



SLUGLINE: NEWARK

BRAD PARKS REPORTS ON **FACES OF THE GONE** IN HIS DEBUT MYSTERY

“FOR A GUY WITH MY BACKGROUND — Connecticut suburbs to the Ivy League — walking into a Newark tenement for the first time was a total culture shock,” says debut author and former *Star-Ledger* reporter Brad Parks.

“Intellectually, I knew not everyone grew up with the advantages I did,” Parks continues. “But really seeing and experiencing it gave me a much different understanding of what it means to grow up in poverty.”

Parks soon got over his shock, getting to know the people on his beat and coming to the realization that they “weren’t really all that different from the people I had met anywhere else — their heat just didn’t work as well.”

In his 10-year tenure at the New Jersey newspaper, Parks stuck to the facts, covering major sports events, Hurricane Katrina, the effects of 9/11 and plenty of stories about Newark, including a 40-year retrospective of the Newark riots. But alongside his newspaper career, Parks began writing fiction.

He put aside his initial effort, a coming-of-age story set in the 1960s, to come closer to home: a mystery series starring *Newark Eagle-Examiner* investigative reporter Carter Ross.

In book one, *Faces of the Gone* (Minotaur), Carter digs deeper after the Newark police wrongly classify a grisly quadruple homicide as a revenge killing. He’s aided in his quest to get the real story by his “smoking hot” city editor, a local stripper and a gay coworker.

“Carter Ross isn’t consciously patterned after anyone, but he probably shares some genealogy with Fletch — as written by Gregory McDonald, not as played by Chevy Chase,” says Parks. He adds about the aforementioned smoking-hot Tina, Carter’s occasional love interest: “Let me assure all of your readers — especially my wife — that’s she’s a total fabrication. My city editor was a lumpy, balding guy named Steve.”

Parks regretfully left journalism behind in 2008, moving with his wife and two small children to Virginia. “Sometimes I feel guilty for jumping ship and leaving my colleagues behind to bail without me,” he says. “But I always harbored this secret dream of writing books for a living. So, in a strange way, the death of newspapers has been a good thing for



me personally, because it forced me to leave the safety of full-time employment and chase my dream.”

The dream continues for Parks, who signed with Minotaur for two Carter Ross books. “Number two is very loosely based on some of the work I did about the subprime mortgage scandal, which was ravaging the inner city long before it ever got out to the rest of America,” he says, adding that the story also borrows “a little bit” from crooked land deals perpetrated by Newark’s former mayor. “You’ll have to wait till fall 2010 to see how,” he teases. — *LF*

For more, go to: BradParksBooks.com.

Clare Willis

ONCE BITTEN
(ZEBRA)

Elevator Pitch: It’s *Melrose Place* meets *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. San Francisco ad exec Angie McCaffrey’s conniving boss goes missing, and the main suspect is Angie’s mysterious new boyfriend, who may or may not be a real vampire. But when Angie becomes the next target she has to figure out who the real bloodsuckers are. Her heart, her life and maybe her immortal soul are riding on the answer.

What appeals to you about your chosen genre?

I love the paranormal genre because of the freedom you have as a writer. It’s a romantic smorgasbord — vampires, ghosts, fairies, werewolves — anything goes, as long as it’s sexy! Next year I’ll have another vampire novel and a ghost story novella coming out from Kensington.

How long have you been writing? It’s been a long journey. I started writing 10 years ago, when I became a stay-at-home mom. *Once Bitten* is the first book I wrote. I was pitching my third book when the call came in asking for my first.

Where were you when you got the call?

My husband and I were in Ashland, Ore., at the Shakespeare Festival. I’d just gotten a new iPhone. I was expecting the agent to call, but when she did I didn’t know how to answer my new phone! I was running around the hotel room, shrieking, pushing every button on the darn thing.

Where do you live, and what is your day job?

I live in San Francisco, a beautiful city with a fascinating history. San Francisco is an important character in *Once Bitten*. I am a mom of two boys, and I work as a guide at a Victorian house museum in the city.

Visit ClareWillis.com.

