

Catch Up With Author Clea Simon

Learn more about the inspiration behind the latest book in her Theda Krakow cat-mystery series, "Probable Claws."

By Stacy N. Hackett

Posted: April 8, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

Clea Simon's cat, Musetta, inspires the author of the Theda Krakow series. 1. What inspired you to write "Probable Claws"? Do you remember the horrible cat-food contamination crisis of a few years ago? When pet food was found to contain melamine, which was harming or killing dogs and cats? When I heard about that, I thought, "Hmm . . . what if it was intentional? Why would anyone want to hurt cats?" I also had been talking to a lot of cat rescue groups and shelter workers, and hearing about the politics that can hinder even the best intentions. I decided to combine these issues. (I also want to let everyone know: The cats in my book become sick, but they all survive!)

2. What type of feedback have you received on "Probable Claws"?

The advance reviews have been great. Publishers Weekly called it "another winner from Simon." I can't ask for better!

3. Where do you get your ideas for the Theda Krakow/Musetta series?

I keep my ears open for everything that is happening with cat care. With all the interest in shelters, rescue and trap/neuter/return programs, there's no shortage of cat issues!

4. Do you base your characters on people (or animals) you know in real life?

Well, Theda's cat, Musetta, is based on my own cat, Musetta. My Musetta, however, has never witnessed a murder (that I know of). My people are fictional. I draw from people I know and I draw from myself, but by this point, as "Probable Claws" is the fourth book in the series, they've pretty much taken on lives of their own.

5. How do you keep Musetta interesting as a character without anthropomorphizing her?

I observe my own Musetta closely and try to be accurate about her responses to situations, then use those very real pieces of cat behavior.

6. Are there other animal-rights issues you want to address in the Theda Krakow series?

There are, but I'm taking a break from Theda right now. This summer, I'm launching the Dulcie Schwartz series with "Shades of Grey." Dulcie is a literature grad student studying spooky Gothic literature who recently lost her cat. When she's faced with a murder, the ghost of her cat, Mr. Grey, comes back to help. "Shades of Grey" will be published by Severn House this summer, and I'm currently working on the sequel. I know I have felt as if a late pet has come back to help me, so this seemed like a natural story to write – only it wasn't right for the Theda series.

7. Can you give us any hints about the next book in the series?

I'm not sure what or when the next Theda book will be, but I hope that cat lovers (and cat-mystery lovers) will check out "Shades of Grey." I have an excerpt up on my website.

Stacy N. Hackett shares her Southern California home with two Cornish Rex cats, Carson and Evita, and Jackson, an orange tabby.