

NOVEMBER MUSINGS

SHARON VIRTS



Finding Narrative in Nature

How the Late-Autumn Landscape Influences Storytelling



There's something profoundly narrative about late autumn. The world feels as if it's exhaling after a long, bright summer quieting itself for reflection. The trees, stripped of their finery, stand like characters caught between acts, their silhouettes sharper and more honest against the gray November sky. The

colors fade to muted ochres and deep russets, and the light—soft, slanted, fleeting—wraps the landscape in a wistful kind of truth.

For me, as both a writer and a painter, this season holds a peculiar magic. The world no longer shouts its beauty; it whispers it. The brilliance of October gives way to the subtle poetry of November, and I find myself drawn to the in-between spaces...the hush, the emptiness, the things left unsaid.

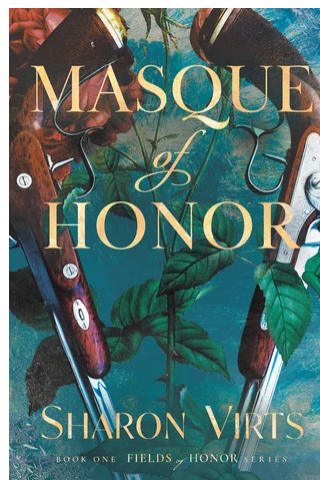
When I step outside, palette knife in hand or story in mind, I notice the texture first. The brittle edge of a fallen leaf, the rough bark of an old oak, the way fog softens over the river and the horizon. These tactile details carry emotion. They become metaphors of time, endurance, and surrender. On canvas, they translate into layered color and shadow. On the page, they become the quiet heartbeat of a scene or the fragility of a character's thought.

Late autumn teaches restraint. The palette narrows, but in that narrowing, every hue matters. The ochre of a dying field or the violet cast of evening sky holds more weight precisely because it is fleeting. The same is true in storytelling. As the year wanes, I find myself drawn to spare prose, to dialogue trimmed to its essence, to scenes where silence says as much as speech.

There's also a rhythm to this season that mirrors the creative process itself. Nature pulls inward, conserving energy for the rebirth to come. I, too, feel a turning inward to reflect, to edit, to refine. The distractions of summer fall away, and what remains is clarity...the bare bones of an idea... the emotional truth that lies beneath the noise.

Perhaps that's why November feels so intimate, so contemplative. It reminds us that beauty doesn't vanish when it fades, it transforms. The artist and the storyteller alike must learn to see beyond the obvious bloom to the quiet grace of what endures.

Because the story of autumn isn't about death at all, it's about *becoming*. About stripping away the unnecessary until only truth remains. And that, after all, is the heart of every great work of art.



Pre-Order Masque

***Masque of Honor* Returns—With a New Cover and More of Jack!**

As we approach the long-awaited sequel's arrival next year, let's revisit the man at the heart of it all—Jack McCarty. It's Jack's journey, his ambitions, loyalty, and the burden of honor that first drew readers into the charged halls of Selma, Belmont, Coton Farm, Raspberry Plain and Cedar Grove to the icy grounds of the Bladensburg dueling field. Now, with **Masque of Honor** returning on March 24, 2026, you'll have the chance to experience Jack's world anew.

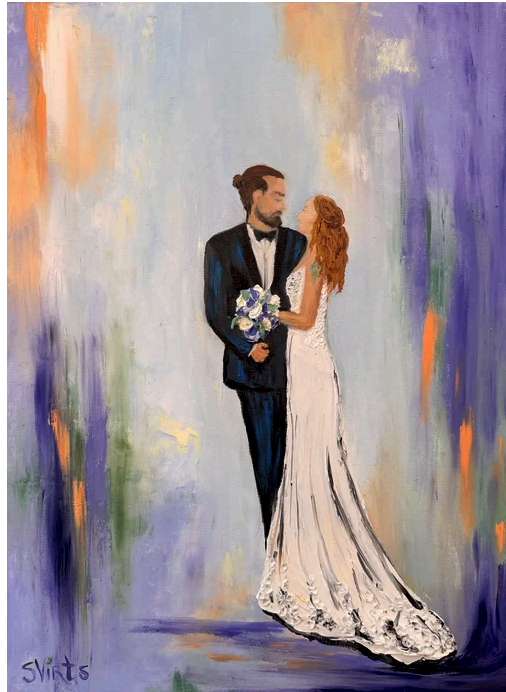
This special re-release features a stunning new cover and enriched content, including fresh chapters that delve deeper into Jack's legacy and a brand-new epilogue that sets the stage for the entire **Fields of Honor** series. The epilogue is designed to connect the threads of history, family, and the choices Jack makes—echoes that will carry through all five books.

Whether you're meeting Jack McCarty for the first time or rediscovering what makes his story unforgettable, I can't wait for you to experience **Masque of Honor** in its bold new form and the upcoming sequels.

[Preorders have opened!](#)

(P.S. I am now in the midst of writing Book 3 in the series!)



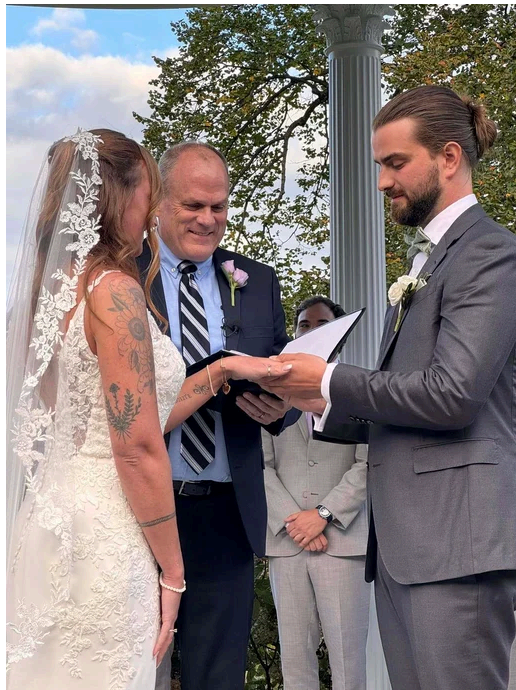


Zach & Emma's Wedding

My son Zach married the love of his life, Emma, in the most beautiful ceremony at Selma.

The sun shone warmly over the gardens, the air was filled with love and laughter.

As a special gift for them, I painted this portrait capturing their joy in that moment which became the label for a keepsake bottle of [Amlés Reflectionist](#)









Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin Visits Selma





On Thursday, October 20th we held a reception at Selma for Virginia Governor Glenn Youngkin. He spoke about the future of the Commonwealth and our commonwealth's promise and potential.



Distilled Intelligence Summit

I joined the ***Exited Founders and Angels from Loudoun County*** panel at Distilled Intelligence 2025, held at the beautiful Lansdowne Resort. The summit brought together the brightest founders, operators, and investors for three days of connection, insight, and \$1,000,000 in startup investment.



As an entrepreneur who built and exited FCI Federal, I shared lessons learned about scaling a business with purpose and the importance of reinvesting success into community and innovation. Surrounded by visionary leaders and emerging startups, I was reminded that Loudoun County continues to be a powerhouse of talent, creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit.



Make *The Grays of Truth* Your Book Club's Spooky Fall Read!

Here's how it works & the benefits ...

- The Book club organizer places the order for 10+ books and gets **25% OFF!**
- Book club organizer gets this cute tote bag as a gift.
- Each book club member gets a signed book plate.
- Each book club member gets a set of *Grays of Truth* spooky stickers.
- Each book club member gets a *Grays of Truth* bookmark.
- Sharon will join your book club via Zoom (or in person if you're local!)

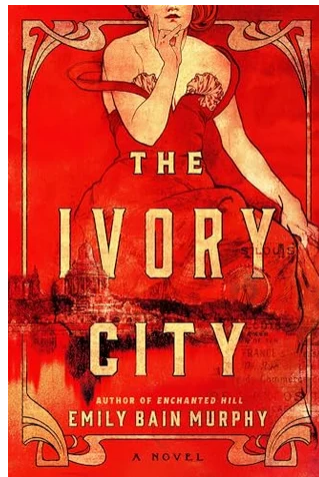


Interested? Use the button below to let us know!

[Tell me more about this great book club deal!](#)

November Book Picks

As winter waits at the edges of November, we turn to stories that illuminate the in-between. This month's highlights are as evocative as the season itself.



4.30★ on Goodreads

The Ivory City

by Emily Bain Murphy

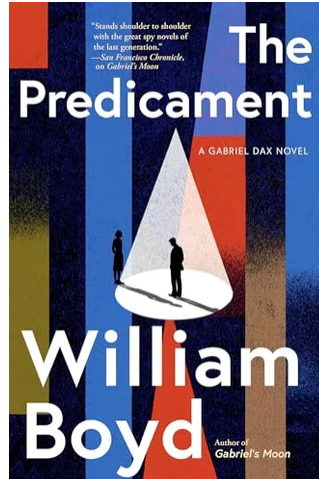
At the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair — a dazzling spectacle of palaces, pavilions and promise — cousins Grace and Lillie arrive hoping for transformation. But when murder strikes beneath the fair's glittering surface, Grace must probe elite façades and question what truly lies behind the gilded veneer. Murphy delivers romantic mystery and historical depth in equal measure.



4.23★ on Goodreads

I, Medusa
by Ayana Gray

This adult debut novel reimagines the myth of Medusa and explores her journey from victim to vigilante as she seeks to write her own story. The book follows Medusa, a young woman who feels out of place among her immortal family and seeks a life of adventure. After being chosen as a priestess by Athena, her life is irrevocably changed when she is cursed by Poseidon.

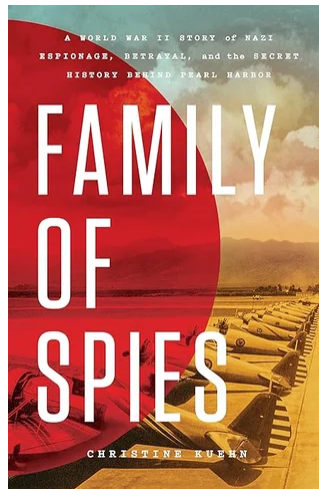


4.25★ on Goodreads

The Predicament

by William Boyd

Gabriel Dax, travel writer and accidental spy, is back— dispatched to Guatemala amid a volatile presidential election where the Mafia and CIA blur the lines between power and corruption. When his path leads to West Berlin, Dax uncovers a shocking plot against President JFK. Suspenseful and richly layered, Boyd delivers a gripping portrait of betrayal, consequence, and the moral gray zones of the Cold War.

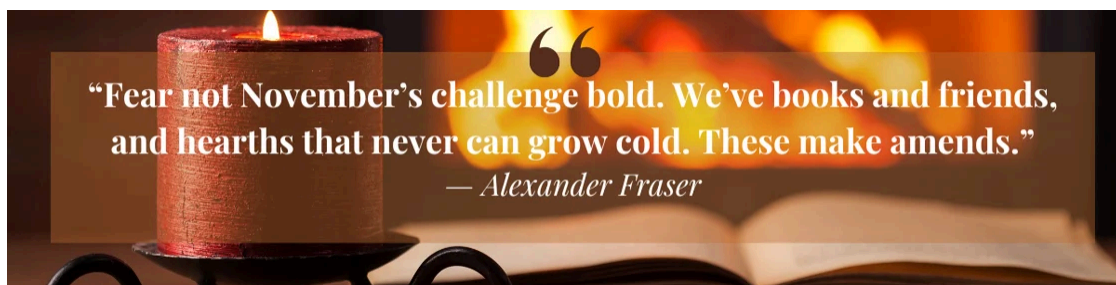


4.57★ on Goodreads

Family of Spies

by Christine Kuehn

A propulsive, never-before-told story of one family's shocking involvement as Nazi and Japanese spies during WWII and the pivotal role they played in the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Jumping back and forth between Christine discovering her family's secret and the untold past of the spies in Germany, Japan, and Hawaii, *Family of Spies* is fast-paced history at its finest and will rewrite the narrative of December 7, 1941.





The Heart of November: Gratitude, Gathering, and Grounding



As the last leaves fall and the air grows crisp with promise, November invites us to slow down, savor, and give thanks.

It's a month that asks us to turn inward to gather the lessons, moments, and memories that have shaped our year and to find gratitude in them all.

This season reminds us that abundance isn't always about more; sometimes it's found in stillness, in connection, and in simply being present.

Here are a few prompts to get you started:

- 🍁 What are you most grateful for right now—in this exact season of your life?
- 🍁 Who or what has grounded you most this year?
- 🍁 As the year begins to wind down, what do you want to honor, release, or celebrate before it ends?

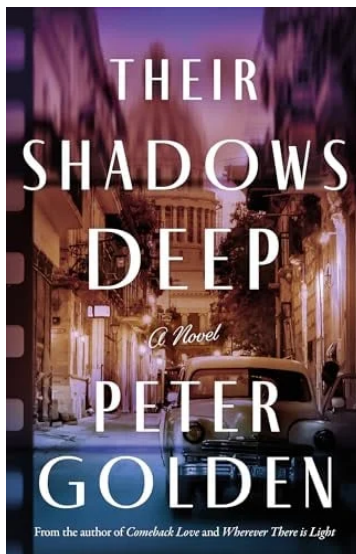
November is a gentle invitation to gather your thoughts, nurture your spirit, and find warmth in gratitude. 🍂



#ReadWithSharon Book Club

Get ready for an incredible lineup in my [#ReadWithSharon](#) book club. On Thursday, November 20, at 7:00 p.m. Eastern, we'll dive into ***Their Shadows Deep*** by Peter Golden, a dark and layered tale of ambition, betrayal, and the hidden costs of the American dream.

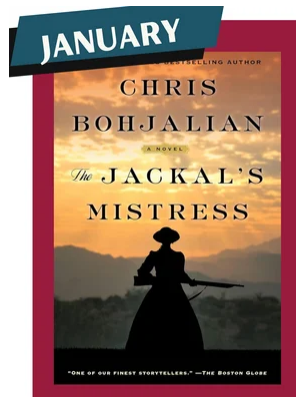
In 1960, as John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign gathers momentum, former cop turned reporter Caitlin Russo begins investigating her husband's murder. Her search uncovers his secret life as a CIA operative and a web of political deception reaching into the highest levels of power. With November marking the anniversary of the JFK assassination, this story's portrayal of the plot surrounding that horrific moment in Dallas sixty-two years ago make for a great read this month.



The [#ReadWithSharon](#) book club only reads current releases of 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 can ask questions during the discussion.

Meetings are typically held on the fourth Thursday of the month (except when Thanksgiving is that very day!) and last one 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](#).



As the nights grow longer and time seems to slow, I hope you find peace and gratitude in these quiet days of November,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Jana', is written on a white background. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.



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