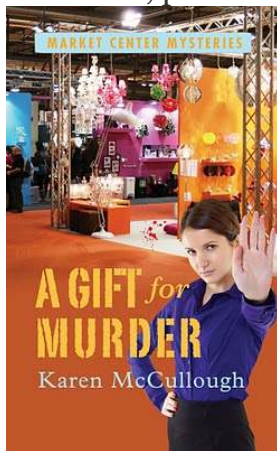


MONDAY, JANUARY 17, 2011

## Why Add Romance to a Mystery?

[Karen McCullough](#) is the author of ten published novels in the mystery, romantic suspense, and fantasy genres. She has won numerous awards, including an Eppie Award for fantasy. She's also been a four-time Eppie finalist, and a finalist in the Prism, Dream Realm, Rising Star, Lories, Scarlett Letter, and Vixen Awards contests. Her short fiction has appeared in several anthologies and numerous small press publications in the fantasy, science fiction, and romance genres. Her most recent novel is *A GIFT FOR MURDER*, published by Five Star/Gale Group Mysteries.



### WHY ADD ROMANCE TO A MYSTERY?

If you've looked at my website, you've probably noticed that I write in a lot of different genres, but one thing my stories all have in common is a romantic subplot.

Purists often object at having their genre tainted with hints of other genres, and romance is particularly disliked. I've actually heard science fiction readers-and the occasional writer-get positively irate about it. Some mystery readers are the same way. They want their stories pure and untainted.

So why write romantic mysteries, romantic suspense and romantic fantasy?

Well, first of all it's fun. Okay, that's probably not a good enough reason.

The truth is, I like the way you can use a romance to reveal and extend your characters. You don't NEED it for that. Certainly there are other ways to achieve the purpose, but it offers some reveal advantages.

Because mystery and detective stories are often told from a tight and sometimes

impersonal point of view, readers may not feel like they know or sympathize with the main detective character. In having a pair of characters in the process of getting to know each other and being attracted, you can show (rather than tell) much about that character you otherwise can't. It lets readers see your viewpoint character from an outsider's perspective.

Having a romantic subplot also offers a way to bring emotional depth and resonance to genres that often get overly intellectual. Traditional mysteries are basically puzzles, and the plot, per force, has to focus on delivering the pieces of the puzzle.

The detective is frequently an outsider, someone who knows enough of the milieu to understand its norms and discern the motives and manners of those who participate, but one who doesn't exactly belong to it either. That can mean the situation leaves little room for showing growth and development of the detective character.

Finally, it can make a great way to raise the stakes in the story. In *A GIFT FOR MURDER*, my Five Star release debuting the end of this month, the murderer threatens my heroine's love interest, forcing her to pull out every clever idea she can in order to rescue him as well as herself from a dire situation at the end.

Of course not all readers want to know or care about the detective character that deeply. Personally I feel a bit cheated if I read a book and don't get any sense of who the main character is or what drives him or her. I want to be able to relate and sympathize with their problems.

Not everyone agrees. De Gustibus....

Oh, and hey, post script time. I've just debuted a new [website look](#). I'd love some feedback on it if you get a chance.

POSTED BY BO PARKER AT 11:38 AM

LABELS: [A GIFT FOR MURDER](#), [KAREN MCCULLOUGH](#)

#### 1 COMMENTS:



[Vicki Lane](#) said...

I added a touch of romance to my series partially because my amateur sleuth needed a cop boyfriend...