

Into the Crucible

“Out of whose womb came this child? She is dirty and wild, and her pretty eyes don’t fool anyone.”

Who is Maggie Black? She would now be about fifty years old, though I don’t know her current situation because I’ve not written her past the age of twenty-six. It is difficult to write about her without saying too much—explaining the joke, so to speak—and her personality shines on its own in my novel, *The Sins of Maggie Black*. As stated in my previous blog on origins, she was abandoned by her Irish mother, then adopted at the age of one by a pious but misguided Catholic couple. Already lacking the warmth an infant receives from its mother, her life could have been enriched by the unconditional love of adoptive parents. But, as one might infer from the above quote voiced by her new mother, it was not to be.

Sensual, free-wheeling and impulsive, Maggie has a classic Dionysian temperament. Sexually active by fifteen, she abused drugs and developed a distain for authority. Later, she would learn to manipulate men and women alike with her beauty and charm, the

only powers she assumed she had. She took up with men she hoped would love her, only to be used and berated. She cheated clients, stole valuables and smoked pot in chaotic households detrimental to her young son—justifying it through an inner rage she barely understood, a rage against God, the world—whoever failed the little girl who only wanted to be loved. Despite her tough, street-wise façade, Maggie Black was dying inside, and something had to give.

In the jewelry business, metals are melted in what's called a crucible. The solid gold or silver pellets heat up into liquid form so they can be casted into various shapes for creating finished jewelry. In this blog's title, the term refers to a basic aspect of story-telling—that characters must be stuck in some kind of dilemma, a situation they cannot walk away from. Things heat up, their predicament worsens, and some change or turning point becomes inevitable. Nominally, the crucible can be a situation, a place, or a combination of the two. On a deeper level, the crucible lies within us. Maggie passes through two turning points before she strands in Scottsbluff, where she meets the story's other two main characters: Jim, a ranger-lawman—and Lena, his troubled cousin. Though Maggie receives the most stage time, this novel is no less about Jim and Lena, and it reveals the crucible each find themselves in. As they strive to heal, to become whole, to make things right—I hope

the reader will see something universal in their struggles, and find their journeys heroic, as I do.

I hope you have enjoyed this latest blog regarding *The Sins of Maggie Black*. If you care to join Maggie on her journey, the novel is available as a paperback and eBook on Amazon. Unsure of my next blog post, I may write about a Vietnam vet and hitchhiker I once picked up outside of Little Rock—as a sneaky way into discussing my next novel, or I may veer back into Maggie’s world. There are many roads left to explore, and there’s still gas in the tank.

See Maggie in action: **THE SINS OF MAGGIE BLACK** is now available!

Find paperback and eBook versions on Amazon.