



Young doc helps punky senior sleuths

This Week's Book

"The Fog Ladies" By Susan McCormick

Wild Rose Press – 332 pp – \$17.99

Doesn't autumn seem to be the perfect time of year for reading whodunits? Here's a brand-new one you might think about adding to your list.

Wild Rose Press just published the debut novel of Seattle-based medical doctor Susan McCormick. The cozy mystery features a medical intern, Sarah, whose need for sleep after working grueling hours in a San Francisco teaching hospital is frequently thwarted by a passel of chatty retired ladies who live in her apartment building.

At the beginning of the book there are six of these women, ranging in age from 65 to 80. They play gin rummy with one another on Mondays and Fridays, as regular as the fog that blankets the bay every morning. That's why Sarah calls them "The Fog Ladies," which is also the title of the book.

The vintage apartment house where they all live has charming features and is situated in a choice locale. But shortly after Sarah moves in, she notices that turnover in the building seems to occur at an unsettling rate. The Fog Ladies are worried – it seems to be the elderly residents who are dropping like flies.

Mrs. Glenn dies of cancer and Mrs. Talwin drowns in the bathtub. Then, Mrs. Bridge falls off a stool while cleaning the bugs out of her kitchen light. Are old people just jinxed, or is there foul play going on?

The Fog Ladies suspect the latter. They try to involve Sarah in their amateur sleuthing, but she thinks they have overactive imaginations and too much time on their hands.

That's until her favorite Fog Lady, Mrs. Noonan in 5-A, falls down the stairs and breaks her hip. When Sarah first goes to visit her in the hospital, Mrs. Noonan tells Sarah she was pushed down the stairs. But when Sarah checks in with her later, Mrs. Noonan can't recall what happened.

Sarah isn't sure if the stress of the fall or the post-surgery medications may have

affected Mrs. Noonan's memory, but she too becomes uneasy about the situation and begins to do some digging of her own.

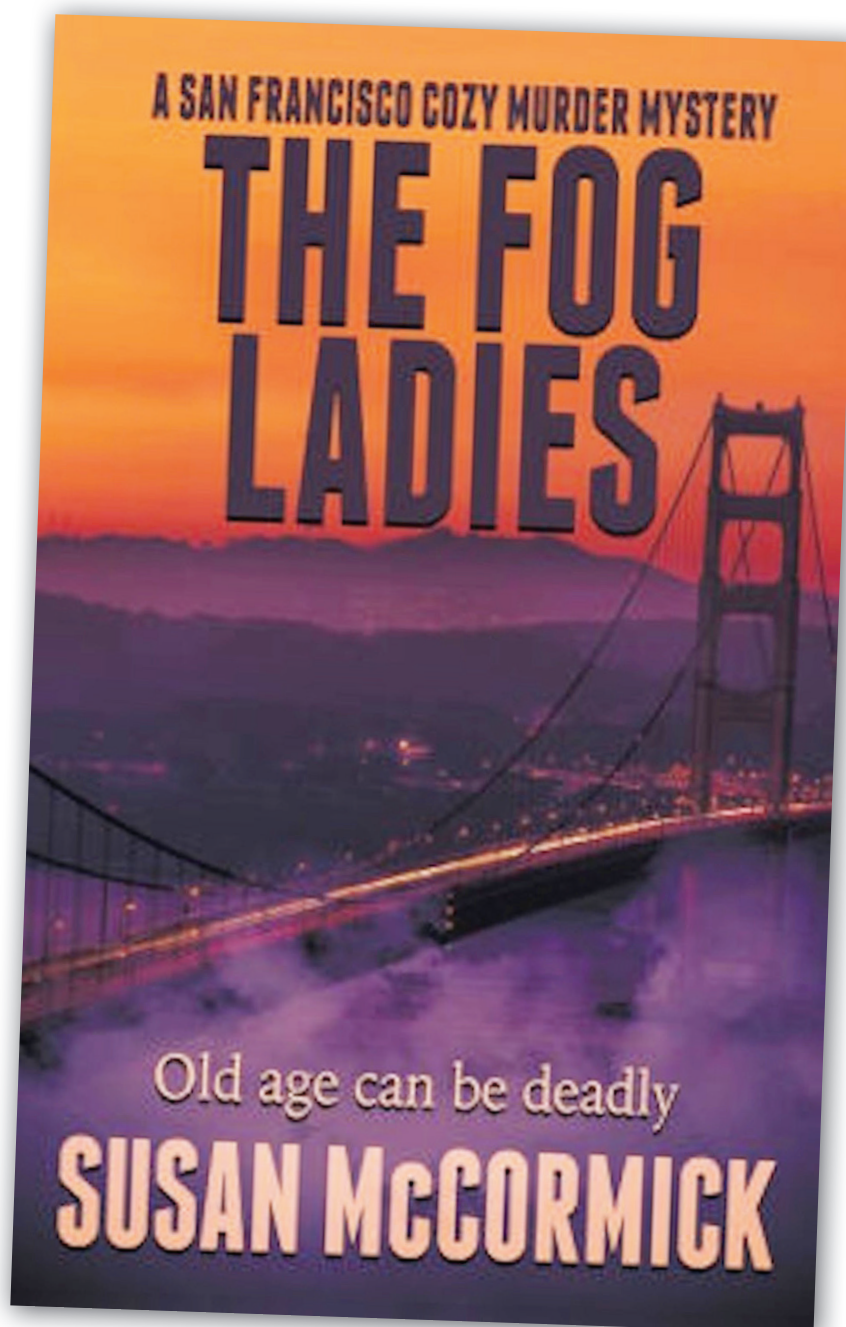
As it turns out, there are plenty of potential suspects. Could it be Tommy, the insolent new handyman? Or Rick, the airline pilot in 4-C? Maybe it was Big Owen, the loutish dad of Little Owen, a baby who one of the Fog Ladies reluctantly agreed to babysit.

McCormick has developed quirky characters who are, by turns, delightful and irascible. She treats us to the busy inner workings of each Fog Lady's mind as each of them puzzles over the series of deaths in their apartment building. But will someone get to the bottom of things before anyone else falls victim?

McCormick knits a tidy conclusion to

this yarn as far as the plot goes, but leaves a few other strands dangling. Will this become a series? The Fog Ladies may have a future, after all.

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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