



Claims Department 63

This entire issue is being created in the last five hours of 2023.

It's been a good year for me, in many ways, and hard in a few others. The good was things like traveling, writing, and my book coming out. The bad? Deaths, financial problems, a couple of minor health setbacks, and plain old exhaustion. My memory issues, which I talk about a lot, have a date with a neurologist, and I'm hoping to get my A1c down a little more by getting back into slightly stricter portion control.

2024 is gonna be interesting. I'm psyched for the upcoming glut of wrestling shows I'll be going to, including seeing one of the tag teams I never saw from the 1980s - the Crush Gals. My kids are coming too.

I'll be writing more, as always, and working on exhibition stuff, and when it's that fun? I'll be taking part of Cinequest off to actually enjoy the festival, and I'll be doing podcasts and audiobook recordings.

I short, every other year in recent memory?

And I just wanna say, I love y'all! It's great to have you around!

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Audiobooks 2023!

I listen to a lot of audiobooks.

In 2023, I spent a lot of time listening to the books that are included with my Audible membership, and thus, I heard more than 20 total! In fact, I think it was somewhere around 30, but they don't go back all the way through the year. I listened to a lot of Cozy Mysteries, and some were great, but there were a few that stuck out.

The Secret History of Twin Peaks was the best thing that's been added to the Twin Peaks universe in the written form, and I say this as a guy who loves *The Secret Diary of Laura Palmer*. This is the story that explains largely what Major Briggs was up to and why the area had become such a strange place. It was really smart, and really dark, and it basically went into the nooks and crannies. It told the story in the literary version of found footage. Since it came from Mark Frost, whose

contribution to Twin Peaks often gets punted in favor of Lynch, it's fully integrated.

This was the thing I listened to all the way through while driving back and forth to work exclusively, and my drive takes me through the Santa Cruz Mountains through to Saratoga, often in the dark of the morning. It was the perfect setting for the story.



Last Book on the Left is one of the better books of the True Crime comedy genre. Yes, I know it's a troubling genre for many, but I find it so very helpful in dealing with the fact that there are truly evil fucks out in the world.

The book looks at a bunch of them, including Ed Gein, Richard Chase (the Vampire of Sacramento), Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, and

more. The book is written by the three guys who were the hosts of *Last Podcast on the Left* at the time, Marcus Parks, Henry Zebrowski, and Ben Kissell, and Marcus does the narrative and Henry and Ben do asides and snide remarks. It's a brilliant piece of audio. The book form I also own and is also great!

I wrote about *The Spare Man*, which I adored and thought was the kind of book I really want more of. The best part of the book was the reading, as Mary Robinette Kowal is a helluva reader. I'd put *The Spare Man* in my top three.

I also wrote about *The Union Street Bakery*, written by Mary Ellen Taylor. There's a sequel, and I'll likely use a credit to listen to it because I enjoyed the hell out of the first one. Some of the finest prose I read all year.

I finally read *The Cases That Haunt Us* by the legendary FBI profiler John Douglas. It's a great over-view True Crime book that looks at several of the best-known crimes of the last century, and gives a view of what the FBI profiler would have been looking for and even more tellingly, dismissing. Douglas is a pretty good writer. He's no Paul Holes, though.

The best new-to-me author I found was Tara Lush. I actually came across her on Threads, and picked up her first book in the *Coffee Shop Mysteries*, *Grounds for Murder*, which was another cozy, but one with a definite Gen-Y edge to it! I really thought it was one of the most fun books I read all year, and the follow-up, *Cold Brew Corpse*, was just as good! I'm looking forward to more books in the series!

So, I've got my five credits to spend over the next year, plus the twelve I get for being a member, plus all the books included with being a member, which includes a ton of Cozies!

I do also use Audible for a lot of research. Dorsey Armstrong's *Turning Points in Medieval History* and the amazing Edward Lengel's Great Course on The Manhattan Project were both enjoyed by me and the Kidses! I listened to Otto Pendler's amazing *Big Book of Jack the Ripper*, largely as research for the Jack the Ripper in Fiction *Journey Planet*, that we released earlier today.

I've got a few on the horizon, there are three more Tara Lush mysteries, and an Otto Penzler *Big Book of Ghost Stories*. That'll make for good early morning driving over the mountain listening!

