

## **Mystery, Thriller, Suspense... and does it matter?**

Hallie Ephron (hallieephron.com) – Author 6 suspense novels (CAREFUL WHAT YOU WISH FOR; YOU’LL NEVER KNOW, DEAR; NIGHT NIGHT, SLEEP TIGHT, THERE WAS AN OLD WOMAN; COME AND FIND ME; NEVER TELL A LIE) and 5 mystery novels; also WRITING & SELLING YOUR MYSTERY NOVEL: REVISED & EXPANDED

### **CHAPTER ONE**

Tuesday, May 9

Lake Como, Italy

8:40 a.m.

COTTON MALONE STUDIED THE EXECUTION SITE.

A little after 4:00 p.m., on the afternoon of April 28, 1945, Benito Mussolini and his mistress, Claretta Petacci, were gunned down just a few feet away from where he stood. In the decades since, the entrance to the Villa Belmonte, beside a narrow road that rose steeply from Azzano about a half a mile below, had evolved into a shrine. The iron gate, the low wall, even the clipped hedges were still there, the only change from then was a wooden cross tacked to the stone on one side of the gate that denoted Mussolini’s name and date of death. On the other side he saw another addition—a small, glass-fronted wooden box that displayed pictures of Mussolini and Claretta. A huge wreath of fresh flowers hung from the iron fence above the cross. Its banner read EGLI VIVRA PER SEMPRE NEL SUORE DEL SUO POPOLO.

HE WILL ALWAYS LIVE IN THE HEARTS OF PEOPLE.

Down in the village he’d been told where to find the spot and that loyalists continued to venerate the site. Which was amazing, considering Mussolini’s brutal reputation and that so many decades had passed since his death.

What a quandary Mussolini had faced.\*\*\*

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THE GAME WAS ROUX’S idea. More than an idea. A plan. She made it up herself, this shotgun of a game. She packed it tight with salt and metal, counting on collateral damage, too, but she aimed it straight at me. She said it was like Never Have I Ever, but not any version I’d ever played. It began innocently enough, with everyone confessing the worst thing they’d done that day.

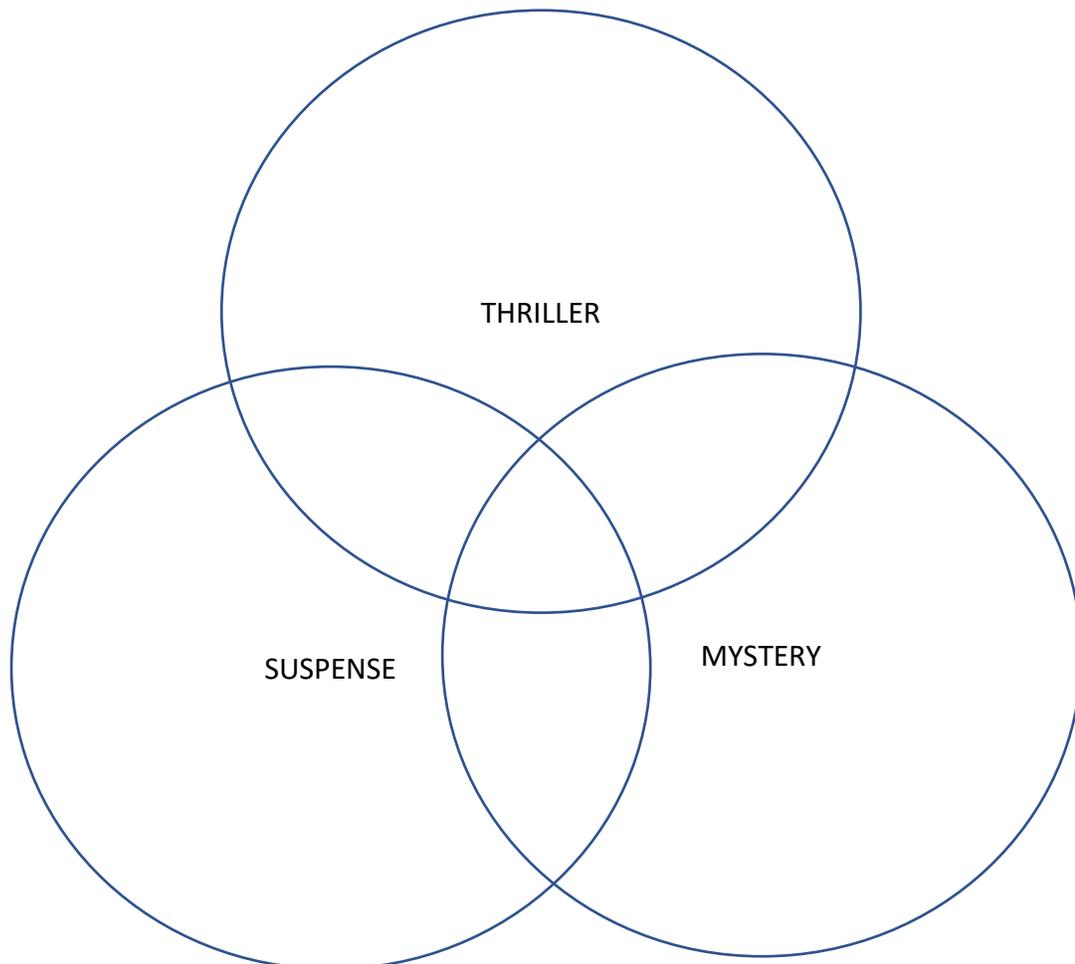
None of us had ever heard of Roux’s rules, so it was possible she invented them that night, for us. For me. Or perhaps she’d played this way before, spreading it, so that her game now cropped up at slumber parties when Truth or Dare or Two Truths and a Lie had lost their shine. Only middle-school girls could safely play it, children whose worst thing was, I showed my bra to that boy I like, or I called my sister the b-word.

We should have known better.

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Wanda Batton-Smythe, head of the Women’s Institute of Nether Monkslip, liked to say she was not one to mince words. She might add that she was always one to call a spade a spade, and that what more people needed was simply to pull their socks up and get on with it. She was saying these things now—calling on all the resources in her cliché lineup, in fact—to a captive audience of approximately thirty-five women who, to a woman, were wishing themselves elsewhere than in the Village Hall, sitting on orange molded-plastic seats that might have been rejects from an ergonomics study, on an otherwise peaceful Saturday night in September.

Reports of members present and apologies for absence received (Miss Pitchford had a head cold) had already been swiftly recorded. The women had stood to sing the traditional “Jerusalem,” if at a somewhat faster tempo than was customary. Still, they had reached this night a deep, throaty trill on “Bring me my chariot of fire!”—for so many, a favorite line, unifying the straying or hesitant warblers into a mighty whole—before the effort collapsed again at “I will not cease from mental fight.”



Driven by what the reader KNOWS	
Driven by what the reader DOESN'T KNOW	
Puzzle	
Chase	
Whodunnit?	
What's going on?	
What's going to happen next?	
Personal stakes	
Global stakes	
Cat and mouse	
Clues and red herrings	
Something's not right	
Action	
Secrets	
Betrayal	
Humor	
Romance	
Food	
Sex	
Violence	
Cozy	
Creepy	
Terrifying	
Clever	
Intriguing	
Disturbing	
Police procedure	
Courtroom drama	
Professional sleuth	
Amateur sleuth	
High concept	
Human drama	
Slow build	
Pulse pounding	

60-80K words  
75-100K words  
90-150K words

OTHER

- Main character
- Setting
- Viewpoint

SOME novels fit into a single genre

The Bourne Identity

Rebecca

And Then There Were None

Most crime novels are a combination...

The DaVinci Code

Silence of the Lambs

Gone Girl

WHAT are YOU writing?

WHO are you writing for?

**Read in your genre**

- Know your comps
- Know what readers expect:
  - What to put in
  - What to leave out?

***What do you think you're writing?***

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