

Patricia M. Muhammad  
presents

# MURDER BY DISSENT

## Interesting Facts:

Murder By Dissent is a mystery/detective-historical romance novel set in 1960s New York. Detective Jacqueline Sadie Thompson's day. She is married to William Singleton, an Anglo Englishman.

1. Murder By Dissent is the author's second mystery/detective romance novel. It is also her second novel featuring a clear black-white interracial romantic relationship. The author is a descendant of a multi-racial lineage.

The Woolworth building is the scene of murder in which Detective Thompson, her husband William and Detective Johnson venture to. It is also the scene now where they are nearly killed as they barely escape the toss of a Molotov cocktail.

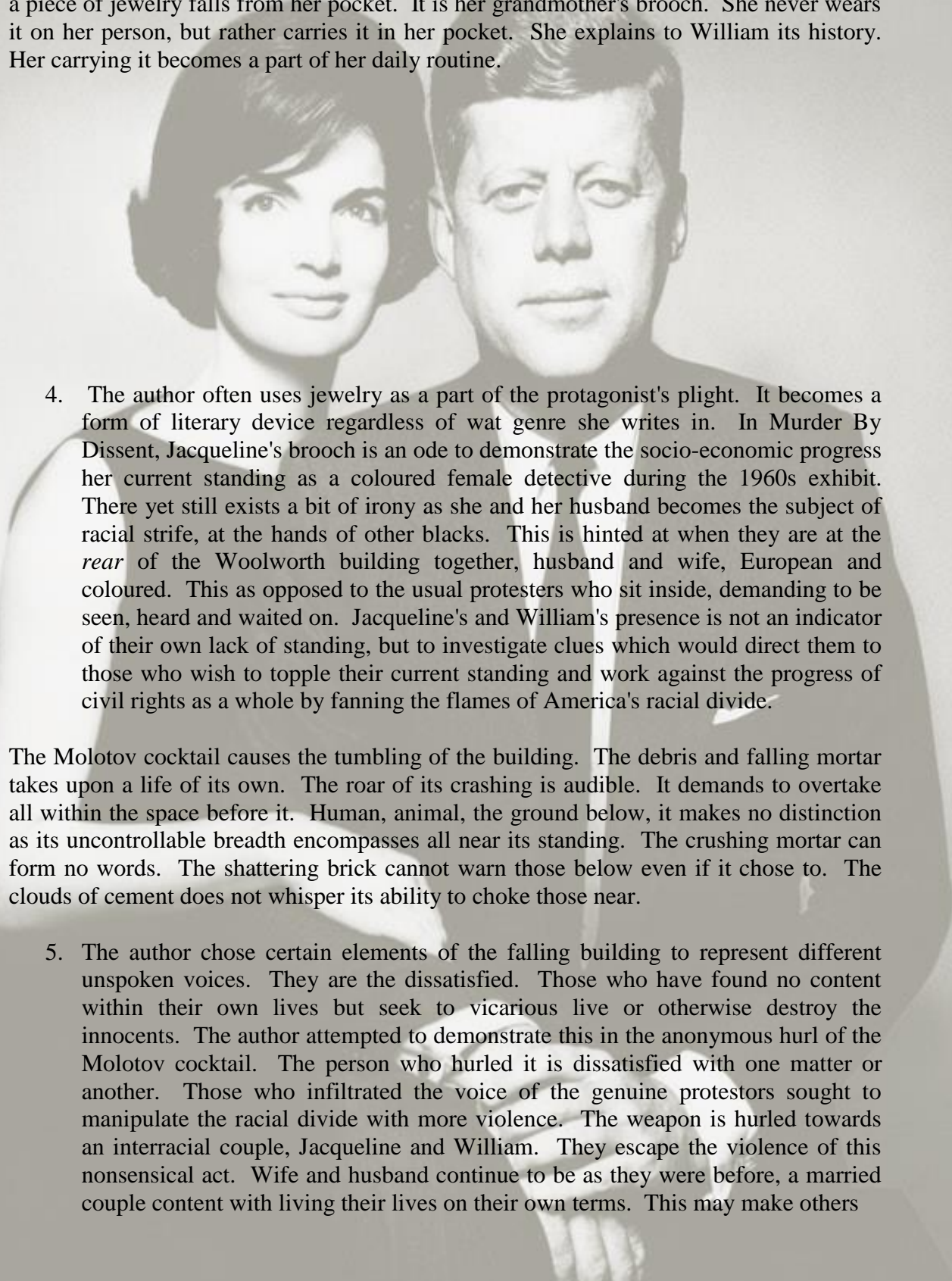
2. The author was aware that during the tumultuous 1960s in the United States, Woolworth's buildings were the sites of peaceful protests. Most of them were places of social gatherings with 'lunch-in' counters. Here is where black protestors would sit after being denied service for dining by white American employees. Sometimes these peaceful protestors were pulled from the stools upon which they were perched, others were met with spit by other Woolworth customers, and even worse was the violence they endured. These historical events occurred within the building. The author decided to craft a the possibility of a scenario of violence and death that happened outside of a Woolworth building, and still relate it to the great American racial divide.

It is Jacqueline's husband, William, who thinks quickly and saves her from the fallen debris. He was not supposed to be there. William's presence was against protocol. His instincts save them both from death.

3. The author wanted to show that an unadulterated love that exists between man and woman transcends race. The author is aware that race relations remains a sensitive subject especially in the United States. Yet she is also aware that not all is black and white. For William and Jacqueline this was case. In the most extenuating circumstances, Jacqueline's British husband only saw the love of his life near death's door. It extended its decrepit limbs towards them, towering over as if to encompass them despite their response. Jacqueline and William had a great and sole affection for each other. William did what any genuinely caring man would

do for his wife, he saved her without hesitation.

When Jacqueline returns home for her long-term convalescence, there is a scene in which a piece of jewelry falls from her pocket. It is her grandmother's brooch. She never wears it on her person, but rather carries it in her pocket. She explains to William its history. Her carrying it becomes a part of her daily routine.

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4. The author often uses jewelry as a part of the protagonist's plight. It becomes a form of literary device regardless of what genre she writes in. In *Murder By Dissent*, Jacqueline's brooch is an ode to demonstrate the socio-economic progress her current standing as a coloured female detective during the 1960s exhibit. There yet still exists a bit of irony as she and her husband becomes the subject of racial strife, at the hands of other blacks. This is hinted at when they are at the *rear* of the Woolworth building together, husband and wife, European and coloured. This as opposed to the usual protesters who sit inside, demanding to be seen, heard and waited on. Jacqueline's and William's presence is not an indicator of their own lack of standing, but to investigate clues which would direct them to those who wish to topple their current standing and work against the progress of civil rights as a whole by fanning the flames of America's racial divide.

The Molotov cocktail causes the tumbling of the building. The debris and falling mortar takes upon a life of its own. The roar of its crashing is audible. It demands to overtake all within the space before it. Human, animal, the ground below, it makes no distinction as its uncontrollable breadth encompasses all near its standing. The crushing mortar can form no words. The shattering brick cannot warn those below even if it chose to. The clouds of cement does not whisper its ability to choke those near.

5. The author chose certain elements of the falling building to represent different unspoken voices. They are the dissatisfied. Those who have found no content within their own lives but seek to vicariously live or otherwise destroy the innocents. The author attempted to demonstrate this in the anonymous hurl of the Molotov cocktail. The person who hurled it is dissatisfied with one matter or another. Those who infiltrated the voice of the genuine protestors sought to manipulate the racial divide with more violence. The weapon is hurled towards an interracial couple, Jacqueline and William. They escape the violence of this nonsensical act. Wife and husband continue to be as they were before, a married couple content with living their lives on their own terms. This may make others

unhappy, but it is not their job, duty or obligation to please the distorted and hateful wishes of complete strangers. The author is aware that it is they who are unstable. It is they who wish to crush anyone in their path regardless of their status of innocents. They use their girth, combined wealth, sinister tactics to effectuate a different kind of change, that which would hurl America into an even worse form of bitter chaos. The Molotov cocktail represented the agent of this chaos, while the building was the enforcement of their mal-intent.

After the explosion, the lieutenant visits the forensic scientist on more than one occasion. The examiner has taken ink imprints of the most recent deceased, Margaret, Detective Sebastian Johnson's wife.

6. The author researched whether fingerprints were used in investigative matters in the 1960s. It was one of the most consistent and well-developed forensic tools that law enforcement had available at the time.

One of the person's responsible for the murder many would consider an unlikely suspect. This is due to colorism which exists among black Americans regarding skin tone. Those of a certain range are considered more likely to be innocent not based on fact, but on the hue of their skin.

7. The author used this as the backdrop of developing the primary perpetrators character traits. The criminal offender in many ways assumed the identity of those who actually suffered racial discrimination. She is married to a detective. In her own way, she went undercover among blacks to hear their gripes and used them to her advantage to seemingly present herself as the self-anointed spokesperson for the sufferings of this segment of the American population. In doing so, she became the criminal hidden in plain sight among most of the protestors. A handful of the protestors were not deceived, yet they kept their observations mostly to themselves. The author juxtaposed this character to the detectives, who went undercover for legitimate reasons, the facilitation of justice. In doing so, they were still able to hear the causes of dissatisfaction amongst the ones who voiced them the most; yet they did not use this to their advantage. These detectives were not primarily a part of that world.

There is part of the plot which leads the reader to consider that Mark Anderson, another detective is part of the plot in which protestors were killed. Most of his colleagues at the station house tolerate him, though he is quite capable of performing his work.

8. The author is aware that so often law enforcement has a negative reputation with the civilian population. In this scenario, Mark Anderson is a coloured detective who is superficially suspect among his colleagues. When he presents himself at one of the protestor's meetings, some are weary. Most are not aware that he is an undercover detective. Yet he is easily exonerated because he was not guilty of any wrongdoing. As a matter of fact, it was Detective Anderson who stood in the shoes of the recuperating Detective Johnson in order to further the murder cases to their rightful close. The author considered that many readers would erroneously assume that Anderson had some role in the murders. This is often another ploy

that those who wish to heighten the intensity of violence during racial strife or widen the gap of mistrust between law enforcement use. Statistically speaking, most crimes even until this day are committed by civilians, often from the world 'below' against other civilians. The most glaring difference is the era in which Murder By Dissent takes place. The civil rights violations were systemic, recorded and even legislated. However, in this day, not everything is black and white, and even if difficult for others to consider, back then not all was black and white either.

William and Jacqueline spend much more time together when her lieutenant orders her on sick leave. They share a true affection for each other. Husband and wife express it in every waking and opportune moment they are able. They are subtly aware of each other's cultural differences, yet it does not impact their genuine love for one another.

9. The author intentionally focused on the adoration that Jacqueline and William share. It is unadulterated. Their mutual and exclusive affection is unparalleled and just the opposite of the racial strife which exists external of them. Neither William or Jacqueline subscribe to certain ideologies that only hinder racial progress. The author made them the contrary microcosm to the world which existed around them during the turbulent 1960s. After Detective Thompson retires from law enforcement, she and William focus on their family, which has now just become a little bigger. Jacqueline is pregnant.

