



Midnight Ink Books
January 8, 2015

TracyWeberAuthor.com

[f](#)tracywe [g](#)KillerRetreat



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT:
Angelle Barbazon
574-350-4501
angelle@jkscommunications.com

Yoga teacher sleuths out murder mystery in second Downward Dog book
***Killer Retreat* combines Tracy Weber’s three loves: yoga, dogs and mysteries**

SEATTLE, Wa. – Tracy Weber’s second installment of her award-winning Downward Dog Mystery series again has vegetarian yoga teacher Kate and her feisty German Shepherd solving an intriguing murder mystery.

In Weber’s *A Killer Retreat* (January 8, 2015, Midnight Ink Books), Kate is teaching yoga at a vegan retreat center when a wedding guest at the center is found dead only shortly after a loud and public fight with Kate. She takes on trying to solve the murder before the police put her behind bars as their number one suspect.

“Weber’s vegan yoga teacher is a bright, curious sleuth with a passion for dogs,” said Krista Davis, *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Domestic Diva* and *Paws and Claws* mysteries. “A well-crafted whodunit with an intriguing mystery and a zinger of a twist at the end!”

Weber’s first book of the series, *Murder Strikes a Pose*, won the Chanticleer Book Reviews INDIE Manuscript Awards for the Cozy Mystery Category and the Mystery and Mayhem Awards 2013 for the Animal Mystery category.

The series combines Weber’s three loves: yoga, dogs and murder mysteries. Weber has enjoyed mysteries since her earliest reading years as a child, has a rambunctious special-needs German shepherd very similar to the one in her books and has owned her own yoga studio for 13 years.

“My primary intention is always to entertain,” Weber said. “And I’m also trying to convince people that yoga is for everyone, even imperfect, non-bendy people like Kate!”

Weber is a member of the Pacific Northwest Writers Association, Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and the Dog Writers Association of America. Outside of writing, she is a certified yoga teacher and the founder of Whole Life Yoga. She and her husband live in Seattle with their German shepherd and a cat.

##

Meet Tracy Weber

Tracy Weber is the author of the award-winning Downward Dog Mysteries series. The first book, *Murder Strikes a Pose*, was published in January 2014 by Midnight Ink. The second, *A Killer Retreat*, will be available in early 2015. Tracy is a certified yoga teacher and the founder of Whole Life Yoga, an award-winning yoga studio in Seattle, WA. She loves sharing her passion for yoga and animals in any form possible.

She grew up on a dairy farm in Montana and spent her childhood surrounded by dogs, cats, cows, and a variety of other animals. At age 18, she left the farm and temporarily moved to Seattle for college, where she has now remained for three decades. She met her husband Marc when they were both attending the University of Washington.

She received a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering and worked as a research engineer until she realized she preferred spending time with people rather than machines. She returned to the University of Washington for her Masters of Business Administration and worked as an organizational consultant for several years before becoming a group manager at Microsoft.

She left Microsoft to pursue a career teaching yoga, becoming a certified yoga therapist and opening her studio, Whole Life Yoga, in 2001.

Tracy and her husband Marc live in Seattle with their challenging yet amazing German shepherd Tasha. When she's not writing, Tracy spends her time teaching yoga, walking Tasha, and sipping Blackthorn cider at her favorite ale house.

Tracy is a member of the Pacific Northwest Writers Association, Mystery Writers of America, Sisters in Crime, and the Dog Writers Association of America. For more information, visit her author website: TracyWeberAuthor.com.



Praise for *A Killer Retreat*

“Weber's vegan yoga teacher is a bright, curious sleuth with a passion for dogs. A well-crafted whodunit with an intriguing mystery and a zinger of a twist at the end!”

—**Krista Davis, New York Times bestselling author of the Domestic Diva and Paws and Claws Mysteries**

“An engaging mystery full of fun and fascinating characters and unexpected twists. An intriguing read that includes yoga lessons and feisty dogs.”

—**Linda O. Johnsnton, author of the Pet Rescue Mystery Series**

“Fans of Tracy Weber's charming Murder Strikes a Pose have eagerly awaited the return of yoga instructor Kate Davidson and her challenging yet lovable German shepherd, Bella. Happily, Weber's second yoga mystery, A Killer Retreat, is as delightful as her first. Readers will love the setting, the complex mystery, and the romance of Kate's second adventure. Especially noteworthy in this popular series is the appealing combination of strength and vulnerability that Kate and Bella share. Enjoy!”

—**Susan Conant, author of the Dog Lovers' Mystery series**

“Whether yoga instructor, Kate Davidson, is wrestling her hundred-pound dog, her new love life or trying to solve a murder, A Killer Retreat is simply a killer read! Witty, fun and unpredictable, this is one cozy mystery worth barking about!”

—**Shannon Esposito, author of the Pet Psychic Mystery series**

“Fun characters, a gorgeous German Shepherd dog, and a murder with more suspects than you can shake a stick at. Killer Retreat is a must read for cozy fans!”

—**Sparkle Abbey, author of the Pampered Pet Mystery series**

Praise for *Murder Strikes a Pose*

“Weber's debut, which launches the Downward Dog series, should appeal to anyone who likes canines, yoga, and a determined sleuth. Cozy fans will eagerly await the next installment.”

—**Publishers Weekly**

“Kate Davidson's pluck, humor, and determination make her a welcome addition to the ranks of amateur sleuths. Reading Murder Strikes a Pose made me want to study yoga. It also left me hoping for a sequel so that I can visit with Kate and Bella again.”

—**Laurien Berenson, author of the Melanie Travis Mystery series**

“Murder Strikes a Pose pieces together a skillful collage of mystery, yoga, and plenty of dog stories against the unique backdrop of Seattle characters and neighborhoods. The delightful start of a promising new series. I couldn't put it down!”

—**Waverly Fitzgerald, co-author of the Barking Detective Mystery series**

Book Details



Paperback, \$14.99
ISBN: 978-0738742090
Cozy Mystery, 318 pages
Midnight Ink Books, Jan. 8, 2015

Kindle, Nook and Kobo versions will also
be available.

Yogi Kate must clear her name of murder in this charming yoga mystery

When Kate Davidson gets an offer to teach yoga classes to wedding guests at the Elysian Springs resort, she jumps at the opportunity, even though it means being forced to endure the wedding ceremony of the center's two caretakers. Avoiding the M-word turns out to be the least of Kate's problems when a wedding guest is found floating face-down in the resort's hot tub, shortly after a loud, public (and somewhat embarrassing) fight with Kate.

The police pick Kate as their number-one suspect, so she's forced to team up with boyfriend Michael, best friend Rene, and German shepherd sidekick Bella to find the real killer. But they'll have to solve the murder before the police arrest Kate, or her next gig may last a lifetime—behind bars.

Q&A with Tracy Weber

Your Downward Dog Mystery series combines your three loves of yoga, dogs and mysteries. How much do you draw on your own life in writing the series, and is Kate's character based on you?

I'd like to say that my work is 100% fiction—and for the most part, it is—but I paint my fictional worlds on the canvas of my real life. Kate Davidson, the protagonist in my book, is a yoga studio owner who lives in Seattle and lives with a crazy German shepherd named Bella. I am also a yoga studio owner in Seattle, and I own a crazy German shepherd named Tasha. How could there not be some overlap?

My yoga students often say that they see me in Kate and hear my voice in her narration. Even my own mother called when she read my first book and said, "I just got to the part where you found the body."

Let me assure you, I have never stumbled across a body near my yoga studio, or anywhere else for that matter. And although the series takes place in my Greenwood neighborhood, I try not to write about people I know. In fact, I go out of my way *not* to write about my friends, family, or yoga students. Including them in the series just seems mean, since I will inevitably kill them off or make them a murder suspect. My dog can't read and no one cares if I make fun of myself, so I do write about Tasha's and my sillier exploits from time to time.

A part of me exists in every character. To be honest, personality-wise, I think I'm closer to Rene, Kate's best friend: a plotter, jokester and conniver. Unlike Kate, I don't have a cute pet store owner in my life, I don't get nauseated when I see a man with a beard, and I almost never lose my temper, at least not publicly.

To read more comparisons of my real life to my fictional world, check out [Will the Real Kate Davidson Please Stand Up?](#) and [Yoga Studios Fact and Fiction](#) and the [guest post on Brooke Blogs](#) about how my dog compares to Bella, the dog in the book,

You've had a varied career. How did you get started in writing and why did you pick this subject matter?

I never intended to be a writer. But then again, I never intended to be a yoga teacher. If you'd asked me in my early thirties, I'd have told you that yoga was for woo woo Gumby wannabes, and writing was for people who had more talent in their left pinky toe than I possessed in my entire five-foot-two-inch body.

I blame a fender-bender for my yoga career. In the early 1990s I was in a car accident that left me in severe chronic pain for over seven years. That pain was eventually mitigated—though not completely cured—by consistent yoga. My life was so transformed by yoga that I quit my corporate job and opened [Whole Life Yoga](#).

My writing career has more complex origins. For that, I blame a grueling workout, my temperamental German shepherd, Tasha, and mystery author Susan Conant.

The ingredients for my series were already inside me, I just didn't know it. I love dogs. I adore my own crazy, special-needs dog to a fault. I've read cozy mysteries since long before I knew there was a genre by that name. And my lifework is yoga.

One day, while trying to distract myself from a grueling workout, a passage in Susan Conant's *Black Ribbon* made me burst into laughter. I knew I'd found my author soul mate. I jumped off the exercise bike, ran home, got online, and proceeded to buy every book she had ever written. That same night, I began to wonder: what would happen if a yoga teacher with a crazy dog like mine got mixed up in murder? And if she did, could I write about it? The whole idea seemed crazy. After all, I hadn't written fiction since I was eighteen—which was way too long ago for me to admit—and I had no writing training. I laughed the whole idea off until a feisty yoga teacher named Kate Davidson popped into my head a few days later. She refused to leave, no matter how much I begged her to.

How do you find the time to write while also managing a business, teaching, and caring for a special needs dog?

I'm fortunate. I own my own business, so I'm able to work whatever 100-hour-a-week schedule that I want. Seriously, sometimes it feels that way. If I ever find the answer to life-work balance, I'll let you know. Luckily, I'm happiest when I'm busy.

I've been highly influenced by a quote from Gloria Steinem. Paraphrased, it's that women (and men!) *can* have everything. Just not all at the same time.

For me, the key to satisfaction is being flexible, knowing my priorities, and making tradeoffs. My dog comes first. Tasha has many medical needs, she depends on me, and I'll only have her for a few years. Of course, my husband is even more important to me, but generally speaking, he knows how to take care of himself. ;-)

My writing time ebbs and flows based on my other competing priorities, including my friends, my business, and my students. Sometimes several weeks will go by without my having had time to write a word. Other times I write nonstop. I'm most creative late at night, so I often write in bed until very early in the morning, which drives my husband crazy. I'm also the world's worst housewife. I never cook and my husband does most of the cleaning. Poor guy!

How do you reconcile writing both about yoga (which advocates nonviolence) and murder?

This is such an interesting question, and one that I've only been asked a handful of times. First, I'll say my genre, cozy mysteries, helps. By convention, gore and on-the-page violence are minimized. There are definitely some tense and challenging scenes, however. I try to balance them with humor.

But even if I wrote horror, I could still combine murder and yoga in the same work. The yoga teachings never promise that yogis will live in a world without violence. In fact, they say that suffering is inevitable. What they *do* promise is that people who practice yoga—which is so much more than doing poses—will be able to survive life's traumas with less emotional suffering. They also ask that yogis personally practice compassion, honesty, and nonviolence in actions, words, and thoughts. Yogis are exposed to the same triggers and conflicts and traumas. Yoga doesn't stop what happens around us; it simply gives us choices in how we react to it.

But the truth is Kate—my yoga sleuth—doesn't live in an ideal world, and she doesn't always react like the perfect yogi. She has a terrible temper and often acts impulsively. When Kate's at her best, she responds to the tension and heartache in her world with self-deprecating humor and compassion.

Overall, Kate tries to be compassionate and generous. She helps others when it would be much easier not to. When she screws up, which is often, she tries to learn from her mistakes and to do better in the future.

To me, that is yoga.

How do you keep your plots and your characters straight?

My stories all occur during an important, life-changing event for one of my key characters. So keeping the major plot points of multiple books straight is relatively easy, as I relate them to the transformations and life events of those characters, who are like my best friends!

Names and descriptions of minor characters and within-a-book timelines are harder. I write by the seat of my

pants so I don't know how a story is going to unfold until I write it. Sometimes even the murderer changes mid-stream! Still, especially in mystery, the careful revealing of clues is critical.

After the first draft, I go through the entire novel and make a detailed spreadsheet that outlines which characters appear in each scene, the location and description of the scene, the date and time of day, the key plot points, and any important clues that have been revealed.

I refer to and modify that spreadsheet through the remaining twenty-odd drafts of the book. And when minor characters decide that they are actually important enough to come back in future books, I refer to that same spreadsheet to make sure they act, dress, and have consistent idiosyncrasies from book to book.

Like the rest of my life, it's a practice of organized chaos.

How many books are planned for the series? Any sneak peek you can give us into the third book?

I'll keep writing as long as readers want to keep reading! I have a contract for three books, but I'm hopeful *Midnight Ink* will renew it. If not, I'll self publish. I already have solid ideas for books 4 and 5, and tentative ideas for 6 and 7. Evidently, I enjoy imagining murder!

The third book, tentatively titled *Karma Can Be Killer*, is a lot of fun, and a huge growth opportunity for my protagonist, Kate. We'll learn a lot about the reasons behind Kate's idiosyncrasies, including her fear of commitment and why she has such a strong aversion to beards. And of course, Rene and Bella will figure out new and funny ways to get Kate into trouble. This book is especially fun for animal lovers. In addition to Bella and a host of other dogs, the story involves goats, a pigeon, and an especially mischievous crow.

Here's a quick blurb: Kate Davidson and her German shepherd Bella struggle to find room in their house—though not in their hearts—for Kate's just-moved-in boyfriend, Michael. Kate wonders which will burst first: her house or her head. Then her estranged mother, Dharma, shows up at Kate's yoga studio, asking to be part of Kate's life. Kate has no intention of getting close to the attractive, animal activist “egg donor” who abandoned her as a toddler. But when Dharma is charged with murdering the head of an animal rights organization, Kate feels compelled to help. To solve the case, Kate, best friend Rene and Michael must dive deeply into the worlds of animal rescue, activism, and the dangerous obsessions that drive them. All while Kate discovers that no matter how hard you try, you can never escape family—not even by murder.

How can yoga be applied to people with imperfect bodies? Is yoga really about exercise or something else?

I've yet to come across a human being with a perfect body, either inside or outside of my yoga classes. My favorite yoga quote is “If you can breathe, you can do yoga.” Yoga is ultimately the connection of body, breath and mind. Anyone can do it, and everyone can benefit from a well-designed yoga practice.

I've certified yoga *teachers* who have multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, fibromyalgia and chronic fatigue syndrome. I've taught kids as young as six and adults who are ninety-years-old plus. I've taught students who were deaf, blind, and one who was both deaf *and* blind. I've taught group classes to students who use canes, walkers, and wheelchairs. I know of yogis who have no arms; others who have lost both legs. I have yet to find a student who couldn't do some form of yoga.

Yoga as a form of exercise is a Western idea. In the East, the goal of yoga is to clarify and balance the mind. Physical fitness is simply a cool side benefit. We often confuse yoga in the West with asana (yoga postures), which is only one of its many tools. Yoga encompasses that and so much more: meditation, pranayama, ritual, chant, right relationship, and so on. So yes, anyone and everyone can benefit from doing yoga.

Even asana, which is the simplest of yoga's tools, can be done by anyone if appropriately modified. That's what I love so much about Viniyoga, the style of yoga that Kate—the yoga teacher sleuth in my series—and I both teach. The word viniyoga means “proper application and adaptation.” The goal is to work *within* a pain-free range of motion with the goal of *increasing* that pain-free range of motion over time.

Regardless of age, body type, injury, fitness level, or goals, yoga is a tool that can help anyone. If you try a class and it doesn't work for your body, try another! There are dozens of yoga styles, each different from the rest and at least a gazillion yoga teachers. I truly believe there is a yoga practice for everyone.