

## **FORTUNE FAVORS THE DEAD**- Stephen Spotswood

**Author:** STEPHEN SPOTSWOOD (he/him) is an award-winning playwright, journalist, and the creator of the Pentecost & Parker mystery series. He is the winner of the 2021 Nero Award for best American mystery, a finalist for the New Blood Dagger Award; a two-time finalist for the Lambda Literary Award for Mystery; and an Edgar Award finalist. As a journalist, he has spent much of the last two decades writing about the struggles of wounded veterans, and his dramatic work has been widely produced across the United States. He makes his home in Washington, DC with his wife, young adult author Jessica Spotswood. There are 5 books in this series.

### **Characters:** (per author list)

- Willowjean Parker: The circus trained right-hand woman of Lillian Pentecost Learning the highs and lows of being a working detective.
- Lillian Pentecost: New York City's preeminent laddy gumshoe. Not as steady on her feet as she used to be but it's her steel trap of a mind you need to watch out for.
- Alistair Collins: Steel magnate and coldhearted patriarch. A little over a year ago he picked up a gun and put the final punctuation on his own life.
- Abigail Collins: Matriarch of the Collins family. Somebody ruined her Halloween party by bludgeoning her to death with a crystal ball,
- Rebecca Collins: Daughter of Al and Abigail. Bold, beautiful, and more than just your average society girl.
- Randolph Collins: Rebecca's twin brother. Looking to take over where his father left off, and he figures that includes keeping his sister in line.
- Harrison Wallace: Godfather to Rebecca and Randolph and acting CEO of Collins Steelworks and Manufacturing. Says he wants justice for Abigail, but that might just be lip service.
- Ariel Belestrade: Medium and spiritual advisor to the Upper East Side. Says she can speak with the dead, but is she leaving bodies in her wake?
- Neal Watkins: Former university wunderkind turned Ariel Belestrade's assistant. How close is he following in his employer's footsteps?
- Olivia Waterhouse: Mild mannered professor with a passion for the occult. Her obsession with Ariel Belestrade might go beyond the academic,
- John Meredith: Longtime plant manager and brawl-scarred bruiser, He has a chip on his shoulder and strong feelings about the Collins clan.
- Dora Sanford: The Collinses' longtime cook. More than willing to spill the beans.
- Jeremy Sanford: The Collinses' butler. Practicing the perfect poker face, he keeps the family secrets locked up tight.
- Eleanor Campbell: Lillian Pentecost's cook and housekeeper. Loving, loyal and not to be trifled with.
- Lieutenant Nathan Lazenby: - One of NYPD's sharpest. Underestimate him at your own risk. Willing to give Pentecost and Parker just enough rope to hang the killer. Or themselves.
- PLUS
- Circus folks: Kalishanko, Mysterio, DeeDee, Lovely Lulu etc.
- And: Hiram McCloskey, J. Markel, Hollis Graham, et al
- AND then: Orly Crouch

## QUESTIONS

1. There are several crimes discussed in this book. a) What crime(s) are Pentecost and Parker hired to investigate. b) Other crimes are: assault, theft, murder, fraud, blackmail &? Who are the perpetrators in these? What happened?
2. Who changed their name? Why? Does this add to the plot?
3. How did Ms. Pentecost get a glass eye?
4. Why was Willowjean hired?
5. Why does Ms. Pentecost encourage Will to spend time with Becca? Does this method work if both are men? (using women to seduce men to get info – e.g. North by Northwest, Notorious, Mata Hari)
6. Why did Aistair kill himself?
7. What is Lazenby's relationship with Ms. Pentecost?
8. What is the relationship between the twins? with their parents?
9. Who hired the detectives and why?
10. How did Belestrade get involved with the Collins family?
11. How did the incident with McCloskey and Markel contribute to the storyline?
12. What did you think of Belestrade's actions when Will was following here?
13. Did the following clues (if they were clues) mean anything?
  - Collins, separate bedrooms
  - Photo with Harrison Wallace and the Collins family
  - Markel's watch stolen by McCloskey with Ariel Belestrade on paper
  - Meredith's feelings about the twins
14. Why did Belestrade reveal personal information about Will? How did she know?
15. Why was Olivia Waterhouse important?
16. Did the 1940's setting ring true?
17. Various issues and concerns are raised in this book. Some are part of the plot and some are descriptive of the times. Many concerns continue to this day. These issues include: corporate greed, domestic violence, racism/antisemitism, homosexuality, poverty, tenants' rights, blackmail, murder etc. Which ones are part of the specific crime(s) and which are descriptions of the characters in general and the environment?
18. What do you think about the resolution? Is it ok that Becca was not reported to the police?
19. Will you read others of this series?

## QUOTES

“Would the assailant have needed to be particularly strong?” “Hiram shook his head  
“Not particularly, no” Since the victim had been found sitting, the angle of the wound meant nothing,,,,,..... Excellent! We could rule out infants and the comatose’  
‘You realize I used to dress up like a showgirl and have knives thrown at my face. My threshold for uncomfortable is pretty high’.