

STRANGE LITTLE COMFORTS

VOL.1

NOTES ON HOME, HABIT, AND THE THINGS THAT QUIETLY KEEP ME GOING

When I'm not virtually tracking down murderers and look at cases from the past, I do other things...like read, and cook, and go to thrift stores. I am not a hoarder, but I am possibly whatever is a distant cousin of a hoarder. I like weird stuff – bones and old doll parts and bits and bobs of a used-to-be life.

The Garden Gate

Now that the holidays are over, I've taken down the decorations and will probably have a month of hibernation. Well, not complete hibernation. At the end of the January, Mr. Agatha and I will be going to visit the grandbabies for a birthday party. I'll also probably start planning my gardens in the next month, too, and maybe even start some tomato plants. At the moment, I have two raised veggie beds, an herb bed, and three flower beds. One of the flower beds is on the side of the house and it's also where the herb garden is. There's already a walkway between the two to the back gate, so my plan is to make the entire side yard into an English Cottage Garden.



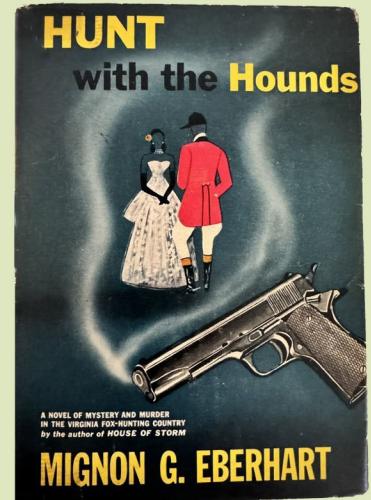
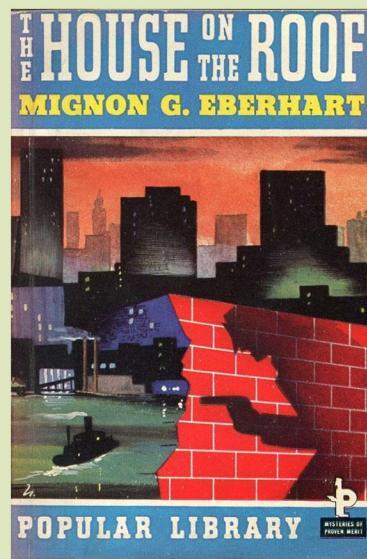
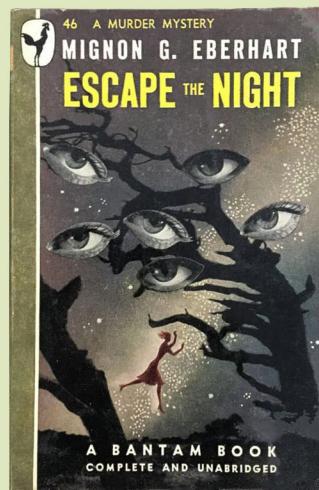
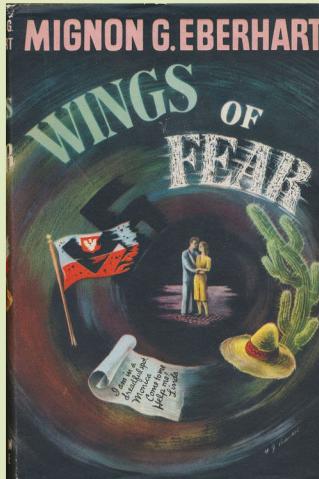
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The Library

It's probably not surprising that the majority of the books I read are mysteries. Lately, I've been reading Mignon Eberhart mysteries. She wrote her first book in 1925 and her last one in 1988, which is an impressive writing career. For the most part I enjoy her books. However, there is a lot of very dramatic romance and it usually entails two people who are attached to other people, but then end up getting together, because of course they do. I think I'd rather have the mystery without the over the top romantic tension. But, there is also full-alert suspense in her books, too. A lot of the dialogue between the characters is high-strung and fast! I do enjoy the mystery aspect of her books!



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My Kitchen Table

Recently, I've decided to just make our own bread instead of buying loaves that are full of who knows what. The only problem I have with making our own is that I tend to eat a lot more of it. Here is the fail-proof recipe I use. It's easy and I haven't had a messed up a loaf, yet.

Homemade Bread

2 cups warm water (105-115 degrees)
1 Tablespoons rapid rise yeast
1/4 cup honey or sugar
2 teaspoons salt
2 Tablespoons oil (canola or vegetable)
4 - 5 1/2 cups all-purpose or bread flour



Add warm water, yeast, sugar, salt, oil and 3 cups of flour to stand mixer. Using the padddle attachment, mix to combine.

Add another cup of flour and mix to combine. With the mixer running add more flour, 1/2 cup at a time, until the dough begins to pull away from the sides of the bowl. The dough should be smooth and elastic, and slightly stick to a clean finger, but not be overly sticky. Add a little more flour, if needed.

Switch paddle attachment to dough hook.

Mix the dough for 4-5 minutes on medium speed (or knead with your hands on a lightly floured surface, for 5-8 minutes).

Grease a large bowl with oil or cooking spray and place the dough inside, turning to coat. Cover with a dish towel or plastic wrap and allow to rise in a warm place until doubled in size, about 45 minutes - 1 hour

Grease two 9x5" bread pans generously with cooking spray or shortening on bottom and sides.

Punch the dough down well to remove air bubbles. Divide into two equal portions. Shape each ball into long logs and place into greased loaf pans. Cover with towel.

Allow dough to rise again for about 45 minutes to one hour, or until risen about 1 inch above the loaf pans. Gently removing covering.

Preheat oven to 350 F. Bake bread for about 30-33 minutes, or until golden brown on top. Give the top of a loaf a gentle tap; it should sound hollow.

Invert the loaves onto a wire cooling rack. Brush the tops with butter and allow to cool for at least 10 minutes before slicing.

Once cool, store in an airtight container or bag for 2-3 days at room temperature, or up to 5 days in the refrigerator.

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Bread Notes:

If you want to use regular yeast instead of rapid rise, you'll need to proof the yeast first. To do so, replace the following with the first step in the recipe:

In a large bowl or stand mixer add the yeast, water and a pinch of the sugar or honey. Allow to rest for 5-10 minutes until foaming and bubbly. (If it doesn't foam, the yeast is not viable, and you'll need to start over with fresh yeast).

Add remaining sugar or honey, salt, oil, and 3 cups of flour. Mix to combine.

If you don't have a warm spot for the yeast, you can turn your oven on 180° F and then once you're ready to knead your dough, turn off the oven. The residual heat will be perfect for your dough.

To freeze the dough before cooking: Prepare recipe through forming the loaves (before the second rise). Place loaves in freezer safe or disposable bread pans. Cover tightly with foil and freeze up to 3 months. To bake, allow the loaves to thaw, let rise and then bake as directed in recipe.

To freeze after cooking: Wrap dough in foil and place in a gallon bag. Will keep for up to three months. I make two loaves at a time, and freeze one. We typically have it out of the freezer after it's only been in there for a week.

If you are planning on toasting or using the bread for a grilled sandwich, it will brown much quicker than store-bought bread, so you'll need to shorten your toasting time, and lower the temp.

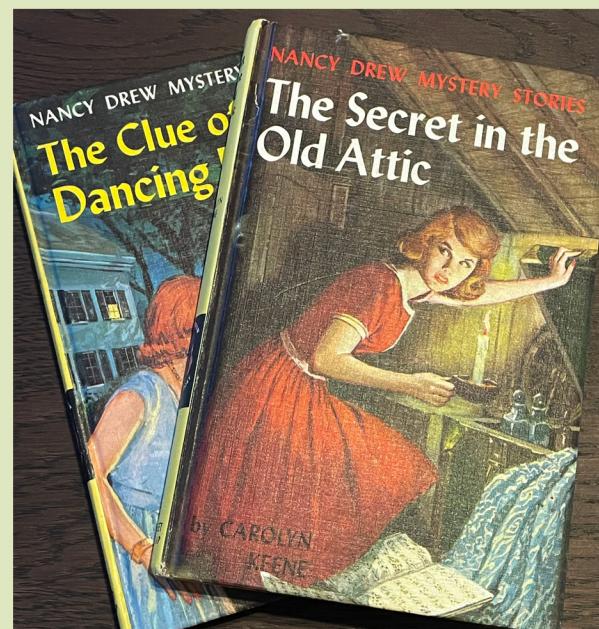
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My Thrift Finds

I have been a thrift store shopper for as long as I can remember. I've always loved old things, and thrift stores, and estate and garage sales are the best place to find them. Some of my favorite things to buy are books, and I always look out for Nancy Drew books, because can you ever have too much Nancy? These are my two most recent finds. And, do I still read them? Yes I do. I've had people tell me that adults shouldn't read "kid books." But, I am still the person I was when I was ten and would climb the maple tree in our back yard, and sit and read while the branches swayed around me. We don't stop being who we are, even when the years tell us we're someone new. We are the accumulation of all the ages we've been. So, if you have books you loved as a child, grab one and read it and remember what it was like to be the child that fell in love with reading.



The Cabinet of Small Things



I have a small collection of mourning and funereal items. It was an accidental collection. It started with me buying a bottle that had the word "Dodge" embossed on it. I found it at a flea market for \$1. I discovered that it wasn't manufactured for the car maker, Dodge, but rather for the embalming fluid, Dodge. And, so the collection went from there. Here are a couple of the vintage mourning brooches I've thrifted. The one on the right is from the 1950s or 60s. The left one is from 1900 - 1910.

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Just Between Us

I want to take a moment to say thank you, truly and sincerely, for being here. Your support of my channel means more to me than I can ever fully put into words. Our community isn't just a subscriber list or a number on a screen, it's real people choosing to show up, listen, engage, and care.

This channel is my full-time job. It's the late nights, the research rabbit holes, the emotional weight of the stories, the editing marathons, and the responsibility I feel to get things right. And I couldn't do it without you. Your support makes it possible for me to keep telling these stories, to keep asking hard questions, and to keep showing up consistently and unapologetically.

So thank you for believing in this work, in this space, and in me. I don't take that lightly, not for a second. I'm incredibly grateful to walk this road with you, and I promise to keep doing everything I can to make it worth your time, your trust, and your support.

*Love.
Aggie*

