



Margolin's latest features plot twists, dementia

Portland author Phillip Margolin worked as a criminal defense attorney for a quarter of a century before turning to writing full-time in 1996. With both his Amanda Jaffe and Dana Cutler series, he has made legal thrillers and strong female protagonists his specialty.

For his 21st novel, "The Third Victim," Margolin is working with a new publisher (Minotaur Books/St. Martin's Press), and he's come up with a plot-twisty, page-turning tale that features two women as leads: seasoned criminal defense lawyer Regina Barrister, and her protégé, up-and-coming attorney Robin Lockwood.

The story begins when a woman, battered and half-naked, emerges from the forest into the path of an oncoming pickup truck on a remote road in rural Oregon. Meredith Fenner says she has just escaped from a place where she had been held captive, tortured and starved.

As detectives follow up on her story, they connect it with the unsolved cases of two other recent victims who had not survived similar ordeals. This time they get lucky, however: DNA testing on the duct tape that had bound Meredith leads them to a prominent attorney, Alex Mason, who owns a vacation home close to where Meredith

was found.

The detectives compare the statement Fenner makes with an interview they conduct with Mason's wife, who confirms her husband's proclivity for sadistic sexual practices. This seems to seal the case against him.

But Mason is able to hire powerhouse attorney Regina Barrister, and Regina has just brought on crackerjack young attorney Robin Lockwood as her second chair.

As the two begin to build Mason's defense, Robin realizes that her mentor is no longer at the top of her game. In fact, when it comes time to argue the case in court,

Regina seems to miss critical opportunities to object and cross-examine. Robin worries that these mistakes may be enough to send an innocent man to Death Row — if Mason really is innocent, that is.

In addition to touching on issues of dementia, Margolin peppers the story with red herrings and shift characters with underhanded motives — drug dealers, crooked cops, scheming hookers and hothead lawyers. There are several unpleasantly graphic descriptions of sadomasochistic sex.

The author's writing is at its clunkiest when he introduces new characters — each one seems to get

a perfunctory description of face, body type and clothing.

The author also would have been served by having a sharper copyeditor — using "laying" when it should have been "lying" and "discrete" when he meant "discreet" — these are errors that ought to have been caught before this book went to press.

But where Margolin shines is in the plotting. The legal procedures are intriguing, and the story unfolds with unanticipated but plausible turns of events.

Carved up into short chapters, "The Third Victim" should come with a word of warning: This is a

"The Third Victim"
By Phillip Margolin
Minotaur Books
320 pp
\$26.99

book that can easily keep you up past your bedtime. You'll find yourself thinking "just a few pages more," but with each new revelation, the book becomes increasingly hard to put down.

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.

Fort George Benefit Night raises funds for library renovation

ASTORIA — There are two vital parts of any community: the public house and the public library.

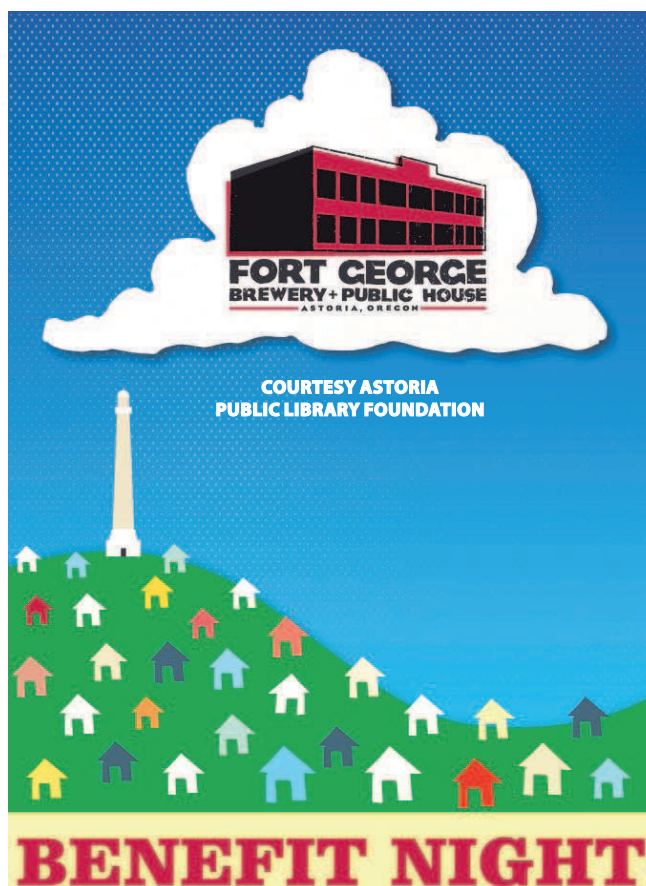
The Astoria Public Library Foundation needs your help as it raises funds for a well-deserved library renovation.

Join us at this month's Fort George Benefit Night 4:30 to 9 p.m. Tuesday, March 27, when all profits from the pizzeria will go to the Foundation Library Renovation Fund. The event takes place upstairs at Fort

George (1483 Duane St.).

Bring cash/checks for the raffle with prizes, including Glam Tram Transportation Rental and tickets to the annual Astoria Warrenton Crab, Seafood & Wine Festival. Raise a pint and raise some funds to renovate our library.

Come to Benefit Night to celebrate the recent selection of the Portland-based firm Hennebery Eddy Architects Inc. and learn more about our library's impact and the foundation's work to support it.



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