



There's Something in a Sunday

Marcia Muller

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It's a cold Sunday in San Francisco. Sharon McCone's alone on a routine surveillance job, following a man named Frank Wilkinson through the city's lush horticultural hot spots to the sere foothills of the Diablos. But when she returns to find her kindly old client in a pool of blood nothing she's learned explains it. The search for answers takes her from Wilkinson's sullen brood on Burning Oak Ranch, to the eccentric havoc of a household in the Haight, to Golden Gate Park and the desperate digs of the homeless. Unraveling the threads that link a homeless man, a pair of prominent activists, a wayward rancher, and a mysterious missing beauty, Sharon is plunged into the depths of domestic mayhem...entering a realm where dreams shatter and marriage leads to bloody murder.

There's Something in a Sunday Details

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From Reader Review There's Something in a Sunday for online ebook

Marcie says

I want to go to San Francisco!

aPriL does feral sometimes says

So, what happens when a loosely connected group of women who are all in traditional marriages with strong, old fashioned men in 1989 become aware they have given up their autonomy for house and babies, only to discover their husbands feel no obligations or respect for them despite their sacrifices? In this too common story, even today, each woman hides her pain in solitary suffering, but through their anxiety and rage hurt their children psychologically if not physically, as well as become more suspicious and jealous, pushing already disinterested husbands further away, or they may try to escape by disappearing, which given the nature of the men they married, can mean hiding from a potential murderer at worst or at minimum, an overbearing macho man certain of his authority and ownership.

These unequal power relationships suddenly ignite into open warfare when one of the women, charismatically attractive to many of the involved men, disappears, only to reveal her presence two years later. There was a lot of unfinished business which did not go away when Irene Lasser divorced her husband and dropped out of sight. But now she's been found, and the men are circling about her. Worse, the wives now know of the plausible cause for their husbands' lack of affection. Soon, a man's body is discovered, and McCone no longer has a client.

Whatever. McCone is not going to allow a murder to go unsolved on her watch!

Jan C says

I like the Marcia McCone series. There are many at the beginning that I haven't read yet. So I have gone back to some of the earlier ones to try and catch up.

Enjoyable story. I had to take this out twice from the library via overdrive. Listened to about half of it this afternoon, on a Sunday.

Not sure if it was because I had to take it out twice or whether the story was just confusing, but I got confused.

Sparrow says

Marcia's not the greatest writer, by which I mean a person with a talent for fondling words. Here's one of her passages, chosen at random:

I shut the outside door and looked around. There was no furniture in the room other than a heavy antique sideboard, covered with what looked to be junk mail and what definitely was dust: The rough plastered walls were hung with Indian rugs; even to my untrained eyes they looked expensive.

This is a key description, a house central to the story. (I'm trying not to ruin the plot.) It's written like a shopping list by a half-asleep housewife. I find that capitalized "The" particularly mystifying. Actually, the one note I made in the book occurs on the same page:

There were dust mice -- no, dust rats -- lurking along the baseboards.

I've never heard of dust mice, only of dust bunnies. Maybe dust mice are the California version of dust bunnies. Or did Marcia get confused with the phrase "dust mites"?

I didn't intend to quibble with *There's Something in a Sunday*. It's a moderately successful mystery tale -- I didn't guess the numerous culprits -- with a complex plot which I BELIEVE makes sense. But as sociology, it's superb. (Are all mystery novels sociology? Must be.) Muller captures with unintentional accuracy the San Francisco of 1989, painfully transitioning from the last vestiges of Hippie into the dawn of High Yuppie. (Even the title suggests the move from marijuana to reading the Sunday New York Times.) Everyone is depressed, and drinking increasingly better wine. Each day the cuisine and the coffee improves, and life gets worse. About a third of the characters are on the verge of suicide, including possibly the narrator. (Of course, no one will ACTUALLY kill themselves; that's not how California works.) Gay people are completely invisible. But not the homeless: they were a troubling new presence in cities.

Muller, I forgot to say, is a leftist. This might be the best liberal detective novel ever written. Her character, Sharon McCone (a weird name!) is a lawyer at the All Souls Legal Cooperative, an activist organization in a Victorian house in the Mission -- in fact, some of the lawyers live in the small rooms upstairs. All Souls began with the goal of defending the poor, and is gradually moving into regular law. Living under George Bush I, it's difficult to be a saint. Besides, everyone's exhausted, but tormented with guilt about it.

About all that's left is feminism, which largely motivates *There's Something in a Sunday*; but a shrewd, almost bitter feminism. Women are driven to immense selfishness BECAUSE they're oppressed -- especially good-looking women. They're difficult to love, which makes them more manipulative. Nonetheless, we must defend our sisters. This is Marcia Muller's final message in this 8th Sharon McCone mystery.

Ron Hefner says

After reading and re-reading virtually everything Bill Pronzini ever wrote (and that's a lot of reading), I finally decided to turn my attention to his mate, Marcia Muller. I figured that Pronzini wouldn't be married to her unless she was a good writer.

I'm pleasantly surprised, for a couple of reasons. First, her style is close to Bill Pronzini's. The subject matter may involve crime and murder, but there's a distinctly humanistic feel to Sharon McCone, just like Pronzini's legendary Nameless Detective. This isn't sleazy Jim Thompson noir or underworld Mike Hammer type stuff. The detective is likable. She does her job well, and we follow her through her case with anticipation.

Muller also plots her story like Pronzini does, accumulating little clues and insights along the way to solving

the crime.

Muller published the first Sharon McCone novel in 1977. It's clear that she influenced Sue Grafton. Why Grafton became a colossal best-seller and Muller is only read by hard core detective fans is a mystery to me. I'm not knocking Grafton, but there is no question that Muller is the matriarch of postmodern female detective fiction, paving the way for writers like Grafton, Lisa Scottoline, et al. As is often the case, one writer sets the bar for a particular genre, and others pick up on it and achieve greater fame and fortune.

I seldom read series books in order. This one is number 8, and I'm looking forward to reading them all. There are 33 McCone novels, plus several stand-alones and a few collaborations with her husband. Lots to look forward to.

It seems that Muller and Pronzini are birds of a feather. Long may they both continue to write and add to the great legacy of detective fiction.

Kathleen Hagen says

out in her new role as a supervisor. In the meantime, Sharon has been asked by one of the partners to follow a man on a Sunday for a client. She's told that the client is concerned that the man will "get in trouble" in San Francisco, but she believes there is more to it than that. She follows him all of that Sunday to one obscure flower and plant market after another. It becomes obvious he is looking for someone, and he isn't finding her either. When Sharon goes to report to the client the next day, she finds him dead. The immediate suspect is a homeless man but Sharon doesn't believe it. In sorting out this case, she becomes involved with two separate families, domestic abuse, betrayal, the problems of the homeless, and the police who believe the homeless man did it and don't want to hear anything else. It's very good. I do enjoy these early books in this series so much.

Ed says

#8 in the Sharon McCone series is an average entry.

Sharon McCone suspects her client, Rudy Goldring, isn't being completely candid with her, but she agrees to tail Frank Wilkonson, whose activities are confined to places connected with the horticulture world. At Goldring's apartment to deliver her report, she encounters a frantic woman fleeing the premises and the corpse. Sharon finds a leather pouch belonging to a derelict Goldring has befriended, and the homeless man becomes the main suspect. Believing in his innocence, the sleuth turns her attention to Wilkonson and to locating the unidentified woman.

Quillracer says

I had a hard time getting into this story, was almost ready to give up long before the hundred page mark, and almost didn't finish it.

Even though this book was written from a first person point of view, which I like because it makes me feel like I *am* the main character, I never really connected with Sharon McCone that way. She always remained a person on the page telling me what happened to her. I never felt like I was seeing what she saw, hearing what she heard, feeling what she felt.

Still, I'm glad I stuck it out because this book turned into a pretty good tale with several twists. However, I felt Muller didn't quite give us a full explanation of what happened.

I won't rule Muller out for future reads, but she won't go on my 'must read' list.

William says

I'm reading the McCone series in order, and this one is a quantum leap forward. The characterizations are less cardboard stereotypes, and the plot has a series of twists which hold together pretty well. The story is a bit of a study in human dysfunction, since every character is not healthy or, in several cases, quite sane.

But this is not top-drawer. Other readers have asked why Muller, who apparently inspired Sue Grafton, has rarely if ever been seen as writing at the same level. Kinsey Milhone is somehow a more likable character, and has a sense of humor (which McCone utterly lacks). And Grafton's prose, while hardly complex, flows much better. I have so far in this series seen a lot of pedestrian writing carried along by plots which seem to be getting better with each story.

Not sure if I will hang in there for the remaining 25 books in the series, but I will certainly keep at it for a while yet.

Sarah Ehinger says

I like the Sharon McCone character. This particular mystery was just OK for me. Lots of potential suspects, but not one of the better entries in the series.

Maria says

I enjoy the mystery process in these books, although I'm not too fond of most of the characters, including Sharon McCone, the PI. The reader can follow the twists and turns of the investigation along with Sharon and enjoy finding the information without always being able to guess the solution, which is a major plus for me. Unfortunately, I'm not much into the lone wolf female protagonist who views relationships selfishly and therefore will never have a satisfactory one herself. Her new sidekick Rae is the other side of the coin, in a

relationship where she is the giver and her husband the taker, but about to change that without giving up on her husband completely. She may become an interesting character in future books but all the others were awful.

Shannon Appelcline says

Reading them back to back, I'm impressed by how much a better writer than her husband Marcia Muller is. In particular, I'm impressed by how much of a stronger impression of San Francisco she gives. This one has so much San Francisco color: Golden Gate Park (which I'd love to go bike around today), the Windmills there (which I remember from the Mother's Day before last), the San Francisco Flower Market (which I think I remember from Tales of the City, though perhaps I saw it somewhere else).

The mystery's also pretty good, and though I'm not convinced I had the clues to put it together myself, it fit in the end. And, much like her last book, I felt this one was full of characters, many of whom were living in unfortunate circumstances that you had to empathize with.

Janice says

Didn't get past the first few chapters. Too dry to keep my interest.

Alton Motobu says

Surprisingly good for this genre - film noir - like the movie, Chinatown. PI embarks on seemingly innocuous case only to find a complex world of adultery, incest, rape, out-of-wedlock child, and murder with lots of seedy and unsavory characters in dark and scary surroundings. Story takes place in SF in the 1980s, mostly in the Mission district underbelly, with a trip to Hollister, a small town south of San Jose. I could see Susan Sarandon as Sharon McCone, Faye Dunaway as Irene, Jack Nicholson as Wilkonson (this is the spelling from the book) and John Huston as the elder Johnstone. I am a fan of Muller and have read a dozen Sharon McCone books so far, but I never expected such a story in this series. Top notch!

Chuck says

Published in 1989, this Marcia Muller book is noticeably dated in areas. However, the story is a good one and Sharon McCone, the main character is easy to like. Also love the San Francisco setting and descriptions. A nice summer read!

John Grazide says

Simple case. Follow a guy and see what he does. Sharon doesn't have anything else to go on so she stats the

surveillance. And she tracks him to a cattle ranch and finds a fairly normal guy, who may have a temper, but aside from that just normal. But then the man who hires her ends up dead. And Sharon searches for some answers. Taking her back to the small cattle town where secrets are kept, and back to the city where the rich and the homeless work with their own secrets.

With a few good twists this is a really good story.

Sherri Robinson says

The Sharon McCone series continues to get better with each book. I enjoy the introduction and continuing characters like Rae, Ted, & Hank.

SuperWendy says

I've been revisiting this series (in order) on audio and this book is (IMHO) Muller's most complex mystery to date. Sharon takes a surveillance job tailing a ranch foreman who comes to San Francisco every Sunday. Things eventually get thorny when her client ends up dead and all of the players orbiting the drama seem totally unrelated. What do the dead man, the ranch foreman, a mysterious woman, a do-gooder couple and a homeless man have in common?

However, to be honest, I found myself annoyed, once again, by all of the secondary players. I think I'm supposed to feel sorry for the woman at the center of this drama, but I wanted to smack her into next Tuesday - something I feel marginally guilty about when all her baggage comes to light. But seriously, she annoyed me. There's also the old "hysterical woman" trope thrown in (part of the do-gooder couple) that grated on my nerves. But Muller does keep it interesting and she did keep me guessing.

Kathleen says

Not my favorite McCone mystery, but not really sure why. It was fun to go back and read about the early days at the co-op.

Kenneth Flusche says

A quick read on a snowy day and yes Marcia surprised me at the end
