

Detective series debuts with takedown of family empire

Thomas & Mercer, the mystery/thriller arm of Amazon Publishing, is named for streets that flank Amazon's headquarters complex in Seattle's Lake Union neighborhood. But given the global reach of the parent corporation, there's not much emphasis placed on the Pacific Northwest connection.

Look hard enough, however, and you'll find a little something.

"Next of Kin" is a recent Thomas & Mercer paperback original and the debut offering in the Buddy Lock NYPD detective series.

It was conceived by Minneapolis attorney James Tucker, a past participant in the highly competitive Tin House Writers' Workshop, which is held annually in Portland.

In this fast-moving, brutal story, Tucker shines a spotlight on the art world's underhanded legacy of collusion with the Nazis — now a killer is bent on revenge for his family's lost heritage to profiteers during World War II.

Buddy Lock is a detective first grade with the New York City Police Department. He is a workaholic, and until art gallery executive Mei Adams came into his life recently, the only commitment he had was to his career. But his relationship with Mei has taken a serious turn: He's moved in with her, and she is already making noises about having a baby.

Neither one expected to have a trial run at parenthood, but that's what happens when Buddy is asked

to take protective custody of 10-year-old Ben Brook, the sole surviving member of a wealthy family that was brutally murdered on New Year's Eve.

Buddy and his partner are assigned to the high-profile case, which includes corporate greed, family dysfunction, looted art masterpieces and a serial killer on the loose. When other members of Ben's extended family — his aunts, uncles and cousins — also end up dying by heinous methods, Buddy takes extreme measures to protect his young charge.

But even high-tech alarm systems, professional armed security and trained attack dogs are not enough to keep the killer from penetrating Ben's various hideouts. Yet by several strokes of luck, Ben and Mei manage to es-

"Next of Kin"
By James Tucker
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cape — not once, not twice, but at least three times — from the slayer's sinister intentions.

Obviously, reader credulity will be strained here. It seems preposterous that Buddy would keep assuring Ben that he'll be safe, when whatever security detail gets assigned to the kid always winds up dead on the floor.

If you can get beyond the problematic mechanics of the killing-spree plot, there are several elements that hold promise for the series. Tucker has a knack for throwing in red herrings that will keep you guessing

— including, in "Next of Kin," a mention of Seattle's Pike Place Market. Buddy's backstory has potential for more development, and his half-brother, Ward, is an interesting secondary character who deserves more time on the page. As Buddy's girlfriend, Mei has panache and some latent toughness.

By the way, if you have

a novel up your sleeve, the application period for the Tin House Writers' Summer 2018 Workshop opened Jan. 8.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlinc.com.

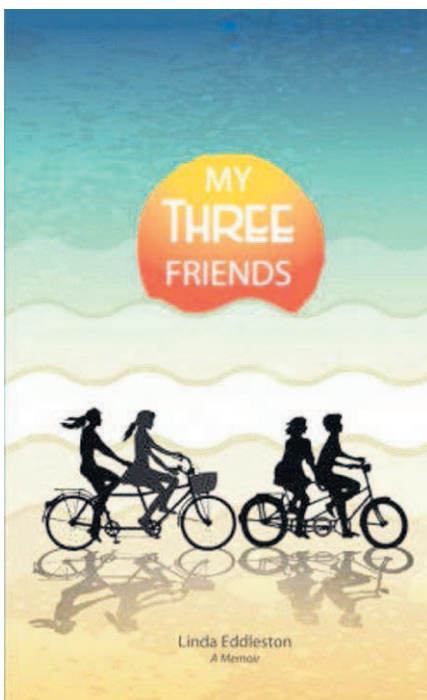
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- Holiday Inn Express
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- Inverted Experience
- Shilo Inn
- Comfort Inn
- Rivertide Suites
- Holiday Inn
- Inn at Seaside
- Best Western
- Shilo Inn
- River Inn
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- Gearhart by the Sea
- Shelburne Inn
- The Depot Restaurant
- Uptown Café

Local author tells of 'My Three Friends'



COURTESY SEASIDE PUBLIC LIBRARY

SEASIDE — At 1 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 13, Friends of the Seaside Library will welcome local author Linda Eddleston as she tells the story of "My Three Friends." The event will take place in the Community Room. There will be book sales and signings.

"My Three Friends" tells a coming-of-age story with charm and delight. Eddleston's memoir is the account of four young girls who come together in Portland in the 1950s. She describes the choices, successes, trials, tragedies and, most of all, the enduring friendship of four women, framed by the events of the decades they grow up in.

From a third grader's demand, "Why me? It's your brother's pigeon coop," though broken arms and broken hearts, separations and reunions, and a last walk on a beach, "My Three Friends" reminds the reader what it was like to be young and grow together. Though these women came of age

'MY THREE FRIENDS' TELLS A COMING-OF-AGE STORY WITH CHARM AND DELIGHT.

in the 1950s and '60s, their experiences are universal; even today's teenagers will appreciate the characters and their story.

The book also includes Eddleston's summer experiences in Seaside and will touch on the riot of 1962.

Eddleston is a retired elementary and special education teacher. She is the author of the anthology "That Holiday Feeling" and has published works in The Children's Ministry Magazine.

Seaside Public Library is located at 1131 Broadway St. For more information, call 503-738-6742 or visit seasidelibrary.org.

coastweekend.com

