

HYGIENISTS IN PRINT ALL RDH FICTION & NON-FICTION LOIS FOSTER HIRT

THE SMART ONE AND THE PRETTY ONE—Claire LaZebnik. (www.ckaurekazebuj.com) Lauren Nickerson grew up in Los Angeles, moved to NY, & works in a boutique. This young lady is totally non-fiscally responsible. She's in tremendous debt & is getting evicted from her apartment. Her sister/lawyer Ava is totally her opposite. Both are very pretty; however, Ava couldn't care less about what she is wearing as long as it looks professional & forget make-up & even dating. She lives in her own apartment in LA.

Their mother is going to have chemo for breast cancer, so Lauren comes home to help & be with her at that time. Ava won't have to miss work, & it will help take the pressure off Jimmy their father. While at home Lauren discovers a contract their parents signed with the Markowitzs, a couple they were friendly with. It seems the 2 families decided when Russell & Ava were little kids they should get married & jokingly put that in a contract. None of the kids knew about this.

Lauren thinks Ava needs a life & arranges for Russell & Ava to meet "accidentally." Ava is almost 30, never married. Russell is almost 35 & twice divorced. He heads up a very well-known woman's clothing company. Ava trying to teach Lauren how to be financially responsible makes her sign a contract stating she will not shop for anything other than necessities like soap & toothpaste.

While taking her mom for chemo, Lauren meets Daniel who has partly put his life on hold to come help his mother who's going through chemo since his brother is living out of the country & not totally willing to come home.

The RDH part arrives with 1. Jimmy isn't lecturing Lauren about finding a job & getting out of debt. He thinks she should go to "dental hygienist school," which he is willing to pay for it. Not only is Lauren disgusted with the thought, so is Ava. Jimmy's thoughts are, "I've been thinking about it & you need to acquire some skills that will ultimately bring you in contact with the right kind of men. You'll never make money, so you better marry it." [Claire had Jimmy want Lauren to be a RDH because "I wanted to convey that while her father wants to still control her life a little bit, he's not really taking into account who she is—she already has a chosen career field & he's ignoring it. I think that's genuinely the level at which he's operating. He's not thinking about what her interests are but about what her fingers look like."] He continues with, "I've figured it out. You have nice thin fingers, so I think you'd make a decent dental hygienist. And dentists earn good money while working much more regular hours than doctors." Lauren thinks he is talking about "better husband material." She asks Ava, "Can you imagine me as a dental hygienist. Or even married to a dentist?" [Claire included the proceeding because "I think Lauren is so into having "cool" boyfriends that a dentist has never quite made his way onto her radar."] "He's been researching dental schools on the Internet. I mean dental hygienist school apparently I'm not smart enough to become an actual dentist." [The proceeding was written because "Her father's very old-fashioned so he tends to think of "women's jobs" being different from "men's jobs." To him a woman can be a dental hygienist but not a dentist which annoys Lauren. Plus there's the suggestion that she doesn't have the focus to do the longer schooling she'd need to become a full-fledged dentist, & even though she's not interested anyway, I think it bugs her that he just assumes she couldn't do it."] Lauren tells Ava she needs an "escape route" which means moving in with her. Ava says, "So either I let you move in with me or you have to become a dental hygienist?" Ava tells Lauren she does have nice thin fingers. Lauren answers, "And they're just itching to do a dance inside some stranger's mouth. She shuddered audibly. Ew. And Ava agreed." 2. Another dental reference: Carolina Hernandez, a debt counselor, comes to help Lauren. "Carolina smiled and her teeth sparkled. Bleach. Ava thought. And not just over-the-counter Crest Whitestrips bleach. The real thing, done in a dentist's office for hundreds of dollars. There were some white teeth."

Douglas Kiker's series books, MURDER ON CLAM POND (1986), DEATH AT THE CUT (1988), DEATH BELOW DECK all have the same RDH in them. Unfortunately, they are called dental technicians. Mr. Kiker passed away in 1991 so we can't find out why he did that.

MURDER ON CLAM POND starts the series, giving us the info how protagonist Mac McFarland ends up in Cape Cod. It spits out details about Mac's wife /dental tech Earline & that they met when she cleaned his teeth. He doesn't paint a pretty picture about her. We learn of Earline's affair with her orthodontist boss. Her downfall was keeping a diary about the affair. How Mac handles Earline & her boss is funny. While in Cape Cod at dinner Mac thinks of Earline's usual dinner conversation topic such as "the size of the hunks of plaque she had scraped off her patients' teeth that day. 'I swear to God, as big as these kernels of corn we're eating.'" Mac does mention Earline & even reads a letter from her. In this story Mac

gets involved in finding the murderer of the lady next door. This is also the introduction to meeting his new lady friend.

DEATH AT THE CUT has Mac finding a VW half-submerged in water with a dead young woman in the passenger seat. The Cape Cod beach just happens to be next the place where a presidential-hopeful is staying. It is questioned if she had ties to him. She didn't have a great reputation. One good line is "The restaurant sat on the shore of the Cut, so called because it was an abrupt break in the shoreline of the Cape, like a missing front tooth, through which the tidal waters of the sound flushed into and out of the harbor." Earline comes in when Mac is talking about how he ran away from his wife. Someone says, "Some beautician, I heard." Mac comes back with, "A dental technician, Give me a little credit, will you? Her affair with her boss is also mentioned."

DEATH BELOW DECK=Earline plays a small role when she shows up at Kate's house (Kate is the woman he had been living with.). She wants Mac back. He believes it's because she needs money. Kiker does not shine Earline in a nice light. Mac meets with Bitsy Binford, a woman he worked with at a newspaper in Chicago. She has been married a few times & owns a number of small newspapers & TV stations. Mac brings up Earline when Bitsy asks if he has ever been married. He did tell her that they got divorced after he "discovered that my wife was screwing the dentist she worked for." Mac discovers Earline is in town when the Binnacle's bartenders in North Walpole informs him Earline came in looking for him, announcing she was Mac's wife. Mac goes to Kate's house to confront Earline. She denies to Kate everything Mac says what happened at their house when he discovered she was fooling around with her boss. She makes it sound like Mac is crazy. He asks her why she didn't divorce him, since he made a settlement. She claims she never wanted the divorce. He counters with, "You were screwing the dentist you worked for," Earline cleaned teeth, the one thing she did well. I had first met her when she cleaned mine. Long story." She claims it was only a professional relationship. She stopped working for him a long time ago. We discover Earline had a great body, but smokes, has no appreciation of fine things, does drugs after following a married basketball player all over the country, sold her corvette & was renting a compact car, went on a expensive spending spree with his newspaper severance pay, had an abortion (the DDS is mentioned with this situation), & sold their house. Her name appears a few more times but she physically doesn't. The mystery here is who killed Bitsy's son-in-law on his new boat. At first it is thought he committed suicide.

THROUGH THE GRINDER by Cleo Coyle-Clare Cosi manages Madam Blanche Dreyfus Allegro Dubois her ex-mother-in-law's historic Village Blend coffeehouse in NYC. One perk is that she now lives above the shop in the duplex. One problem is Madam gave her son/Clare's ex Matteo Allegro equal rights to stay there at times when he isn't off hunting the perfect coffee bean around the world. Their college daughter Joy is enrolled in cooking school. Something weird is going on with her women customers. Within a short period of time, 3 young, suicidal women, die. The 1st Valerie Latham is supposed to have jumped in front of a subway train, the 2nd Inga Berg jumped off a building, & the 3rd Sahara McNeil went in front of a garbage truck. Det. Mike Quinn is trying to convince his boss that these 3 women were murdered. There are possible witnesses in the 3rd "suicide" to show she didn't jump in front of the truck on purpose. However, no one saw a potential killer in any of the 3 deaths. For Sarah McNeil's death, 1 witness is a RDH. Clare asks Quinn what did the person see. "Nothing like the bartender" (1 possible other witness.) "A dental hygienist in a first floor apartment was getting ready to go to work. She heard the scream. She also heard someone running on the sidewalk. But by the time she got her window open enough to stick her head out and look down the street, the person doing the running had vanished around the corner." [Cleo states she used a RDH-because "that scene required a reliable witness, & in my opinion a dental hygienist would be perceived by most mystery readers to be someone who would give the NYPD an honest account of what he or she saw or heard on the street-you know, as opposed to say a crack dealer! No kidding though, in my experience, dental hygienists are among the most functional, cheerful, reliable people that I have met in the course of my life, & I think most of my readers would trust them as eyewitnesses to a crime."]

Quinn asks Clare how did she decide it was time to leave her marriage? They have flirted around, but she wouldn't fool around with a married man. Joy is trying to find the best on-line dating services. One night upstairs at the Village Blend they had a Cappuccino Connection for singles. So many people paid \$40 to spend 2 hours meeting other singles. You had so many minutes to talk to someone before going onto the next person. Both Joy & Clare were there. Clare went to check out the men for Joy. As she is doing that she meets Bruce Bowman, someone she will go out with. She also saw another young man that she had a blind date with. Bruce did ask her out & left with Sahara whom he went to school with. Quinn comes to the shop

to probe Clare about Sahara, & how well she knows Bruce. It seems Bruce dated/knew all 3 women. Quinn warns her about going out with Bruce.

A couple of dental tidbits are “Matteo grinned. His teeth shone white against his now darker than dark skin.” “A little long in the tooth but not bad,” the man snorted”

In Coyle’s DECAFFEINATED CORPSE, Clare’s ex-husband Matt Allego’s best friend Rick Gostwick has developed the world’s first botanically decaffeinated coffee bean. Rick smuggles it into the US, & Mario is out trying to sell it. Cleo & Matt’s mother Madame Dubois are following a man they are suspicious of. He leads them to a PI office in a building in the Dag Hammarskjold Plaza. She & Madam go there under the presumption they need a PI. Cleo describes it as not being large, “about the size of a busy dental practice. [Cleo’s reason for the comparison is “One of the challenges in writing fiction is finding subtle & succinct ways to make characters & settings come alive for the reader. In order to do that, an author must strive to make connections with the reader’s own experiences. In that particular scene, my amateur sleuth walks into the office of an international private investigator operating near the United Nations in New York City. That *sounds* like a glamorous & inaccessible setting but it’s just an office, like any other, with clients & files & phones. By comparing Worldwide Private Investigations with a busy dental practice, I am (hopefully) getting across to my readers a familiar sense of place that will help them see & understand the setting. In other words, few people have walked into a private investigator’s office, but most have been to a dentist’s practice! Remembering that feeling of dealing with a receptionist, sitting in a waiting room with magazines, anticipating your turn to be called in for your appointment—all of that is meant to be evoked by that single, very simple phrase “about the size of a busy dental practice.”

I always ask an author if they can add anything else. Cleo did. “I have the greatest respect & appreciation for anyone practicing the medical art of dentistry. So many diseases stem from people not taking good enough care of their mouths that it always pains me to come across a person who does not see a dentist regularly (a motherly lecture from me typically ensues!) As a child, I had the biggest, most embarrassing crush on my dentist—he was the most charming man. And my current dentist in NYC is a wonderful man who practices with his lovely warm wife, who works as his hygienist. I always look forward to my teeth cleanings & check-ups so I can catch up on how they & their young son are doing. I usually tell *them* about movies like *Ghost Town* & books like *Compromising Positions* (by one of my favorite authors, Susan Isaacs) that prominently feature dentists.

She also added if any of your readers would like to learn more about her Coffeehouse mysteries or her other series—The Haunted Bookshop Mysteries, they should go to www.CoffeehouseMystery.com & if you are coffee drinkers, you can sign up for her free periodic newsletter. Subscribers are automatically entered in her weekly free coffee drawings in which she randomly selects a subscriber to receive a pound of one of her favorite gourmet coffees (“that’s why God invented teeth-whitening, right?!”)

Coyle’s = LATTE TROUBLE—Village Blend is hosting a party .One barista is taking out his frustration by butting “the bottom of the stainless steel pitcher against the steam wand’s spout. The result was a tooth-grinding clang of metal on metal. Another left barista left for a DDS appointment.

GHOST TOWN is a movie/comedy about a Manhattan bachelor DDS who dies for 7 minutes after his colonoscopy. I haven’t seen it yet.