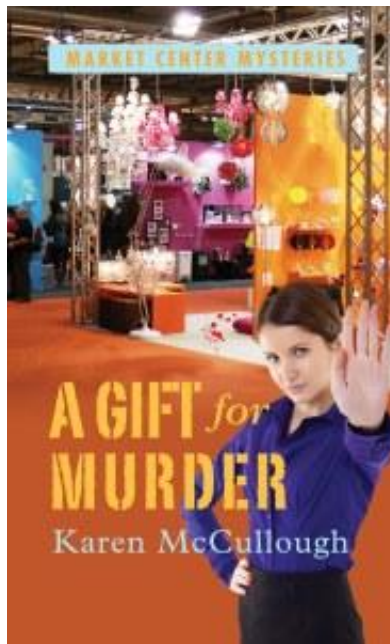


FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2011

Killer Crafts & Crafty Killers

HTTP://WWW.ANASTASIAPOLLACK.BLOGSPOT.COM/2011/12/BOOK-CLUB-FRIDAY-GUEST-AUTHOR-KAREN.HTML

BOOK CLUB FRIDAY -- GUEST AUTHOR KAREN McCULLOUGH



*Karen McCullough is the author of eleven published novels in the mystery, romantic suspense, and fantasy genres and has won numerous awards, including an Eppie Award for fantasy. Her short fiction has appeared in several anthologies. Her most recent releases are **MAGIC, MURDER AND MICROCIRCUITS**, a paranormal romantic suspense now available in most electronic formats, and **A GIFT FOR MURDER**, published in hardcover. Coming soon is the electronic re-release of her Christmas vampire story, **A VAMPIRE'S CHRISTMAS CAROL**. Learn more about Karen and her books at her [website](#) and her site for the [Market Center Mysteries](#) series.*

*Karen is offering a copy of **A GIFT FOR MURDER** to one of our readers who posts a comment to the blog this week. -- AP*

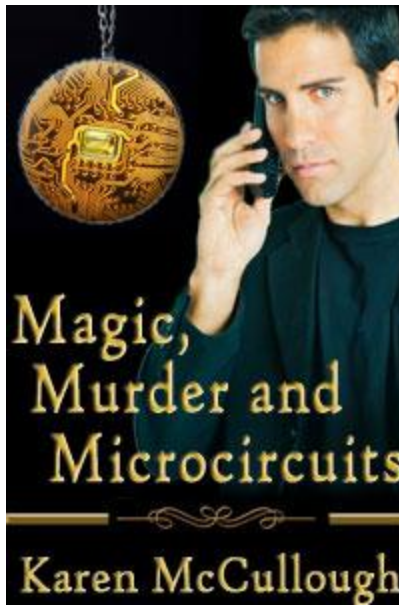
Crafty Writers Writing What You Know?

Any author who's gone to a writer's conference or workshop, or read a couple of books on the craft has heard the advice. "Write what you know."

It's a common-sense piece of writing advice. You can create a deeper, richer, and more engrossing story when you draw on your own training, background, travels, employment, or other actual experiences to tell your story. It's often the details, the kind you can only get from being there, that make a story ring true and pull the reader into the world you're creating.

I followed that advice when I wrote the first book in my Market Center Mysteries, **A GIFT FOR MURDER**. This series is set at a large convention center/exhibition hall. Although I've never actually organized a trade show, I've attended a number of them, and covered others as a member of the trade press. I've talked to trade show organizers, listened to their stories, and heard about some of the challenges they faced. Of course none of them ever had to deal with a murder at a trade show, but it's not a huge leap from the smaller problems to a really big one.

I made a few assumptions, of course, but most of them were grounded in my knowledge of how trade shows work, who comes to them, and the reasons they happen. I just had to up the stakes a bit, and attribute fewer inhibitions to a certain individual to bring it off. Plus, you've got a rich background canvas. Those other, relatively more minor issues don't go away just because our heroine had bigger problems. She still had to deal with all of it.



But my most recent release, **MAGIC, MURDER AND MICROCIRCUITS** is a different kind of story. It's a mystery, too, but a paranormal romantic mystery, with protagonists who are powerful wizards.

I don't know about you, but I've never actually met a real, live, magic-slinging wizard. That hasn't stopped me from writing about them. What do I know that let me do that?

Well, I have read a LOT of fantasy literature. I began reading science fiction and fantasy in my early teens. After I worked my way through what I could find at home, I raided school and public libraries. In the nineteen sixties and early seventies, there wasn't a huge amount of fantasy being published, until **THE LORD OF THE RINGS** trilogy changed everything. I found and devoured it while in college, and it was actually a life-changing event in many ways. One of the best ways was that fantasy became popular and publishers started putting out more of it. I slurped up all I could. Some of it was decent, some if bad, and some of it blatant rip-offs, but I met lots of wizards and wallowed in a nice variety of magical systems.

As a result, even though I've never met a wizard in person, I feel as though I'd known a number of them pretty well. I have a rich well of material to draw from in formulating my own system of magic.

I also have something else that came into play when writing this story: a basic knowledge of physics. Don't get me wrong. One college course doesn't make me any kind of expert. But between that and subsequent reading, I've maintained a grasp of some of the main principles of mass, gravity, acceleration and momentum.

Somewhere in the depths of my undoubtedly geeky mind, fantasy and physics mated to produce a system of magic my heroine describes as a sort of "subatomic psychokinesis." Of course it's not really as simple as that. I want there to be some actual magic involved as well.

But at least I've grounded it to some extent in what I do know. I've also heard someone respond to the "write what you know" advice by saying you should "write what you want to learn about." That works for me!

*Thanks for joining us today, Karen! Readers, if you'd like a chance at winning a copy of **A GIFT FOR MURDER**, leave a comment. And don't forget to either include your email address or check back on Sunday to see if you've won. -- AP*