

Terry Shames writes the Samuel Craddock series about a former police chief who is

pressed back into service in his older years. She can be contacted at www.terryshames.com.

Rancho de Taos by Gay Toltl Kinman

When is a sleuth not a sleuth? When she's a catalyst. And that's what my newly-widowed narrator is in **Death in Rancho Las Amigas**. As you might have guessed, I changed the name from Rancho de Taos to Rancho Las Amigas. In reality, the original Las Amigas were French nuns, arriving on the site in the 1730s. In the early 1800s they, and many others in the area, died from the influenza epidemic.

I love the Taos area, and have been there many times. I was particularly interested in Rancho de Taos as a setting. It is shaped like a large horseshoe, with the buildings being part of the iron forming the shoe. In the center, between the two prongs is an adobe church, similar to the one memorialized by Georgia O'Keeffe in her painting *Ranchos Church*.

The whole area has atmosphere, and the setting evoked the story, which serendipitously wrote itself—an event that I have only experienced twice before.

In the story the narrator, a poet, in fact, a professor of poetry, goes there to heal. It was an area where she and her late husband spent many happy trips. Maybe, she thinks, she can recapture those happy times—and she is drawn to the church—San Francisco de Assis. She feels a peace in the newly-re-modeled small apartment near the church, as there's not much around except nature.

She has the apartment for a month, then it will be the padre's when he returns from his back-packing trip.

Alas, in mysteries there is no way to tell about the story without giving away the plot. A consortium has nefarious plans for the area but because they think she is someone from a government agency who has come to spy on them, they rush prematurely into their game plan. Thinking there is a traitor in their midst forces them into deeds they had never planned on.

Every year there is a 'mudding' event to restore the church—it is after all adobe, which is mud. The next morning after the mudding she finds a body—definitely not an accident.

The consortium can't kill her just yet—it would look too suspicious. And besides they don't know who is watching out for her—and watching them.

A deputy sheriff takes her to a few of the local sites (which the reader can enjoy vicariously). In addition, she meets up with some bad guys and some good guys, and can't really tell the difference, because she's not looking for anything—just trying to heal mentally and physically.

Since it's a mystery, all is not what it seems, nor are the people she meets.

Death in Rancho Las Amigas is a stand-alone. I've emptied my mental cauldron on

the area—no more stories lurk in the area for me. At least I don't think so.

Exciting News!

Now for the exciting news! As you read this, Harley Jane Kozak, fantastic actor, fantastic author and fantastic person, has finished recording **Death in Rancho Las Amigas** for Audible from ACX. Hearing the words from her gave me an outer-world mental sensation. I can't explain how I feel, but 'euphoric' might well be one of the words. So the book is available on Audible. What could be better? Nobel? Pulitzer? Nah—this is better!

There is conflict in life, as there is in fiction. The words don't flow like cream from page to mouth to recording. There are a few steps in between. (Jessica Kaye's **The Guide to Publishing Audiobooks: How to Produce and Sell an Audiobook** is an excellent way to learn about all that goes into the industry.)

Harley said she was a 'producer' and I instantly thought *Academy Awards here we*

White-Haired Love by Chris Knopf

I conceived of my character Sam Acquillo when I was about thirty years old. I wanted a guy who was around fifty-two, old enough to have had done a few things, but still young enough to throw a punch if necessary. I thought it was a bold move to place my main guy so distant in the future, so far removed from my own life experience.

As it turned out, I didn't publish my first

come. 'Producer,' however, is the term used by Audible and other companies to denote the 'reader.' As mentioned above, there's more to it than just reading aloud. The producer needs a good studio, a good sound engineer, and a director.

Harley updated her equipment and bought a new sound booth with a/c, upgraded the operating systems on her Mac, and threw in some words like Studio One, DAW—Digital Audio Workstation—and something about learning new software. My eyes had crossed by the time I finished reading her email. It was hard to decide whether to laugh or cry at all the obstacles/crises/conflicts she had to overcome. (The next book she writes may be **Dating Dead Minds**.)

Bottom line is *It's a Go!!*

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Sam book until I had caught up with Sam's age, so relating to his character attributes was no longer a stretch. With the exception of throwing a decent punch.

At this point, fifty-two is looking like the age of a tender babe. I've written Sam for about eighteen years, so at some point I had to either eliminate his physical prowess, or cheat back the calendar. His dog, Eddie, the