, written side up, for a better view. On one appeared a jumble of words; the other looked like a crude map with a pirate-style "X." What in the world? Folded for so long, the wrinkles wouldn't flatten enough for a clear look at the scratchy pencil marks.

She hustled the cloths to the laundry room and laid them upside-down on the ironing board. With a warm iron, she gently pressed both fabrics on the non-writing side. Turning the cloths over, she saw this flattening improved legibility.

Were these two different pieces of cloth accidentally padding the same frame? She moved the pieces of fabric around on the ironing board, noting torn and even edges. As she brought them together, the torn sides matched exactly. Two pieces from one cloth. So these weren't separate fabrics randomly stuffed in the same place; they were related. Moreover, the same scratchy pencil had marked both pieces.

Back at the table, she grabbed paper and pen to copy recognizable words, line by line. Finished, she wasn't sure what to do next. Glancing up, she found the dragon staring directly at her. Didn't archeologists identify readable words on scrolls or reliefs and then *infer* missing or illegible words? After a couple of tries, she made substitutions for the handful of garbled words which seemed to fit the shapes of partial alphabet-letters, the size of the space to be filled, the logic of each sentence and the rhyming nature of what appeared a poem. Then she shot the dragon a conspiratorial look and read aloud:

"April 30, 1863

A RIDDLE: WHAT IS 'X'?

*A Union general stole X for the Blue
from Virginia families whose anger grew.
But the Gray found X in the general's lair
and rescued it back with daring flair.
Then danger loomed for Grays who carried X.
To avoid recapture, they quickly buried X.
When Gray Ghost sent his men to get it,
only one could but he'd regret it.
Pursued by Blues, he couldn't carry X.
His only choice: he must rebury X.
If X you find, your task is clear,
for pride of cause and honor dear.
You'll know it's X by JSM's knife.
Make haste then if you value your life.
Get X to General Robert E. Lee
for return to owners in our Confederacy."*

Jennifer leaned back in her chair. Didn't General Lee command the Confederate Army in the Civil War, and wasn't April 1863 a date during that conflict?

Grabbing another paper, she scribbled key words: Union General, Blue, Gray, Gray Ghost, JSM, General Robert E. Lee and Confederacy. She hustled this list to her computer and Googled "Dates of the American Civil War." Wikipedia confirmed 1861-1865. Next, she typed "Civil War Gray Ghost." Up popped links to John Singleton Mosby. This fit the riddle's initials, "JSM." A thrill rushed through her. Had she accidentally stumbled upon something historic? But what was X? Stolen by a Union general and found in his lair, which angered Virginia families.

How did JSM link to a Union general? She Googled "Mosby and the Union general." This provided numerous links to a Union General Edwin H. Stoughton. But nothing about X.

Googling "Gen. Stoughton's documents" yielded nothing. Next, she tried "Gen. Stoughton's valuables." This brought up a "Civil War Treasures" link, describing an alleged cache of gold and silver looted from wealthy southern families by Stoughton's invading army and later captured by Mosby during his raid on the general's headquarters at Fairfax Courthouse.

If Jennifer substituted "treasure" for "X," the riddle made sense. She flashed the dragon a victory smile. Was her imagination overactive or did he return the smile? What a silly thought.

She turned next to the crude map on the other cloth. Nobody could miss Potomac River, lettered on the far right along two parallel lines which ran north/south and then curved west. Might that curve on a standard map help narrow the location? Another line clearly showed a railroad. The printed names, Gentry and Parker, might mean individuals or farms she could trace.

But this looked like two maps in one and drawn to different scales: the larger showing the Potomac, railroad and farms and then a smaller insert detailing a stream, a stone wall, a winding path and a square structure with sharp right angles. Near the bottom was an odd sketch depicting a shape like a box with rounded corners and something she couldn't identify on top – an odd primitive hut?

Except for the river, railroad and proper names, the map's landmarks remained mysteries, but the spot marked by X, wherever that might be, stood clear.

She need not be a curator to realize the fragile cloth and faded writing would suffer from handling and folding, so she made copies

of them at her printer. Then she copied her interpretation pages, showing the key words and her inferred substitutions. Gently folding the cloth originals, she slid them into a large envelope for safekeeping and hid it on a laundry room shelf behind some vases.

"Now, why did I think it smart to do that?" she asked the dragon, who said nothing.

Back at the computer, she wiggled excitedly in her chair. If correct, she'd answered the riddle's question: *what* is X?

"But," she said aloud to the empty room, "the riddle's real message targets something different: *where* is X." If the map held the answer, could she follow it herself to discover the location?

If not, who could she trust to help her discreet search for artifacts that might affect history? Who had the important knowledge she needed without the greed treasure hunting often generated?

Now the dragon's wise stare made her uneasy, as if he read her mind. Did he know the secret of "X?"

CHAPTER 4

As she pondered the riddle, the map and the dragon, the phone rang.

“Hi, Jen. Its Mary Ann. Guess what. I think I’ve met a very special man.” It was Jennifer’s friendly neighbor who lived three houses away and whose husband had died two years earlier.

“Good morning, Mary Ann. So, tell me.”

“Well, you know it took me a year to land on my feet after Dan died. Although you and other friends rallied around me, I began to miss male companionship and signed up for that dating service where I met the losers. But a few weeks ago, I found this ad on Craigslist and he sounded nice and about my age, so we met in a public place, just like you’re supposed to. And, Jen, he’s quite good-looking – handsome, even. And has an out-going personality. He’s English and I love his accent. His name is Charlie and he has nice manners. We’ve been seeing each other regularly for three weeks, and I think I’m smitten.”

Grateful that Mary Ann paused this monologue to take a breath, Jennifer said, “You certainly sound excited. Have you met any of his friends?”

“Not yet and he hasn’t met mine. We wanted to see if the two of us clicked before we widened the circle.”

“Where does he live?”

“He rents an apartment near Tysons Corner. I’ve been there and it’s beautiful. He said he had a decorator furnish it for him and it looks like it. He let slip a few times that money was no

object and he takes me to great restaurants like L'Auberge Chez Francois and Ruth's Chris and The Palm. We're having wonderful times together."

"What does he do?"

"Some sort of import/export business involving antiques."

"Has he been to your house?"

"Yes, several times. I cooked for him one night, and last night on the patio, he grilled delicious steaks. It felt a lot like old times when Dan was alive. Of course, I realize Dan's gone forever and I have to move forward. Charlie may be the one to move forward with."

"Will Jason and I meet him soon?"

"Great idea, like a double date. Also, I'd appreciate Jason's impression of him."

"I understand. Shall I get my calendar?"

"No, I'm driving right now. May I call you tomorrow to set up a time?"

"Absolutely. Okay, bye for now." Jennifer ended the call. Did her friend remember their earlier discussion about potential pitfalls in these blind date situations? Or had infatuation swept caution away? Did this man answer Mary Ann's prayers or embody her worst nightmare? She wished Mary Ann a second chance at happiness. She knew numerous friends who lost a spouse and later found a loving companion to share their golden years.

The dragon stared at Jennifer, as if aware of those answers.

She reached again for the map, but the phone interrupted again.

She picked it up. "Hello."

"Help me. Help me...please," a frail old voice begged.

Jennifer immediately recognized this caller's voice but not the fragile, beseeching tone. Her grip tightened on the phone. "What is it? What's wrong?"

"I...it's happened so quickly I can hardly think straight right now."

Alarmed, Jennifer eased into the nearest chair, gripping the phone. Masking her worry, she forced herself to use a calm voice. "Take a deep breath and start at the beginning."

"I...I guess it began at the gas station. When I couldn't start the pump, a friendly young man at the next pump offered help. He said his name was John and we chatted while he filled my tank."

"Go on..."

"He asked if I garden. I told him I used to but now I paid a service to take care of my landscaping until they stopped coming

because...well, because I forgot to pay their bill. He said he did yard work and would charge less than the service that deserted me. But he'd have to see my property to give an estimate. He asked how I liked my Mercedes and if I did a lot of driving. I explained I didn't drive much anymore, just for necessities, because..."

"Because..." Jennifer prompted.

"Because...well, I didn't want to tell you this, but I failed my last driving test, so I guess I've been driving illegally for a few months. Instead of chastising me like you're probably about to, he laughed. He'd chauffeured in a past job and suggested the 'Driving Miss Daisy' thing. So John came back to my house, looked around, gave a really low estimate for the yard and said he's also a handyman. I showed him a few chores and he spotted several more. He changed my burned-out light bulbs, opened a window stuck shut for years and suggested a little paint would brighten up the woodwork. I agreed. So he gave me his prices, did the chores and I paid him."

"Yes..." Jennifer encouraged, wondering how this related to the call for help.

"The next day, he drove me to the grocery in my car, which made me feel rather queenly. On the way home, he mentioned his wife does domestic work and is also a great cook; would I like to give her a try? I agreed, thinking what good luck to meet him. She's also pleasant enough. She cleaned the house and cooked a fine lunch and dinner. And then..."

Jennifer shifted the phone to her other hand because she'd gripped it so tightly her fingers tingled. "And then..." she urged.

"Then when they returned the next day he looked sad for the first time. He said they had to move from their rented house because the owner decided to sell it and they had to be out today. They found a nice furnished place but couldn't move in for two days. He said money was tight and they were trying to figure out a place to stay for two nights. Well, I looked around my big, empty house and thought I could be gracious to this nice, hard-working young couple, so I offered to let them stay here. They moved in and..." the voice trailed away.

"And?"

"And it should be wonderful because Jane cooks, cleans house and goes with me every time I leave the house so I have a companion. But..."

"But?"

"But they still haven't left and it's been over a week."

"Did you tell them to go?"

"I don't like confrontations or acting impolite, but I hinted. Weren't they only staying two nights? Yes, but their new place had a roof leak and the owner needed another week for repairs. They always have believable answers for my questions, ones that involve staying here longer."

"Are you all right otherwise? Have they harmed you?"

"Well, yes and no. I feel like a prisoner in my own house. John drives me where I want to go, so he has my car keys and they've hidden the phones so I can't make calls. I wonder if they put something in my food, because I sleep a lot more than I used to."

"Without a phone, how are you calling me now?"

"You know, Chelsea's done my hair at the same beauty shop for thirty years. That's where I am now. Chelsea let me borrow her cellphone, and I'm hiding in the ladies room because Jane stays to watch and listen whenever I leave the house. I wonder now if it's to make sure I don't contact anyone. She listens to every word I say. She's sitting in the shop right now waiting for me to come out so John can drive us home."

"Can you get help from a neighbor?"

"No. Those two watch me every minute I'm awake. They seem like they're just being nice, but they don't leave. They seemed so interested in me and learning all about my family and friends. Since I live alone, I enjoyed someone to talk with. Looking back now, I realize they asked me a lot of questions and I told them much more than I should have. But in the beginning they seemed so... wholesome and likeable that I wasn't at all suspicious."

"What if I told them to get out?"

The voiced sobered. "I don't feel comfortable about that. What if it makes them angry? How could I defend myself?"

"I think I should call the police right now. They will..."

"No. Please, Jennifer, just come here yourself to help me. Couldn't you get to Florida tomorrow on a plane...or maybe even tonight? I hate to bother you, dear, but I...I'm scared."

"You are never a bother to me. Look, I'll check flights and get to Naples today if possible, latest tomorrow. Can you manage until then?"

"I...I hope so. Thank you, Jen. I'm so confused, I don't know what to do."

"Try to relax now and don't worry. I'll be with you in less than twenty-four hours. Just hang on and know I'm coming to

rescue you." A sudden thought struck her and she added quickly, "Remember, this is our secret. Don't tell John and Jane I'm coming."

"All right, our secret. Thank you, Jennifer. I love you, dear."

"Love you, too, Mom."

Jennifer's mind raced. Would her mother stay safe until she arrived?

CHAPTER 5

Jennifer ended the call, sighed and cradled her face in her hands. She'd balanced small signs of her mother's forgetfulness against her equally strong wish to live independently in the same Florida neighborhood familiar to her for thirty years. This worked if her mother could drive, handle daily living and decision-making on her own. Finding caretakers to deal with a senior's creeping dependence offered solutions but also risks. Paid help could neglect or otherwise take advantage of an elder without a trusted advocate nearby to check.

But now Jennifer recognized having nobody on site left her mother at even greater risk, as today's revelation proved. Should she have insisted on local oversight to prevent her mother's gradual aging issues escalating into this crisis?

Jennifer inhaled deeply, acknowledging this wasn't her first sudden race to Florida. Besides the "want to" trips, when she and Jason visited her mother to exchange Naples' warm winter sunshine for McLean's blustery winters, were the anxious "have to" trips. Her mother's ambulance ride to the ER triggered Jennifer's first dash to Naples. Fortunately, the resulting A-fib diagnosis could be treated with prescriptions—assuming her mother remembered to take the meds.

When her mother's beloved Jaguar developed expensive mechanical troubles, Jason flew down to help select a new car. The Mercedes they chose—he for the dependable machinery, she for the

aristocratic lines and plush interior – served her well until today’s revelation about no driver’s license.

And the lost purse episode, when Jennifer rushed to Naples to resolve the missing checkbook and credit cards and to get her mother a new driver’s license at DMV. Because the purse also held her keys, they changed locks on her house. And, of course, replaced the missing cellphone.

Still another time, Jennifer persuaded her mother to simplify life with a Naples home-care group sending someone daily to cook and help with shopping and light housework. After the first week, her mother locked them out, certain they were stealing her sterling silver, one piece at a time.

Forays to Florida to stomp out these brushfires weren’t convenient for a daughter living this far away. After today’s experience, she knew her mother shouldn’t live alone any longer. Should she search out senior housing for her in Naples or coax her here to McLean, where they could keep an eye on her? Getting her to agree to such a move promised a battle.

She glanced at her watch. Ten in the morning. Back at her computer, she pushed aside copies of the riddle, her translation attempt, and the map in order to type in her travel options. She booked a flight, leaned back in her chair, stared at the ceiling and closed her eyes. So much to do to get ready in so little time.

She scribbled a hasty to-do list, wrote down meal suggestions for food already in the refrigerator and packed a suitcase. On impulse, she threw in her copies of information from the cloths. Then she cancelled appointments for two weeks and knocked on her daughter’s bedroom door.

“What is it?” a sleepy voice asked.

“Grammy needs me, Becca. My flight’s at 1:00. Any chance you could dash me to Dulles in half an hour? I could drive and park myself but I don’t know how long I’ll be away and don’t want to leave my car in the airport garage for weeks.”

After a pause to comprehend, again the sleepy voice managed, “Okay, Mom. I...I’ll be ready soon.”

“Thanks, hon.” she said to the closed door. Next, she phoned Jason. “Jay, sorry to bother you on the golf course, but...” and she explained her impromptu trip of unknown length.

“Do you think this is the beginning of what we talked about for your Mom...moving her out of her Florida house and close to us?”

"Maybe, but she won't cooperate. It means stress between us instead of the good memories I'd like in my final years with her. Wish you were there with me, because she'd listen to you. She thinks you're wise and wonderful."

He chuckled, "Well, she got that right."

"Indeed, she did." Jennifer smiled. "I'll make a list for you of things happening while I'm gone, like Celeste cleaning house on Tuesday. I've left a few meals, but you'll soon be on your own."

"Don't worry, just new reasons to appreciate you. Becca and I'll bachelor it for a week. After all, I survived in the military."

"Yes, but the mess hall fed you or you had those meals-ready-to-eat."

He groaned. "Just thinking of MRE's kills my appetite. I'll be fine, Jen. It's you I'm worried about. Go by the police station first and get a cop to go with you before you square off with this John and Jane duo. They think they're on to a good thing and may not give up easily. Your Mom might not realize it, but they could even be armed."

"Jay, I hadn't thought of that, but you're right. Okay, I won't go alone." She looked from her to-do list to her watch. "Becca's taking me. My flight's at 1:00 and I must arrive an hour before, so I'll leave for Dulles by 11:00. Love you, hon. I'll miss you and thanks for being understanding about Mom."

"At least I got lucky in the mother-in-law department."

"You think so now, but who knows what's ahead if she..."

"Don't worry, I'll wear my FH and DSIL hero cape and goggles for the task."

She wrinkled her nose, trying to puzzle this out. "FH and DSIL?"

"Fearless Husband and Devoted Son-in-Law."

* * * * *

Traffic slowed as they drove toward Dulles airport. "Probably an accident," Becca guessed, eyeing the crawling line of cars snaking ahead. "Not even a steady creep, just stop-and-go."

"I can't miss my plane. Your Grammy needs me..."

"Worst case, Mom, you can catch the next flight. Why not reserve a seat right now so you have one if you need it?"

Whipping out her cellphone, Jennifer did.

"Look, Mom, not everybody makes it to the airport an hour before flight time. Your boarding pass and carry-on give you an

edge. Once through security and the shuttle train, maybe you can run for it."

Jennifer nodded but then admitted, "Anything preventing getting to Grammy fast is a worry, but you're right, the later plane is Plan B."

They inched along for ten miles as XM radio music played. Jennifer tried not to fidget.

"Look, Mom. Traffic just opened up. No accident or logical explanation for the slow-down. Go figure."

Jennifer's watch read 12:20. "I might still make it if the security line's short and the shuttle train out to the planes is quick."

"...and if your departure gate is near the shuttle gate. Last time I flew they said their new policy is closing the plane door ten minutes before departure."

Jennifer gathered her purse, double-checked her boarding pass and when they reached the ticketing curb, she jumped out. "Love you, Becca. Thanks for getting me here...physically and mentally." She grabbed her suitcase, blew her daughter a kiss and dashed into the terminal.

Inside, she located her gate on the electronic board displaying flight information. The security line moved fast. Once through, she hurried for the shuttle train. At the departure terminal she rushed toward her plane's gate. Empty waiting-area seats told her the plane had already boarded as she dashed up to hand the agent her ticket.

"Sorry, economy seats are full. When you didn't arrive on time, we gave your seat to someone else. We're just closing the door."

Jennifer fought tears. "Please, I just learned this morning that my mother's in critical trouble. Her life's in danger. She's desperate for me to help her. I left home with plenty of time but traffic stalled on the highway. Please. Please let me on this plane? I must get to my mother."

The ticket agent frowned and shook her head as the boarding agent came up the ramp.

"Ready to close," he said.

With the next flight hours away and her mother at risk, every minute counted toward her rescue. Jennifer choked back a sob, anguish clear on her face.

CHAPTER 6

The impatient airline gate attendant looked up, studied Jennifer and shifted uneasily. The agent recognized how this passenger's obvious distress mirrored her own only last week when she'd rushed to Chicago to help her ailing father. Sudden empathy softened her standard corporate response, and the agent made a snap decision. She studied the boarding pass in her hand. "Just this last passenger, Jennifer Shannon. Put her in the empty in first."

As the boarding agent motioned Jennifer down the ramp to the plane, she touched the gate agent's arm. "Thank you for this kindness." Then she hurried down the jet way.

Inside the plane, the flight attendant guided her to the last empty first-class seat and hefted her carry-on into the overhead rack. She eased into her seat, buckled up and speed-dialed her phone as the plane pushed back. "Becca, please tell Daddy I made the flight. Yes...a miracle and I *am* breathless. Can't talk now – time to turn phone to airplane mode. Call you tonight. Please cancel that later plane for me." She gave her the flight number, ended the call and leaned back.

The flight attendant approached, "Would you like something to drink?"

"Yes, merlot, please." She chuckled at the wild contrast from her near hysteria a few minutes ago to being aboard and en route to her mother. She'd toast this good luck with the wine.

Grateful to board the flight at all, never mind in first class, she closed her eyes, listening to familiar taxi and take-off sounds. Her pounding heart began to slow. She opened her eyes to find the plane airborne. Glancing initially at fellow passengers enjoying the comfortable first class seats and attentive service, she turned toward her seatmate.

He gazed out the window at the view, a closed book in his lap. The title read, "Civil War Relics." He was clean shaven, dressed in expensive casual clothes. His carefully groomed white hair contrasted with a sun-tanned face. His prominent nose and thin lips combined into a hard profile. The manicured hand resting on the book had avoided hard labor. Something "creepy" about him, although Jennifer questioned superficial first impressions. On his tray sat two small empty airline bottles of Jack Daniels beside an empty glass.

"Hello," she said companionably. "Do you fly often?"

"Yes and I loathe commercial flights. But my own plane's hangared for repairs."

"Do you live here in the DC area or Florida?"

He turned toward her. "Both."

Their drinks came. He filled his glass and she tried again. "How is that?"

"How is what?"

"That you live in both places?"

"I have interests in Naples, business in Great Falls and homes in both."

"Is one of those interests connected with the Civil War?"

A sharp, suspicious look crossed his face, as if uneasy at a stranger's insider knowledge.

She gestured. "...the title of the book in your lap,"

"Oh... yes."

"Do you think many Virginians still feel reverence about the Civil War, even though the fighting ended over 150 years ago?" she asked.

"In history's terms, that's like minutes ago," he admonished.

Jennifer plumbed her cursory Civil War knowledge. She recognized battles like Gettysburg, had read *Andersonville* in college, saw *Gone with the Wind* twice, *Cold Mountain* once and watched some of Ken Burns' Civil War Series on public TV. Plus her latest Google searches relating to the newly found map and riddle. Admittedly, she knew little.

"Why does the Civil War draw *your* attention?" she asked.

He looked pensive before giving her a sudden sidelong look. "Are you really interested or making conversation?"

Surprised, Jennifer still didn't hesitate, "Unless we talk about the Civil War, it's just another ordinary flight. But here's my chance to learn something new. Of course I'm interested."

He held the book, its spine in his right hand, and lightly riffled the pages with his left thumb, as if releasing the volume's mysteries into the air. Abruptly, he shut the book.

"If you're American, our Civil War's results impact your way of life today in a general way. If you had relatives who fought in that war, it impacts your life in a personal way. If you live on the very land where the battles raged, it impacts you in an emotional, even a metaphysical way."

Jennifer sipped her wine, not wanting to interrupt his train of thought. At that moment, the flight attendant offered them refills. Jennifer shook her head, but her seatmate again held up two fingers. Obliging, the attendant brought him two more bottles, scooping away his two empties.

"So how has it affected you?" she prompted.

"Though bloody, this war's gore doesn't differ significantly from that in other wars. Its leaders' distinct personalities, like Robert E. Lee or Abraham Lincoln, seemed larger than life, but other wars had legendary leaders like MacArthur, Genghis Khan or Alexander the Great. Here, each side fought with passion for the cause they believed in, but that's also common in other wars, except when mercenaries are employed."

"...who fight for anybody who pays them against any enemy their employer chooses," she volunteered. "So those similarities aside, what was different?"

"History's other wars were in other times, on other turf and for other reasons. For Americans, this was 'our' war with causes wrenching enough to pit fathers against sons and brothers against cousins and each other. This war changed our country's course while ravaging the land and the people it touched. Relics from those deadly battles turn up daily in Virginia's fields, woods and urban excavations."

"Relics like the ones in your book?"

He inhaled one of his drinks. "Exactly."

"So what's your role in this play?"

He managed a deprecating smile, as if he were a celebrity she stupidly failed to recognize. "I guess you could say I'm a collector... and very particular about what I choose."

"A personal collection or a public collection, like a museum?"

"A personal collection, though when I find duplicates, I sometimes offer them to museums."

"Then your collection must outshine most other collections?"

Despite his patronizing expression, he chuckled at his own secret joke. "You might say that."

"So what happens if you and another collector vie for the same artifact?"

He turned toward her, eyes beady. A feral grin creased his face. "That's when the real fun begins. Money smooths most deals, and money isn't a problem for me. It's amusing to guess what cash offer proves irresistible for a 'priceless' artifact. Breaking the seller is part of the game. In the end, whether with money or otherwise," his eyes narrowed, "I always get what I want – whatever it takes."

His face had turned cruel. His cold voice and ominous words sent a chill prickling across Jennifer's neck and down her shoulders. She stared with surprise at the raised hairs on her forearms.

CHAPTER 7

As the flight attendant approached, Jennifer hugged herself, puzzled at her negative reaction to her seatmate. The attendant smiled. "Another round?" Her seatmate held up two fingers. Jennifer declined.

"So you're used to getting what you want?" she asked the collector.

"Why not?" he gave a drunken sneer. "The last time I didn't get what I want, I was seven years old."

"What happened then?"

His harsh laugh caused her to turn toward him. Unnerving how his normal expression morphed into slitted eyes and mean mouth. He's reliving it right this minute, she thought. Would he reveal his shelved memory or close up?

He drained another airline liquor bottle into his glass and drank deeply. "Now I'm financially comfortable, but my fortune is self-made." Rancor filled his voice. "My middle-class parents wouldn't buy me the red ten-speed Schwinn Flyer bicycle I wanted that Christmas. When Santa brought one to a six-year-old neighbor one street away, you might say I made the boy an offer he couldn't refuse. The bike was mine. The boy told *his* parents the story I provided him: two men came by in a car, grabbed his bicycle and reached to take him also, but he ran away just in time. I told *my* parents a stranger riding in a limousine gave me the bike. The two sets of parents weren't acquainted and never put the two stories together."

Cautious now, Jennifer asked, "And what was the offer the boy couldn't refuse?"

Alcohol made his eyes rheumy, but he poured another drink. "I told him my plan for his dog," he slurred, "then for his little sister and then I'd come for him. I almost lost him when he said he hated his sister, but fortunately, he loved his dog." His laugh showed a cruel edge.

"And he believed you?"

He downed his last drink. "I can be...*persuasive* when I choose."

His smirk made her uneasy. She changed the subject. "How do you find these relics?"

He didn't answer right away, as if reluctant to pull himself away from the childhood memory. "I prowl sources myself and get input from finders – some on the internet, some in pawn shops or stores specializing in Civil War artifacts, and some collectors like me who want to trade. They earn a nice finder's fee if they locate something I want, so they're eager to deal."

"After all this time since that war, does anything new ever turn up?"

"Mainly documents or buried treasure."

The riddle and the map! He had her attention, but she didn't want to reveal too much. "*Treasure?*" She feigned surprise. "Are you kidding?"

"No. Southern plantation owners buried valuables on their property to protect them from plundering Union troops or deserters or carpetbaggers. Besides the small troves are occasional big ones. For example, in April 1865 as the victorious Union Army marched on the South's capital of Richmond, President Jeff Davis took with him the Confederate Treasury – plus gold reserves from Richmond banks to prevent their capture. But he reached his destination without those millions, rumored to be buried somewhere between Richmond and Georgia. Did plantation owners divide the treasure and bury it in many places? Did soldiers steal it? Jury's out. In theory, large parts remain undiscovered."

"There are others?"

"Sure. Rumors persist about treasure buried at Boswell's Tavern, Carter's Grove Plantation, Portsmouth, Abraham Smith's Poor Valley plantation, Beale's treasure in the Blue Ridge Mountains, Mount Rogers where a Confederate major buried loot stolen by his men, Roanoke, McIntosh Farms where a Confederate general and his slaves allegedly buried \$4 million and, of course, Mosby's find."

Her mental antenna rose. She stared at him. "Mosby found treasure?"

"Well, that's one of the rumors. Story goes he rescued it from a Union general he captured in a town called Fairfax Courthouse. Then, with a battle threatening, he buried it somewhere along the road between the capture site and Centreville."

She sat up straight in her seat. "Did Mosby go back for the treasure?"

"You mean if it ever existed. Well, if he tried, he failed, because he died nearly penniless."

"Has any Civil War treasure been found?"

"In the 1970s a treasure hunter found silver coins and plates worth \$20,000 in a Roanoke park, but with the state and government wanting all or a cut, most treasure hunters have little incentive now to publically reveal a find."

Could this knowledgeable collector help her better understand what she'd found inside the frame? Something creepy about him warned her not to ask. "So...what if I stumble upon a Civil War artifact or treasure when I'm out in the woods?"

He slid a business card from his shirt pocket and handed it to her. "Why, then you call me."

The name written on the card was "William Early." He looked at her expectantly.

"I don't recognize the name."

"Are you illiterate about this war?" he slurred.

"Apparently."

He harrumphed, then gestured with alcohol-fueled importance, "Confederate General Jubal Early is my ancestor in that War of Rebellion, although the Earlys have lived in America since the 1700s, long before that war."

"No wonder you identify."

He linked words into sentences with inebriated care now. "Identify is too...too shallow a word." Then his tone turned reverent. "For me, the Civil War is a...a living, pulsing entity engulfing me. The thousands of poignant individual tales, the collective tragedy of lost causes. Lost lives and broken families. The dynamic outcome... changed the American way of life, as...as well as history." He breathed rapidly, eyes glistening with manic zeal.

Jennifer felt another chill tingle her neck and arms. Something about him frightened her.

Finally, she ventured, "How long have you felt this strongly about it?"

"Since the day I was born."

She shot him a quick look. Was this drunken exaggeration? But he'd leaned back and closed his eyes. Within minutes, he lapsed into a drunken slumber, snoring gently until the plane landed two hours later in Ft. Myers, Florida.

When the plane taxied to a stop and the seatbelt sign blinked off, she stood, fumbling to retrieve her bag from the overhead rack.

"Out of my way, please," he said impatiently. Making no effort to assist her with her luggage, he lurched past her into the aisle and out of the aircraft.

Was he the sociopath he seemed or just a rude, self-centered clod? Either way, she hoped never to see him again.

CHAPTER 8

After deplaning at the Ft. Myers airport and renting a car, Jennifer zoomed down I-75 toward her Naples exit. Her first stop: the local Collier County Sheriff's office, where she explained her mother's situation to the desk sergeant.

"Senior problem, Cliff," the receptionist said into her phone.

Moments later, a middle-aged man appeared. "Deputy Cliff Goodwin. How can I help you?"

He listened attentively as Jennifer described her mother's phone call, the controlling couple who wouldn't leave and the concern about them administering sleeping drugs.

"Usually you file a report and we look into it later. But I'm heading out anyway and I'll just follow you to your mother's house in case that Doe couple causes trouble."

"The Doe couple?"

"John Doe, Jane Doe. Not their real monikers but handy aliases 'til we know who they are."

Jennifer handed him a piece of paper. "Here's her address in case we're separated. I have a key for the front door. Instead of warning them by ringing the doorbell, shall we unlock the front door and catch them by surprise?"

"Fine, miss, except I'll go in first in case they have weapons. Once I determine it's safe, then you come right behind me."

Ten minutes later, they walked up the sidewalk to the house, eyeing the windows for movement. Jennifer tried to hide her

apprehension as the detective slid her key into the lock. He surprised her by pulling out his pistol before gently pushing the door open.

"Police. I'm coming inside. Police." No answer. Repeating what he'd said, he moved into the foyer, gun poised in his right hand while his other hand motioned Jennifer to stay behind him.

As they both looked left and right, Jennifer gasped. Empty drawers lay scattered on the floor in her mother's once-tidy living room; chairs and tables knocked over, rugs pushed aside, lamps askew, empty nails and pale paint showed on walls where paintings once hung.

Again, signaling Jennifer to stay back, the detective jerked open the door to the garage and led the way in with his gun muzzle. Jennifer peered past him into the empty space.

"My mother's Mercedes. It's gone," Jennifer whispered. "And see those boxes and newspapers. The Doe couple must have packed up Mom's things right here, where neighbors couldn't see."

"Do you know her car's license number?"

"No."

"Never mind. I'll radio it in. What's her full name?"

"Frances Louise Ryerson." His radio crackled. "We have a crime scene here." He gave the address. "Send backup."

"My mother!" Jennifer's voice rose with urgency. "If they've done this to her house, what have they done to *her*?" She started for the stairs but the detective blocked her way.

"You brought me here in case you found this kind of situation. Let me do my job. I'll look for her, but you need to wait in your car until I say it's safe inside."

"I'm not leaving this house until I know she's all right."

He took her elbow firmly. "Yes, you are. I won't take long and I'll tell you exactly what I find as soon as I come out. The faster you leave, the sooner I can look for your mother."

"But..."

"Do you want me to find her or do you want to waste time?"

"But, I..." Jennifer found herself standing outside the front door and heard the lock click behind her, as if he knew she planned to sneak back in when he went upstairs.

At first, she perched unhappily on the front step, but as Florida's summer heat overtook her, she climbed into her car and turned on the air conditioning.

A car marked "Sheriff" pulled to the curb, and another deputy hurried to the house. He entered quickly when Goodwin opened the door for him.

As minutes ticked by, Jennifer shifted impatiently. What could take this long? Were the "Does" inside? If so, did the deputies subdue them or visa-versa? More important, what about her mother? Was she there? Or had the Does taken her away? Had they hurt her? Was she even alive?

Jennifer choked back a sob.

CHAPTER 9

Pistols drawn, Goodwin and his backup checked the downstairs rooms, trashed like the others but with no sign of the suspects or Frances Ryerson. They crept up the stairs. Easing higher, one step at a time, Goodwin felt a growing concern for the mother's welfare.

At the top of the stairs, all doors but one stood ajar as they edged down the hall, hyper-alert for sound or movement. Goodwin eased the first door open wider and inched inside behind his weapon.

Nobody there, although they'd tossed this room like those downstairs. He checked the closet, bathroom and under the bed. "Clear." His companion repeated the same drill in the second and third bedrooms. "Clear," he confirmed. To leave no space unexamined, Goodwin jerked open the two linen closet closed doors and another bathroom facing the hall. He studied the ceiling for attic access.

Only one closed hallway door left. He flung it open, gun pointed, shouldered his way inside and found himself in the master bedroom. The other deputy shadowed his movements.

Last chance—if Ryerson wasn't here, the Does might have kidnapped her...or worse.

They gazed into the wrecked room. Ryerson wasn't in the bed, on the loveseat or at the desk. Goodwin's partner checked the large bathroom. Empty. Anyone still in the house had to be close. Goodwin turned to the walk-in closet's closed louvered double

We hope you enjoyed this brief look at Suzi Weinert's third novel of the Garage Sale Mystery Series. To order a copy, please click on the appropriate links on this page. For a copy of this book, click this link, [Garage Sale Riddle](#). For the other books in the series, click those links below.

If you have not had the chance to read Suzi Weinert's other books from *The Garage Sale Mystery Series*, here is your opportunity to read more stories about Jennifer Shannon's thrilling adventures springing from garage sale shopping. The first title is [Garage Sale Stalker](#), available from www.bluewaterpress.com/GSS and her second title is [Garage Sale Diamonds](#), found at www.bluewaterpress.com/GSD. Both of these tales will keep you on the edge throughout your reading.