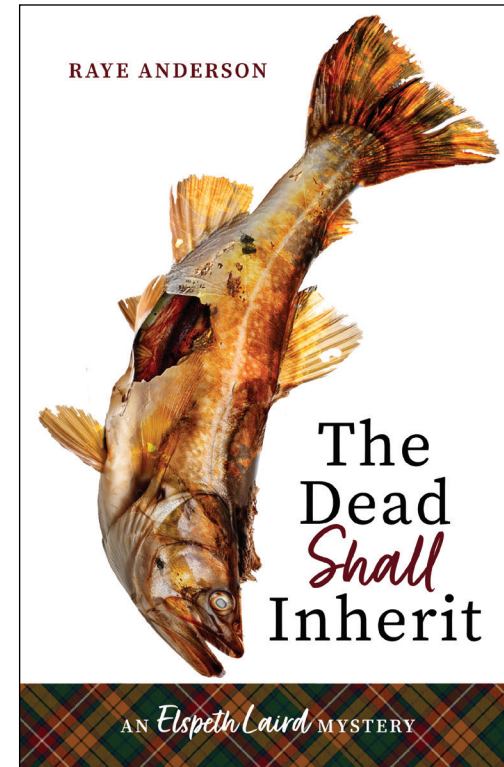


Discussion Questions

1. Elspeth is an immigrant to Canada, who goes back to a country she has seldom visited, but to which she is still connected. What are the advantages and what are the potential difficulties of dual nationality, and how does it affect a person's sense of identity?
2. How does gossip in Sullà influence the characters' relationships and the progression of the plot? Can those stories be trusted? What purpose do they serve in the telling of this story? Are they a catalyst for conflict or resolution?
3. Deirdre MacPhail collected stories from people who lived on Sullà but rewrote them in her own words and to suit her own purpose. What do writers owe to the people whose stories they "borrow"?
4. The Isle of Sullà has become a popular tourist destination in this book. Was Deirdre MacPhail's influence in making Sullà a tourist hotspot more positive or negative for the community?
5. Many of the families on Sullà are interrelated. Other people, like Jackie Buchanan and her husband believe they can make a life there. Elspeth doesn't believe she'll ever be accepted as an islander, but is it true that only the people whose families have lived in small, rural communities forever really belong?
6. How does the setting—remote island, isolated house, stormy weather—contribute to the novel's atmosphere? Does the setting it play a significant role in the plot?
7. Does reading this book make you want to visit Scotland and the Hebrides?
8. Deirdre's Mairi MacIntosh books are set to be adapted into a TV series. If *The Dead Shall Inherit* were to be turned into a TV show or movie, who would you cast to play the different characters and why?
9. How did reading about Elspeth's experiences on Sullà make you reflect on your own views about dealing with inheritance and family legacies?
10. How does Elspeth's experience on Sullà Island transform her as a person? What do you think will happen if Elspeth returns to Winnipeg now?
11. How are Scottish traditions and cultural elements portrayed in the novel? Do you think they are represented authentically?

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Lucky inheritance or deadly curse?

Inheriting the Skipper's House from her late aunt Deirdre MacPhail, a famed Scottish writer, looks like the solution to all Elspeth Laird's financial problems—but this inheritance comes with a dark legacy. As Elspeth settles into life on the Isle of Sullà she discovers a community divided by her aunt's legacy and old grudges. Practical jokes turn into sinister threats, and a murder reveals a killer among them. With tensions high and trust scarce, she must unravel dark secrets before becoming the next victim of the house's deadly curse.

Are you interested in having Raye virtually attend your book club meeting? Please contact Ashley Nielsen at marketing@signature-editions.com to schedule or learn more about book club appearances.

Questions for Raye Anderson

How did you become a murder mystery/crime writer?

I like a good story and believe that the stories we tell and how we tell them matter. They reflect how we like to think of ourselves as a society and what we aspire to be. Quite often they are fiction grounded in truth. I have always enjoyed reading this genre. I learn a lot about different places from reading crime fiction and how people function under stress.

I never intended to become a crime fiction author. It happened unexpectedly. I trained and worked as a drama teacher and was always interested in creating stories and plays with my students so playwriting would have been the natural fit, but that is not what has happened.

About ten years ago I was doing a creative writing exercise with a friend and discovered that I had a knack for writing mysteries. I wrote what became the first chapter of the first Roxanne Calloway novels, *And We Shall Have Snow*, just to see if I could do it and knew right away that the form worked for me, that if I wrote what happened next, I might have a book.

That's what I have continued to do. I write each chapter as I go along and when I get to the end of that book I know how the next one starts, so then I write it. I sometimes wonder if and when that process will dry up but it hasn't happened yet.

I think the best advice I've ever heard for anyone starting to write in any genre is to read a lot of other writers. Because I'd read a lot of mysteries I understood how to structure one. Having a background in drama also helped with understanding how to build a plotline, how to move the action forward, how to pace a story, and how to create characters and dialogue.

You have written four novels about Roxanne Calloway, set primarily in the Interlake. The Dead Shall Inherit begins a new series, set in Scotland with entirely different characters. Why the change?

I had been living with the characters in the Roxanne Calloway series since 2016 and I wanted to try something new. I think there is a danger of starting to repeat yourself when you stick with a series and I wanted to try creating a new story in a different place, with different characters. And I wanted to have a lead character who was not in the police force. Someone who could be more vulnerable and conflicted.

I also wanted to see if I could write about Scotland, where I was born and grew up. I've gone back regularly. I am a cultural hybrid, part Scottish, part Canadian.

There is a thriving Scottish crime fiction tradition in Scotland. The annual book festival called Bloody Scotland claims that it's in the Scottish genes. It goes back to Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*. Arthur Conan Doyle, who created Sherlock Holmes, was born in Edinburgh.

I think my books are quite similar to those of many Scottish crime fiction writers in that we play with a Scottish sense of duality, one where good and bad coexist. I'm not interested in writing about killers who are purely evil. I like them to be people driven to do something wrong and harmful by accident or circumstance, and then as one of the characters in this novel says, "badness just gets more badness." The problem escalates, spins out of control until it is solved and then things return to

normal at the end of the book. I'm more interested in the effect of a crime on a group of people than on the crime itself.

Have you finished writing the Roxanne Calloway novels?

Not at all! As soon as I had written *The Dead Shall Inherit* I went right back to writing a new Roxanne story. I think the break did me good. I was very happy to spend time with Roxanne and her friends again. I have recently finished a first draft of the fifth book in the Calloway series.

I also know where the next Elspeth Laird book starts and I intend to spend the winter writing that book.

I'm hoping to juggle both series for the next few years, to alternate between both of my cultures.

Although the book is set in Scotland the main character is Canadian and the story is told from a Canadian viewpoint. Why is that?

I had to choose whether the book was being told in a Canadian voice or a Scottish one. My own accent is predominantly Canadian now and most of my readers are also Canadian so I went with that. If I had wanted to write it in a Scottish voice I would have had to spend a fair bit of time back in Scotland and get the rhythm and flow of that language back into my ear.

It also meant I had a character who saw Scotland through fresh eyes and could ask the questions that a Canadian readership might want to know.

The Isle of Sullà is fictional. Why did you not set this story on an actual Hebridean island?

I would have had to spend a fair bit of time on that island to make sure that I described it accurately. I also did not want to place a fictional story on an actual place. The people of Sullà and the events I describe are imaginary, as is the island.

It is, however, grounded in fact. I lived for two years on the Isle of Tiree, so the landscape I describe is rooted in what I remember. I know what it is like to live on a small, remote island and how that community functioned fifty years ago. Tiree is a flat island so I blended it with descriptions of the Isle of Colonsay, which has hills, and placed Sullà in a spot on the map somewhere between those two islands. It was important that there should be nothing but the Atlantic between Sullà and Canada.

I have visited Scotland frequently throughout the years, so I know how the country has changed. I still have many friends and relatives there who keep me up to date. I have seen firsthand how tourism has impacted the country and also how the book industry has grown. There are book festivals in many towns and on islands. I wanted to think about how both those trends would impact a small, enclosed community.

I grew up on the East Coast of Scotland and in the Borders. I studied in Edinburgh and have also lived in Fife and in Oban, in Argyll, which also figures in this story, so I have many possibilities when I consider where Elspeth might go next. I'm looking forward to finding out what happens to her and some of the characters in this book next.