

A Letter from Susan

Welcome to the Book Club Kit for *Blue Plate Special*.

I'm an author from Maine, but in 2010 I moved to western Kentucky. I hesitated to write a book set in Kentucky for a long time, for fear readers would know I was a northern transplant who didn't know what she was talking about. Finally, I decided to take the risk and began the True Blue Mysteries series. *Blue Plate Special* is the first, and I'm now working on the fifth of these books.

I'm glad you found the True Blue Mysteries. Book 1 follows Campbell McBride, a young woman whose teaching job at a university in Iowa has been cut from the school's budget. Hoping for sympathy and a short hiatus at her widowed father's house while applying for a new position, she goes to his home in Murray, Kentucky. But her father isn't there! Campbell is at once concerned, but it takes a little while for her to convince her father's employee and the local police to help her look for him. Finding a dead body during the search gets their attention, you can be sure!

I hope you enjoy the enclosed resources and activities, and I can't wait for you to get started. You'll find some interesting data, some questions for book clubs, and more.

You can visit my website at <https://susanpagedavis.com> to learn more about me and my books, and sign up for my occasional newsletter here:

<https://madmimi.com/signups/118177/join>

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Series Snapshot:

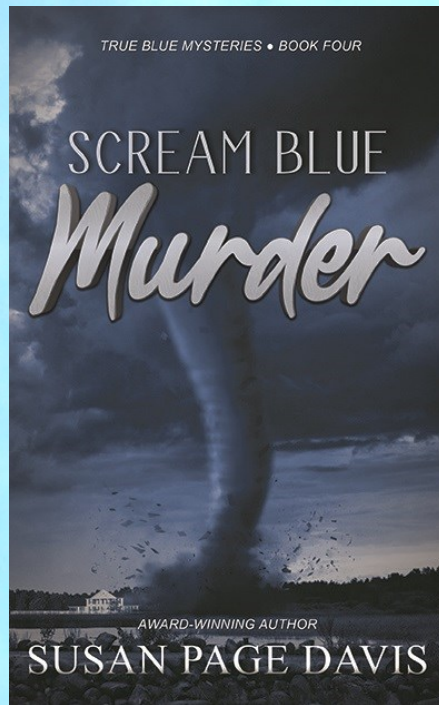


Blue Plate Special is Book 1 in the True Blue Mysteries series. Each book features Campbell and the others at True Blue Investigations as they tackle a new case.

Campbell's dad, Bill McBride, is the boss. Three years ago he hired a brash young man, Nick Emerson, as his protégé and helper. Nick is now a licensed investigator too. Unfortunately, he and Campbell don't always get along, and they engage in verbal sparring.

The assignments Bill hands Nick and Campbell can include background checks for a local employer, surveillance for insurance companies trying to catch people filing fraudulent claims, and generally digging into why things happen the way they do, especially if a crime is involved.

Campbell becomes quite adept at rooting out secrets. Should she keep on looking for another teaching job or stay on with her dad's agency?



Book 1, *Blue Plate Special*, follows Campbell and Nick as they search for the missing Bill McBride. When they try to locate the last person he spoke to, they find the man dead and have a lot more questions to answer.

Book 2, *Ice Cold Blue* True Blue Investigations is hired by a famous author's niece, to find out why her aunt will no longer allow Xina into her house.

Book 3, *Persian Blue Puzzle* involves a self-proclaimed psychic doing business in Murray. The McBrides' neighbors also want them to determine whether their daughter's new suitor is on the up-and-up.

Book 4, *Scream Blue Murder* opens with a powerful tornado touching down in the area. Detective Keith Fuller, his father, and Bill McBride find a dead man in the rubble of a destroyed cottage. Who is he, and how did he get in the debris?

Book 5, *True Blue Christmas*, releases Nov. 7, 2023. The McBrides have new neighbors, and Campbell has jury duty. Christmas is coming, and their new client wants to know if her grandfather was a thief.

Character Cheat Sheet:

Below are some of the most important characters in *Blue Plate Special*. This information can help you keep track as you read and discuss the story.

Campbell McBride:

The protagonist. At age 26, she has just downsized from her job teaching as an assistant professor at Feldman U., in Iowa. Her father, Bill, calls her “Soup” sometimes. What’s she going to do with her life now—but more urgently, can she find her father?

Bill McBride:

Age 50, Bill’s a widower, a private investigator and a former policeman. He’s Campbell’s father and owner of True Blue Investigations.

Nick Emerson:

Employee and protégé of Bill’s, age 23, works full time at True Blue as a licensed PI. Campbell considers him somewhat brash, and they have a mild rivalry. Is he the son Bill never had?

Keith Fuller:

Murray Police detective, age 31. He falls hard for Campbell, but it’s difficult sometimes to separate business from pleasure when you’re dating an investigator and the daughter of your friend.

Author Q. & A.:

Q: How did you think of the idea for this story (Blue Plate Special)?

A: After moving to Kentucky in 2010, I thought a lot about setting a series here. At first I thought I couldn't, because everything is so different here than in New England, where I came from. But after ten years or so, I felt I was ready.

I thought about a young woman having to return home when she lost her job, and I thought, what if she goes home and no one's there? For a while, I actually considered writing it so that her father had died and she came home to plan his funeral. But Bill's character just grew on me, and I couldn't do that to him, or to Campbell. So she comes home fully expecting to find him there and to get some sympathy about her job termination from good old Dad. Instead she finds his snarky employee Nick, who has no clue where Bill is.

Q: Why did you set it in Murray, Kentucky?

A: That's my shopping town now, and Murray has a lot of interesting features. I did consider making up a fictional town, which I do in some of my books, but I decided to go with Murray. I'm finding that local readers love it when I mention their favorite restaurant or theater or grocery store.

Discussion Questions for Blue Plate Special:

1. If Campbell doesn't find another teaching job, won't she be wasting her college degree?
2. Campbell never lived in Bill's current home. What challenges does she have settling in there?
3. Have you ever worked with family members, perhaps in a family-run company? What are some problems that turn up in these situations?
4. Do you think Campbell's estimation of Nick is fair throughout the book? Why or why not?
5. When Campbell questions people at the diner, is she intrusive? Too nosy? Disruptive to the business? Or right on target?
6. Are the police insensitive when Campbell first goes to report her father missing?
7. If you were Campbell when Nick walked into Darrin's house, what would you have done?
8. When she feeds the rabbits, what does that tell us about Campbell? Do you have pets? What would you have done about the rabbits, if anything?
9. What's your initial impression of Detective Fuller? Should he have done more to help Campbell when they first met?
10. Campbell was alone in Bill's house when an intruder broke in. Did she act appropriately? What would you have done differently?
11. Were you satisfied with the book's ending? Why or why not? What else do you think should have happened?

Fun Facts and Free Bookmarks:

- Sometimes I mention real places in the True Blue Mysteries books. For example, the Murray-Calloway County Hospital and Pagliai's Restaurant in this book are real places. The Barn Owl Diner and the Slate Hotel are fictional. In later books I mention a few more real places, such as Sirloin Stockade, The Playhouse in the Park, Land Between the Lakes national recreational area, Murray State University, and the Elm Grove Cemetery. Do you like it when places you recognize are mentioned in a book? And should real places be used in the setting only in positive connotations?
- When we moved to Kentucky, one of the first activities my family took part in was the 300-Mile Yard sale. We loved it! Now it's called the 400-Mile Yard Sale. How things change! Do you have a distinctly local tradition or event you like to take part in?
- Private investigators have to operate within strict parameters, set up by each state. I've tried to do my research and keep these books realistic. If the story doesn't match up with the way things are in your state, keep in mind that Kentucky may have different ways of doing things.
- We expected possums when we moved to Kentucky—something we never saw in Maine. But we didn't expect armadillos! Over the past few years, those critters have been migrating eastward, and now they're a common sight here. But we miss the moose, fishers, and other wildlife found in Maine that aren't in these parts. We're not enamored of the poisonous snakes, something we never had to worry about in Maine. What are your favorite (and least favorite) wildlife species in your area?

For book clubbers reading the True Blue Mysteries, I'd be happy to send bookmarks. These can be requested individually at susan@susanpagedavis.com, or, more efficiently, as a group. The leader can ask for as many bookmarks as your group has members.

Susan Page Davis is the author of more than one hundred Christian novels and novellas in the historical romance, mystery, and romantic suspense genres. Her work has won several awards, including the Carol Award, three Will Rogers Medallions, and two Faith, Hope, & Love Reader's Choice Awards. She has also been a finalist in the WILLA Literary Awards and Selah Awards, and a multi-time finalist in the Carol Awards. Three of her books were named Top Picks in *Romantic Times Book Reviews*. Several have appeared on the ECPA and Christian Book Distributors bestselling fiction lists. Her books have been featured in several book clubs, including the Literary Guild, Crossings Book Club, and Faithpoint Book Club.

A Maine native, Susan has lived in Oregon and now resides in western Kentucky with her husband Jim, a retired news editor. They are the parents of six and grandparents of eleven.

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More of Susan's Novels:

Mystery and Romantic Suspense:

Skirmish Cove Mysteries

Cliffhanger

The Plot Thickens

Backstory

The Maine Justice series:

The Priority Unit

Fort Point

Found Art

Heartbreaker Hero

The House Next Door

The Labor Day Challenge

Ransom of the Heart

The Saboteur

The Frasier Island Series:

Frasier Island

Finding Marie

Inside Story

Just Cause

You Shouldn't Have

Hearts in the Crosshairs

What a Picture's Worth

The Mainely Mysteries Series (coauthored by Susan's daughter, Megan Elaine Davis):

Homicide at Blue Heron Lake

Treasure at Blue Heron Lake

Impostors at Blue Heron Lake

Trail to Justice

Alaska Weddings Series:

Always Ready

Fire and Ice

Polar Opposites

Tearoom Mysteries (from Guideposts, books written by several authors):

Tearoom for Two

Trouble Brewing

Steeped in Secrets

Beneath the Surface

Tea and Promises

Tea Leaves and Legacies

Also from Guideposts, selected books by Susan appear in the Patchwork Mysteries, Mysteries of Mary's Bookshop, Miracles of Marble Cove, Secrets of the Blue Hill Library, and Mysteries of Silver Peak series.

Short Story Collection:

Short and Sweet: 13 Sweet, Romantic Stories

Historical books:

Homeward Trails Series:

The Rancher's Legacy

The Corporal's Codebook

The Sister's Search

The Outlaw Takes a Bride (western)

Counterfeit Captive

Almost Arizona

River Rest (set in 1918)

The Crimson Cipher (set in 1915)

Mrs. Mayberry Meets Her Match

Hearts of Oak Series (Co-authored with Susan's son James S. Davis, set in the 1850s):

The Seafaring Women of the Vera B.

The Scottish Lass

The Ladies' Shooting Club Series (westerns):

The Sheriff's Surrender

The Gunsmith's Gallantry

The Blacksmith's Bravery

Captive Trail (western)

Cowgirl Trail (western)

Hearts in Pursuit (western novella)

Christmas Next Door

Echo Canyon

The Prairie Dreams series (set in the 1850s):

The Lady's Maid

Lady Anne's Quest

A Lady in the Making

Maine Brides series (set in 1720, 1820, and 1895):

The Prisoner's Wife

The Castaway's Bride

The Lumberjack's Lady

Seven Brides for Seven Texans

Seven Brides for Seven Texas Rangers

White Mountain Brides series (set in the 1690's in New Hampshire)

Wyoming Brides series (set in 1850s):

Protecting Amy

The Oregon Escort

Wyoming Hoofbeats

The Island Bride (set in the 1850s)

And many more! See all of her books at <https://susanpagedavis.com>.