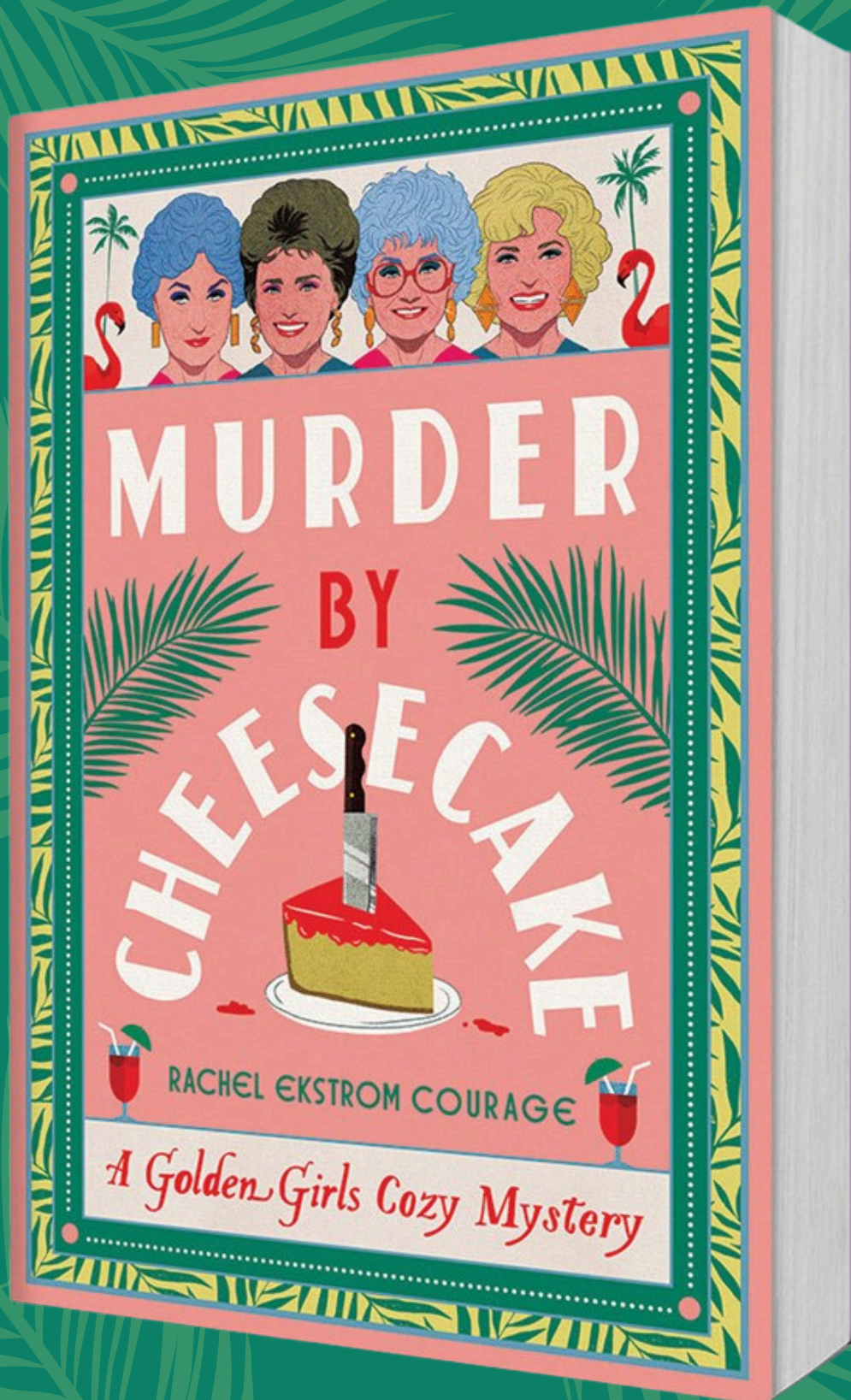


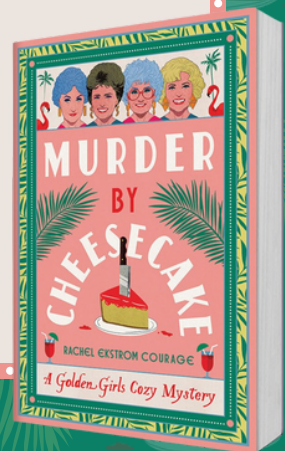
# BOOK CLUB KIT



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**CLICK THE PAGE TITLE TO BE TAKEN  
DIRECTLY TO THAT SECTION!**



# NOTE TO READERS

## SPOILER WARNING

This kit was created for book clubs to use in their discussions of *Murder by Cheesecake* by Rachel Ekstrom Courage and contains spoilers.

## CONTENT WARNINGS

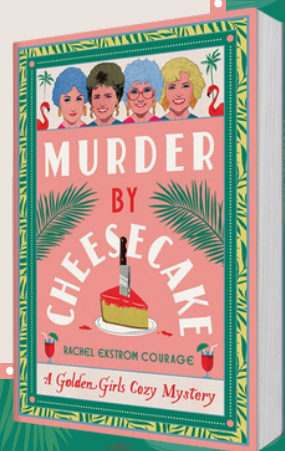
Murder (off-page)

Attempted murder (on page)

Discovery of a dead body

Kidnapping

For a full list of reader-submitted content warnings visit [The Storygraph](https://www.thestorygraph.com).





# AUTHOR INTERVIEW

**What was your relationship like with *The Golden Girls* before you began to write *Murder by Cheesecake*?**

I'm a long-time fan, but I rediscovered my love for *The Golden Girls* during the early days of the pandemic when it became my comfort watch. My nervous system would calm down once the show intro played. The warmth of the friendship between Dorothy, Rose, Blanche, and Sophia and all the fabulous jokes were my escape during a tough time.

**What inspired you to set the book around a wedding and Rose's family?**

I wanted to bring in goofy St. Olaf traditions while also keeping the first book in the familiar setting of Miami. A destination wedding is already full of potential for shenanigans and problems—even without a dead body to complicate matters. Weddings are also fun and joyful occasions, and I thought the Girls would plan an amazing one, even in challenging circumstances.

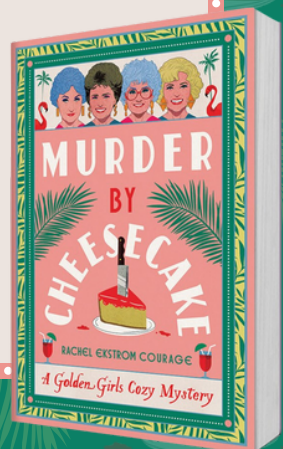
**What do you think draws audiences to cozy mysteries?**

I love cozies for the characters, the settings, and the vibes. I love to spend time with characters that feel like new or old friends, and I really wanted the experience of reading this novel to feel like sharing a slice of cheesecake with Girls. Cozies explore dark themes—like crime and murder—but they also center other aspects of life, and I love that balance.

**Were there challenges when it came to writing about a show set in the 80s?**

*The Golden Girls* was ahead of its time in so many ways, which made it a joy to translate for modern audiences with 21st-century sensibilities.

The main challenge came with trying to translate such an iconic show into prose. The show had excellent writing, and the performances are top-notch. So much humor and emotion can be conveyed with tone or visually with actors' expressions and gestures—and I wanted to make sure that reading this book felt like a fun, immersive, and nostalgic reading experience... which can feel a bit different from watching TV or reading a television script.





# AUTHOR INTERVIEW

**Were there ways that you wanted to bring in some authentic experiences or memories into the storytelling?**

While I was writing *Murder by Cheesecake*, I immersed myself in the *Golden Girls* world—watching the show over and over, and of course, taking my cheesecake-tasting duties seriously.

I asked family members who lived in Miami in the 80s lots of questions about life during that time, since I was a little kid then, and some of those details pepper the book. I enjoyed letting out my goofy and wholesome side in Rose's sections, and my more analytical side with Dorothy.

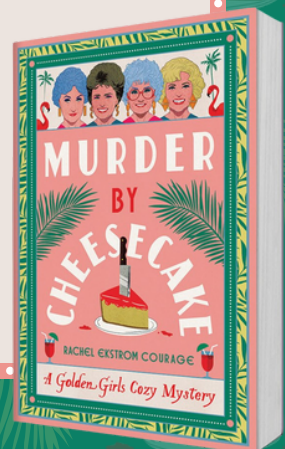
The *Golden Girls* have such a universal appeal, so it's easy to identify with one or more of the girls—and I had fun adding in little tidbits from my own life. For example, at bridal showers in my family, we'll make a hat for the bride out of a paper plate and pile ribbons from the gifts on her head... and I took that tradition to the extreme for Nettie.

**When it came to writing *Murder by Cheesecake*, which of the *Golden Girls* was the most fun to write?**

I really identify with Rose and Dorothy the most, but the quips from Sophia and Blanche allowed me to be a little more cutting (in Sophia's case) or raunchy (as Blanche) than I would normally be, and that was really fun!

**Your cheesecake recipe is featured at the back of the book! If you were to sit down and share a slice with just one of the *Golden Girls* who would it be and why?**

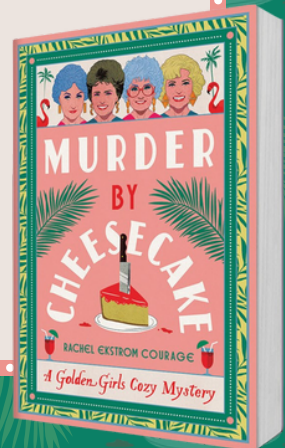
Yes—and it's delicious! I'm very lucky to have grown up with a mom who is an excellent cheesecake baker, and I asked for her help when developing a new recipe for the book. I wanted it to be traditional enough to appeal to lots of people and to also have some St. Olaf flavor. Honestly, I love the girls and would want to share it with all of them. If I had to pick, I'd sit down with Dorothy, since I put her through so much in this novel, and we'd talk about our favorite books and have a lot of laughs.



# AUTHOR INTERVIEW

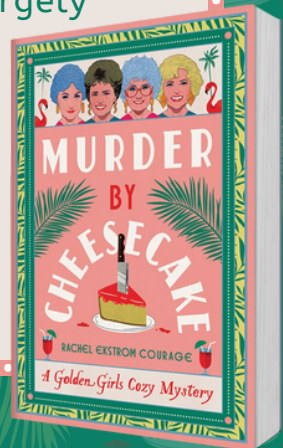
**What can readers expect from the rest of the series?**

In this book, Dorothy and Rose took the spotlight... though Sophia and Blanche played important roles as they worked together to attempt to pull off a last-minute wedding and solve a murder. In the next book, all the girls will play a part, but Blanche will get her moment in the sun. The girls will have learned a thing or two from solving their first mystery, so their sleuthing skills will be a little sharper.



# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) Share your knowledge of *The Golden Girls*. If you came to the book already familiar with the characters, did you feel like the book lived up to your expectations? If you're new to the *Golden Girls* characters, would you recommend this book as a good entry point to their world?
- 2) Friendship is a central theme for *The Golden Girls*. In what ways did you see their friendships tried and strengthened here?
- 3) The past weighs heavily on the shoulders of characters in this book. Rose grapples with proving she's still a St. Olaf girl, Dorothy sifts through old hurts on the road to new love, Jason seeks to stop his family's history of taking control over his life, and more. Discuss how you see this theme playing out throughout the novel.
- 4) For a portion of the book, Rose says Dorothy is the reason "they were in this mess to begin with." Did you think her feelings were justified or did you believe that they were misdirected? Why or why not?
- 5) As you were reading, which characters were you suspicious of and why? Did you think Henry was a con man or an innocent bystander caught up in some trouble?
- 6) Did you ever suspect Henry was a twin? What was your reaction to the reveal?
- 7) Were you suspicious of Chip while reading? What clues indicated that he wasn't to be trusted?
- 8) Wedding traditions are very important to Rose in this book. Are there any wedding or marriage traditions from your family or culture that you love?
- 9) While all of the Girls are in *Murder by Cheesecake*, the book largely focuses on Rose's connection with her past and Dorothy's desire for a relationship. What are elements of Blanche and Sophia's lives you'd like to see explored in a future series installment?
- 10) As a reader, what draws you to cozy mysteries? What elements do you think are essential for a book to be considered a cozy mystery?





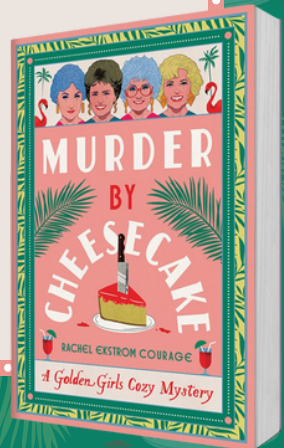
# DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Here are two questions from author Rachel Ekstrom Courage:

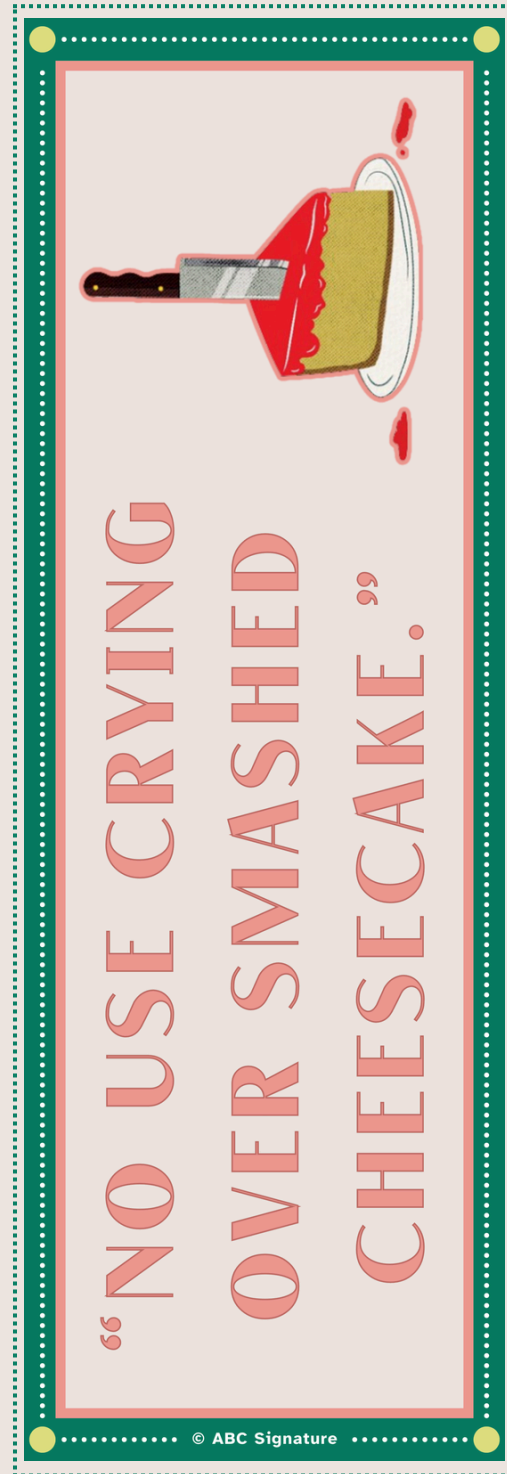
11) Which would you rather do: plan a last-minute wedding or solve a murder?

12) Who in this book club is the most likely to be accused of murder, and who'd be the most successful at clearing their name?

Write down any questions you or other members  
want to ask the group here:



# PRINTABLE BOOKMARKS



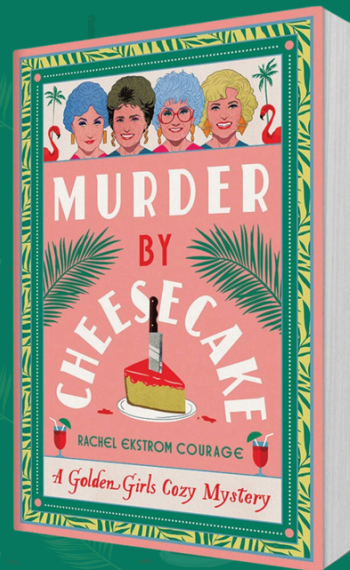
# PRINTABLE BOOKMARKS



**FRIEND**

*noun*

A person  
you share  
cheesecake  
and solve  
murders with



*Used in a  
sentence:*  
Thank you for  
being a friend.

© ABC Signature



# BOOK CLUB BEVS

A fun beverage is a great treat for a book club meeting. Here are options excerpted from *The Golden Girls Cookbook: Cheesecakes and Cocktails!*

## The Big Daddy AKA The Mint Julep MAKES 1 MINT JULEP

1-2 tsp sugar,  
preferably  
superfine

6 mint leaves

1½ ounces (3 tbsp)  
Kentucky bourbon

Muddle the sugar and mint in a rocks or Old Fashioned glass until the mint leaves are very bruised.

Pour in the bourbon and fill the glass halfway with ice.

Give a big stir and serve.

Here's a mocktail version: [spiritless.com/blogs/recipes/non-alcoholic-mint-julep](http://spiritless.com/blogs/recipes/non-alcoholic-mint-julep)

## Here? So Close to Cuba? Blanche's Take on a Mojito MAKES 2

16 fresh mint  
leaves, plus  
sprigs for garnish

2 sugar cubes or 4  
tsp white sugar, or  
to taste

1 lime, cut into 8  
wedges

3 ounces (about 1/3  
cup) white rum  
Club soda or  
sparkling water

Divide the mint leaves and sugar between 2 tall glasses. Drop 2 lime wedges into each glass.

Muddle all together until the mint is torn into rough pieces and the sugar is dissolved.

Stir half the rum into each glass, then fill with cracked ice.

Fill the glasses with sparkling water and stir. Float a lime wedge on top if you like.

Here's a mocktail version:  
[ritualzeroproof.com/blogs/cocktails/mojito](http://ritualzeroproof.com/blogs/cocktails/mojito)



# BOOK CLUB BEVS

## Rosemary-Infused Pear Nectar (With or Without Vodka)

MAKES ABOUT 3 CUPS, ENOUGH FOR 9 TO 12 DRINKS

½ cup simple syrup

2 big sprigs of  
rosemary

3 cups pear juice

¼ cup lemon juice

If making the simple syrup, add 1 sprig of rosemary just before removing it from the heat. If you have syrup on hand, heat ½ cup of it until steaming, then drop in one sprig of rosemary.

Cool the syrup to room temperature. Don't leave the rosemary in the syrup much longer than that or the syrup will turn bitter. Pull out the rosemary sprig and pour the syrup into a 1-quart mason or other type of jar. Add the remaining sprig of rosemary, the pear juice, and the lemon juice. Screw on the top of the jar, shake well, and store in the refrigerator for at least 1 day before using and up to 1 week.

## Rosemary-Pear Martini

MAKES 1 MARTINI

2 ounces (¼ cup)  
Rosemary-Infused  
Pear Nectar (above)

1½ ounces (3 tbsp)  
vodka of your  
choice

Wedge of lemon

Rosemary sprig  
and/or ½ lemon  
slice for garnish,  
optional

Fill a small cocktail shaker two-thirds full of ice.

Pour the pear nectar and vodka over the ice.

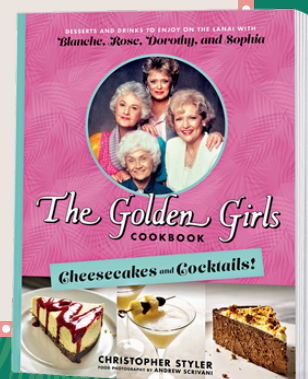
Squeeze in the lemon.

Cap the shaker and shake vigorously until the outside of the shaker is frosty.

Strain into a coupe or small martini glass.

Garnish.

*For a vodka-less mocktail, fill a tall glass with ice. Fill halfway with the pear nectar and add an equal amount of club soda or sparkling water. Drop or squeeze in a lemon wedge.*



# ST. OLAF'S KISS CHEESECAKE RECIPE

Spray or butter a 10-inch springform pan.

## **Crust**

Crush graham crackers and slivered almonds in food processor.

Add melted butter and sugar. Process to combine.

Press evenly onto bottom and up the sides of the pan.

## **Filling**

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Beat cream cheese, sugar, all-purpose flour, and vanilla. Then gradually beat in whole eggs, egg yolk, and cream.

Pour into pan and bake 15 minutes at 400 degrees.

Lower oven temperature to 250 degrees and bake 1 hour.

Remove cheesecake from oven and cool on wire rack. Refrigerate a few hours or overnight.

## **Lingonberry Drizzle**

Slowly heat lingonberries in saucepan over low heat.

Add water one tablespoon at a time to thin the sauce to desired consistency and add one teaspoon of sugar at a time to desired sweetness.

Gently spoon the sauce in the middle of the cooled cheesecake and refrigerate to set. Serve by dipping knife in water and wiping the blade between slices.

## **For the crust:**

2 cups graham crackers (12 full-size crackers)

1/2 cup slivered almonds

1/2 cup melted butter

1/3 cup sugar

## **For the filling**

**(all at room temperature):**

32oz. (four 8-oz. packages) cream cheese

1 cup sugar

1 tbsp all-purpose flour

1 tsp vanilla

4 whole eggs

1 egg yolk

1/2 cup cream

## **For the drizzle:**

1 jar of lingonberries

Sugar to taste

Water as needed



# WHICH GOLDEN GIRL ARE YOU?

**A friend is in need, what do you do?**

- A) Bake something for them - Cheesecake fixes everything.
- B) Offer a shoulder to cry on or an ear to listen to them.
- C) Plan a night out to help distract them from their problems.
- D) Crack a joke to make them smile.

**Pick your role in the spy operation.**

- A) Interviewing suspects
- B) Searching for clues
- C) Handing disguises
- D) Coming up with the plan

**Pick a quote you're most likely to say.**

- A) "I'm stuck between a log and a hard place."
- B) "I wouldn't say [I was] *meddling* - more like asking a few questions."
- C) "[I'm] early for Miami time. It's considered rude here *not* to be fifteen minutes behind schedule."
- D) "Never tell the police anything more than you have to, capisce?"

**Pick the most likely way you'd meet a romantic partner.**

- A) Through someone you know
- B) On a dating app
- C) While out running an errand
- D) At a funeral

**Pick a Miami vacation activity.**

- A) Boat cruise
- B) Reading by the pool
- C) Drinks and dancing at a nightclub
- D) Bus tour

**Pick a St. Olaf wedding tradition to organize.**

- A) In-Law Triangle Dance
- B) Welcome Tuna Tea
- C) Nudist Bridal Shower
- D) Clown Bachelorette Party

**Pick the reason you'd get arrested.**

- A) Poisoned someone with a cheesecake
- B) Guilty by association with a bad beau
- C) Opening someone else's mail
- D) Breaking and entering

## Answer Guide

Mostly Ds...  
You're Sophia!

Mostly Cs...  
You're Blanche!

Mostly Bs...  
You're Dorothy!

Mostly As...  
You're Rose!

# MINUTE MYSTERIES

See if you and your book club can solve a mystery together! Minute mysteries have been around for ages. They're short puzzles that can be read in under a minute. Below we've included an excerpt from *Minute Mysteries* by H.A. Ripley, a book in the public domain available through the free ebook library Project Gutenberg. Time how fast you and your group can solve it.

## A Rum Regatta

'Here's a story that should amuse you, Jean,' said Professor Fordney to his efficient and charming secretary.

He laughed heartily as he handed her a letter from his old friend, George Collins, government investigator in Florida.

Jean read the following:

An old sailor sitting on the sands of Nassau mending his fishing net was approached by three rum-runners shortly after the break of dawn. They came seeking his advice in connection with a wager they had made among themselves the night before.

The three of them, having sampled too freely of the liquor they were to take the next day to Miami, had put up three thousand dollars as a prize for the owner of the last boat to reach Miami. The fact that their boss was in a hurry for the liquor had been completely forgotten.

Sobered, they realized the ridiculousness of the wager but while anxious to reach Miami as quickly as possible, they all agreed it was not to be changed.

The old sailor continued weaving the cords into his net with slow deliberation. In a few minutes, calling them to his side, he whispered exactly the same advice into the ear of each.

A smile spread over his weather-beaten face and he chuckled as the three rum-runners raced to the boats and started for Miami at top speed.

Continued on the next page.

# MINUTE MYSTERIES

## A Rum Regatta

‘It is amusing,’ laughed Jean, ‘but he forgot to say what the old sailor whispered!’

‘That’s for you to figure out, young lady. I’ve never been a rum-runner, but I’ve got the answer.’

**What advice did the old sailor whisper to the rum-runners?**

## A Rum Regatta: Solution

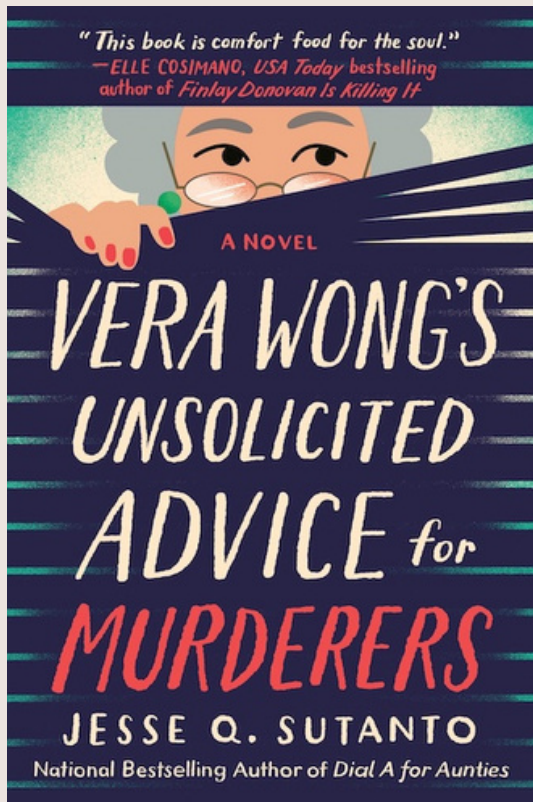
The old sailor whispered to each, ‘Run the other man’s boat.’ As the owner of the last boat to reach Miami was to get the money, each one raced the boat he was driving. By doing so, he hoped to beat his own boat, which was being driven by one of the others.

**Solve More Minute Mysteries Here:**

[gutenberg.org](http://gutenberg.org)



# WHAT TO READ NEXT

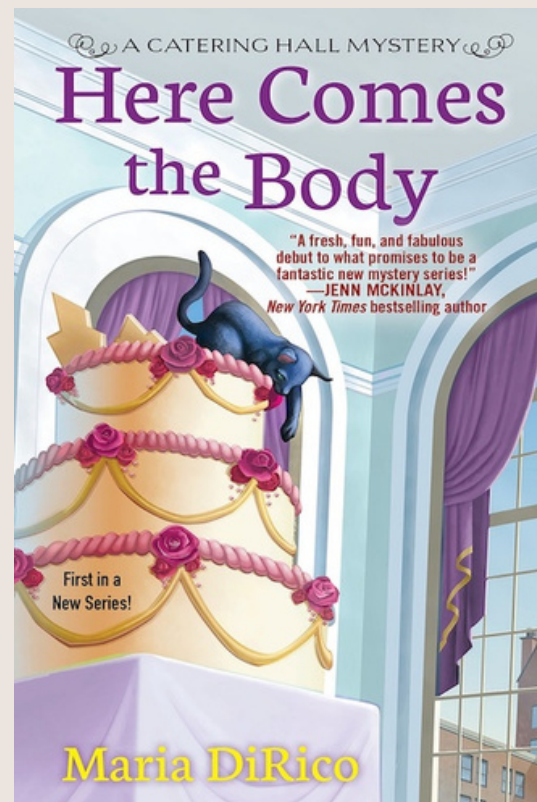


## *Vera Wong's Unsolicited Advice for Murderers* by Jesse Q. Sutanto

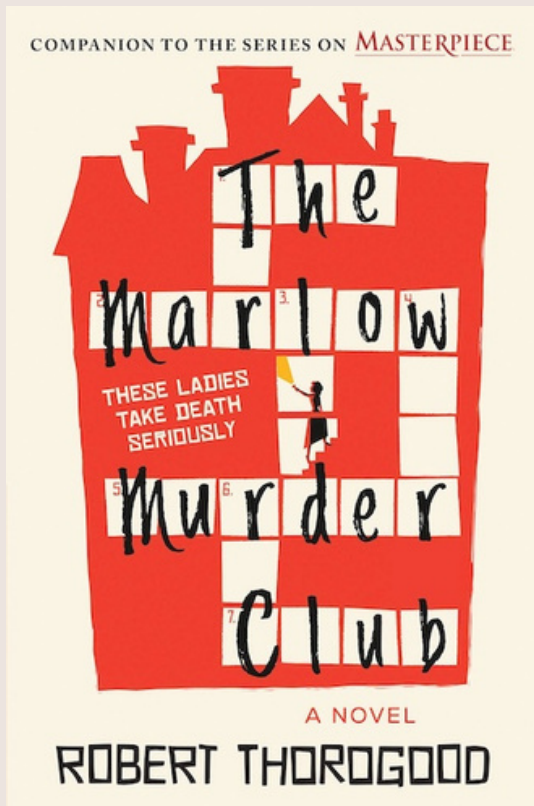
Looking for another cozy featuring a detective in her golden years? Check out the Vera Wong series! When a body appears in Vera Wong's tea shop, she calls the cops and then swipes a vital piece of evidence. With the help of the mysterious flash drive, she decides to find the killer herself.

## *Here Comes the Body* by Maria DiRico

Don your sleuthing hat and your dancing shoes—there's another wedding in need of a detective. When a bachelor party ends with a dead woman being found in the comically oversized cake, Mia needs to act quickly to clear her father's name and find the true culprit.



# WHAT TO READ NEXT

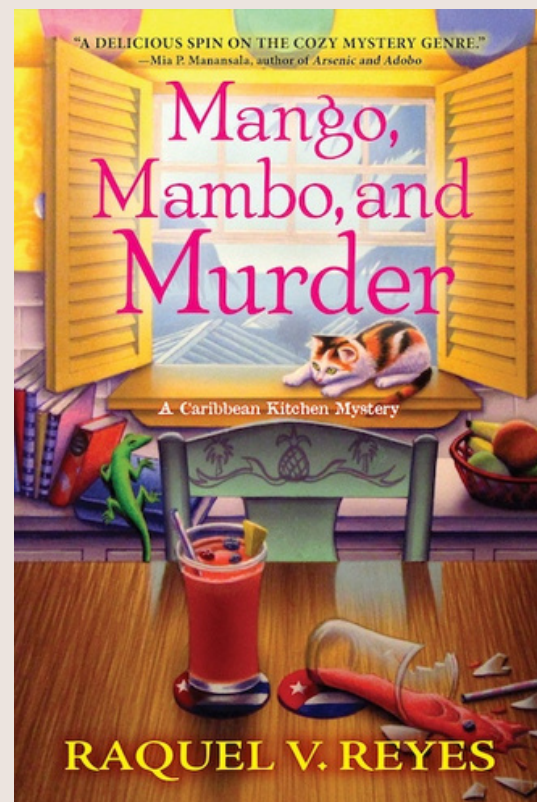


## *The Marlow Murder Club* by Robert Thorogood

If you loved the idea of friends solving crime together, you'll want to read this one. A serial killer is on the loose in Marlow, but the police don't believe 77-year-old witness Judith Potts. Determined that justice be served, she joins with a local dog walker and the vicar's wife to investigate the crimes.

## *Mango, Mambo, and Murder* by Raquel V. Reyes

Want another Miami-set cozy? Raquel V. Reyes has you covered! Cuban-American food anthropologist Miriam Quiñones-Smith is on the case when a series of murders interrupt her new life with her son in Miami. Soon she's teaming up with Detective Pullman to uncover who is targeting the Coral Shores community.





# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rachel Ekstrom Courage is an author and literary agent. She lives in Pittsburgh, PA with her husband (the children's book author Nick Courage) and their dog Chaely.



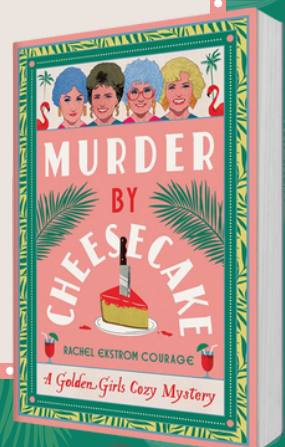
Photograph by Kathryn Stabile

[Rachelekstromcourage.com](http://Rachelekstromcourage.com)

 [Nickandrachelcourage](https://www.tiktok.com/@Nickandrachelcourage)

 [Rachelekstromcourage](https://www.instagram.com/Rachelekstromcourage)

 [Ekstromrachel](https://twitter.com/Ekstromrachel)



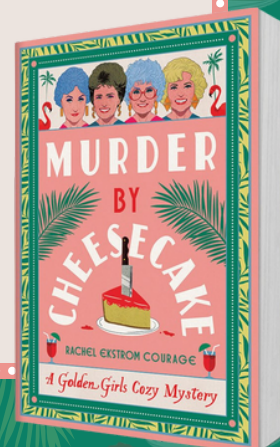
# MORE FROM RACHEL EKSTROM COURAGE



A carefree New England vacation is just what sixteen-year-old Lucia needs to chase her sadness away. At least, according to her mom, who whisks them away for the summer with her ridiculously wealthy new boyfriend. Nothing bad happens in Nantucket, a charming island with cobblestone streets and million-dollar cottages.

But when Lucia stumbles upon the body of a teenage girl on a beach, the discovery reopens old wounds from her past.

With the dead girl's identity a mystery, Lucia takes it upon herself to investigate and crosses paths with Selah and her pack of devil-may-care besties. The three girls are beautiful, chaotic, and a little wild—and they help Lucia forget her crushing sense of grief and loneliness. But as Lucia becomes a part of their shimmering world, she begins to suspect that there are dark secrets hidden in this quiet enclave, and that uncovering them may be the key to solving the dead girl's murder. Not everything on this island is what it seems...





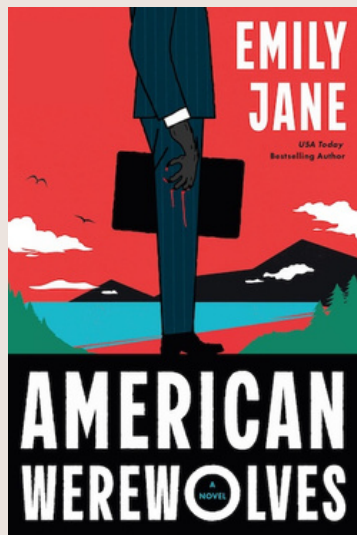
# MORE FROM HYPERION AVENUE



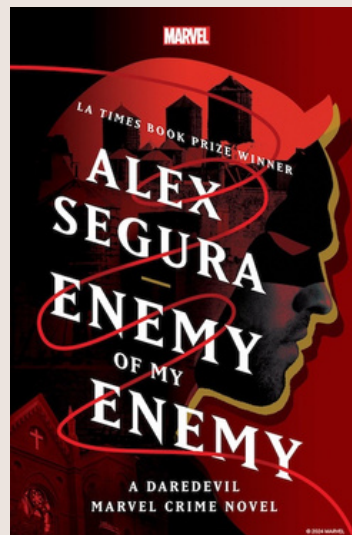
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May 27



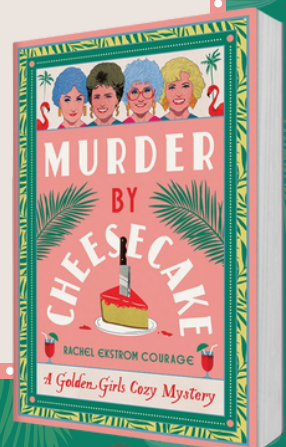
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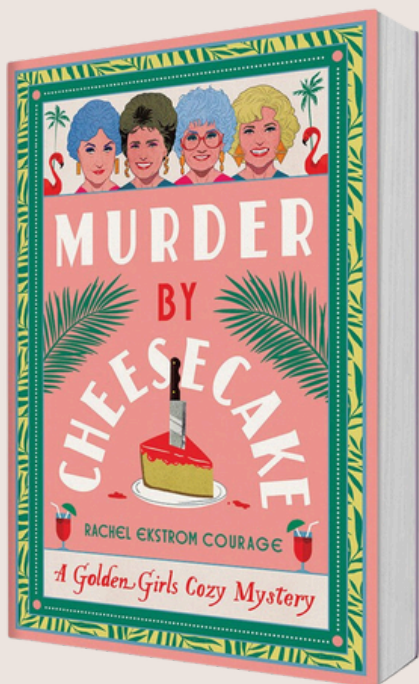
On sale:  
September 16



On sale:  
September 23



# ABOUT THIS KIT

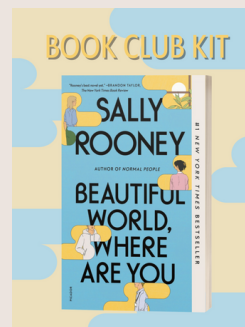
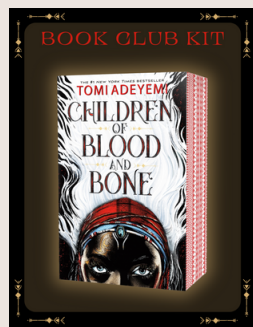
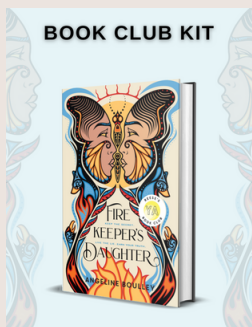
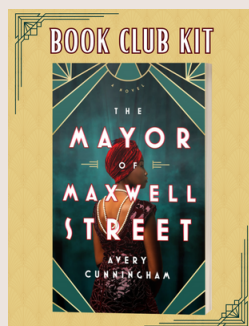


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All of these and more!