

JULY MUSINGS

SHARON VIRTIS



Unexpected Heroes

As we celebrate America's birthday, we are reminded of the brave men and women who fought for our independence, many of whom never expected to assume such a pivotal role in the founding of a nation. I find that this happens when I'm writing; unimagined heroes emerge from the most unlikely characters and become essential to my stories.

After I've completed the research phase of a new project, I create storyboards that include a clear outline of who my characters are and the roles they will play. But

when I begin writing, inevitably a character meant for a minor part grows into a pivotal figure, steering the plot in unforeseen directions.

For example, in my novel [*Masque of Honor*](#), Emily Mason was initially scripted as a mere bystander. As I delved deeper into the backstory and motivations of the leading characters, I realized that Emily, as sister to the antagonist and sister-in-law to the protagonist, was perfectly positioned to challenge the views and decisions of both Jack and Armistead, acting as a catalyst for pivotal moments in their conflict.

It happened again in [*Veil of Doubt*](#) with Maggie Greene. Maggie was initially planned only as a witness at the trial, but as I began writing the scene when Powell first encounters Emily Lloyd, Maggie took on a new role, one that led me to cast her as Powell's former romantic interest. This development escalated the stakes by creating even more tension in Powell's life. The same holds true for Achsah Shippen in my upcoming book, [*The Grays of Truth*](#), and in the story I am currently writing with the character Deputy Lee Aud. Neither of these characters were significant in my initial storyboards, but now play critical roles in each story.

The lesson here is that sometimes characters that “should never have been” are often the ones who leave an indelible impression. They remind us that in both fiction and in the real world, the greatest heroes are often those we least expect.

Happy Reading!

P.S. You can read more about my process in developing secondary characters and unexpected heroes at my [BLOG](#).

The GRAYS OF TRUTH



Check out the trailer for my new book, *The Grays of Truth*, coming October 29, 2024.

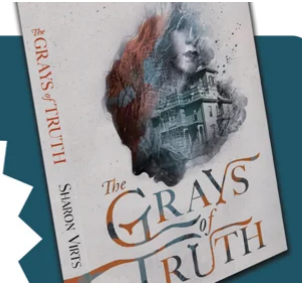
And for a limited time, Barnes and Noble is offering **25% off all online preorders** for Premium and Rewards Members with the code PREORDER25. This includes *The Grays of Truth!* The Rewards Membership is free, and anyone can sign up online at [BarnesandNoble.com](https://www.barnesandnoble.com) to get the discount. Just follow the link below and preorder your copy of *The Grays of Truth* now before the offer ends on July 17.

LIMITED TIME OFFER

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Pre-order Grays of Truth at B&N Here!

American Library Association

Annual Conference 2024 - San Diego

I was hosted by [Ingram](#) at the American Library Association Annual Conference for a *Veil of Doubt* book signing and giveaway. I also participated on a panel to discuss the **Endless Possibilities of Genre Fiction**. What an awesome honor!

During the three days I attended the conference, I talked with librarians from all over the country and met many wonderful and talented authors. Next year's conference is in Philadelphia (my husband's hometown!) and I can't wait to attend again!



Buy Veil of Doubt

"Patriotism is supporting your country all of the time
and your government when it deserves it."

~ Mark Twain



American Patriotism

Love of country is an underlying theme in each of my books. In *Masque of Honor*, the War of 1812 played a pivotal role in the shaping of nearly every character in the story. Both *Veil of Doubt* and *The Grays of Truth* are set during the Reconstruction era and the protagonists of both stories served in the war and were deeply affected by it.

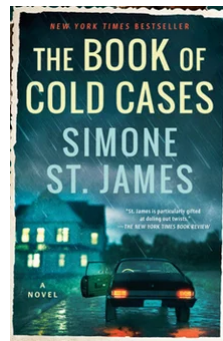
While we do not have the same experiences as those from the 19th century, today we express our patriotism in new and different ways. I asked some of my followers

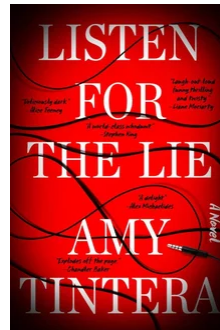
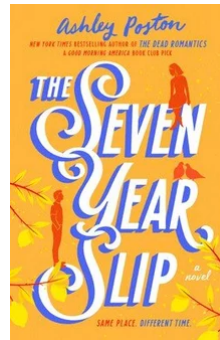
on social media to send me a few of their July 4 photos to share with you. As for me, I spent the holiday weekend with family at one of my favorite places--Bald Head Island in North Carolina.





Summer Beach Reads





***The Book of Cold Cases* by Simone St. James**

I loved Simone St. James's [*The Sundown Motel*](#) and her latest is a story reminiscent of classic Alfred Hitchcock-type thrillers. True-crime blogger named Shea Collins gets the chance to meet an acquitted murder suspect in the latter's

dark mansion. This is spine-tingling summer reading that you won't want to read after dark!

***The Beautiful People* by Michelle Gable**

If you are looking for a lighter historical story full of famous faces and Hollywood glamour, this book is for you! A failed debutante wanting to rebuild her life becomes the assistant to the most sought-after photographer of Palm Beach's socialites and stars, and is swept up in their glamorous inner circle — notably in a friendship with popular fashion designer Lilly Pulitzer. It's a fun retro flashback to the 1960s and is filled with gossip and glitz.

***The Seven Year Slip* by Ashley Poston**

Imagine you meet the perfect man — the only catch is that he literally lives in the past. Clementine has set her life's plan: work hard, find someone decent to love, and try to remember to chase the moon. For reasons she won't talk about, Clementine is careful not to get too close to anyone. And then she finds a strange man standing in the kitchen of her late aunt's apartment. He's the kind of man she would have fallen head-over-heels for if she wasn't protecting her heart. But she finds herself falling for him anyway. Except, he exists seven years in the past.

***Listen for the Lie* by Amy Tintera**

I defy you to put this book down! Although not historical fiction, I lost all sense of time as I was sucked into this mystery and its unreliable protagonist. After Lucy is found wandering the streets covered in her best friend's blood, everyone thinks she is a murderer. It's been years since that horrible night, a night Lucy can't remember, and she has since moved to LA to start over. But now the phenomenally huge hit true crime podcast "Listen for the Lie," and its host Ben Owens have decided to

investigate the murder for the show's second season. Lucy is forced to return to the place she vowed never to return to solve her friend's murder, even if she is the one that did it.



July Journaling Challenge

Capturing Summer's Essence

Most of us will embark on some sort of vacation this summer and for me, there is no better time to write in my journal. Whether you are sitting on the beach or around a campfire, pull out your journal and capture the essence of your days away from the hustle and bustle.

Here are some of the prompts to get you started:

- Pay attention to your senses and write about them. For example, describe the sound of the crashing waves or the chirping crickets. How does the ocean air or the forest floor smell? Reflect on how those sounds, smells and sights make you feel.

- Who are you with and what special moments are you sharing? This is especially important to write about if you are with children or grandchildren.
- List all the things you love about your surroundings and what makes you happy about being where you are. Gratitude is one of the most powerful topics for your journals.

Still stuck? Each Friday, I'll provide more journaling prompts to give you ideas on how to more fully explore the power of creative journaling. Simply follow me on [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#).

[Also, hold onto all the little tidbits and scraps of paper you collect this summer-- receipts, paper napkins, hotel coasters, ticket stubs, postcards from your vacation spot, that tag from your new bathing suit, etc. We're going use them in a future Journaling Challenge!]



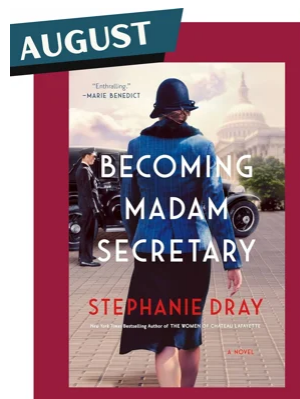
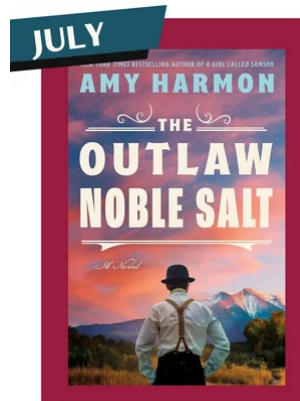
#ReadWithSharon

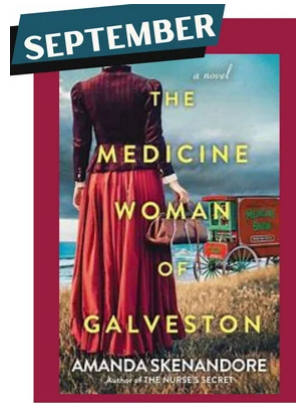
Historical Fiction Book Club

Get ready for an awesome line up in my [#ReadWithSharon](#) book club. On Thursday July 25 at 7pm eastern, we will discuss our July read, [The Outlaw Noble Salt](#), with author Amy Harmon.

The #ReadWithSharon book club only reads current release (within the last year) historical fiction and I do my best to pre-read every selection before making the pick. Most months, the author joins us via zoom and you are able to ask questions during the discussion. Meetings are the fourth Thursday of the month at 7pm eastern, and never go longer than an hour. For meetings you miss, you can access our zoom discussions with the authors on my [YouTube Channel](#).

If you love stories from the past, this club is for you. You can sign up for free [HERE](#)





"History tells us what people do;
historical fiction helps us imagine how they felt."

– Guy Vanderhaeghe

Let summer be your favorite chapter!



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