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Book Review: *Skin and Bones: And Other Mike Bowditch Short Stories* by Paul Doiron

BY JANET WEBB May 13, 2025

For the first time in print, *Skin and Bones* by Paul Doiron features a collection of eight gripping original short stories in the bestselling Mike Bowditch series—including one brand new, never-before-published story. Keep reading for Janet's review.

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Readers have a reason to rejoice—Paul Doiron is releasing a new Mike Bowditch short story, “Sheep’s Clothing.” “Sheep’s Clothing” is one of eight Mike Bowditch short stories in the *Skin and Bones* collection. We’re in familiar territory—Maine game warden Mike Bowditch has managed to tick off the higher ups to whom he reports to such an extent that he’s been demoted.

I had just been busted back to patrol from my position as a warden investigator because of some trouble I had gotten myself into up on the Quebec border. The move had been made to placate the Canadians and, to a lesser extent, certain bureaucrats in my own state who felt that a sworn officer who had violated so many rules and regulations, never mind international law, by chasing a fugitive into another sovereign nation, need to be made a public lesson.

“Don’t be a reckless idiot like Mike Bowditch if you value your career” was the statement my demotion was supposed to send to my fellow officers.

To clarify, until Mike was put back on patrol, he was a warden investigator (i.e., a detective) for the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. I puzzled over which book contained Mike’s fall from grace.

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“The Bear Trap” came out in 2015. Prepare to meet “legendary Maine woodsman and bush pilot,” Charley Stevens, Mike’s guide, mentor, and father figure. Charley tries to impart wisdom to young Mike, who doesn’t view himself as a rookie. Here’s a link to [“The Bear Trap.”](#)

“Rabid” (2019 Edgar award nominee for Best Short Story) was published in 2018. Elements include Charley Stevens, a bat, and rabies. Here’s an excerpt to [“Rabid.”](#)

“Backtrack” (2019) is a story from Charley Steven’s younger days. “When a visiting hunter goes missing in the middle of a snowstorm, a young Charley Stevens sets off to rescue him—but begins to suspect the man may not want to be found.” Here’s a link to [“Backtrack.”](#)

The title of “The Imposter” (2020) gives away the plot. A driver’s license on a dead body (that Mike discovers) has Mike’s name on it. Criminals and stolen identity cases are one thing, but this is weird. Read an excerpt of [“The Imposter.”](#)

A recurring theme in the Mike Bowditch mysteries is the impact of wealthy folks who seek to impose their vision, their lifestyle, on the Maine landscape. “The Caretaker” (2021) is the cautionary tale of “a sinister prowler who turns a couple’s dream vacation home into a nightmare.” The tension is more than clashing mores. Read an excerpt of [“The Caretaker.”](#)

For Mike Bowditch, an old case is not necessarily a cold case. It’s more than curiosity; Mike is relentless, and it matters not that the crime might have happened years earlier. A slain bald eagle connects Mike to “an old case of a missing young man whose physically abusive brother might have murdered him,” in [“Skin and Bones”](#) (excerpt, 2022).

The murder weapon in “Snakebit” (2023) is a rattlesnake. How can that be? Rattlesnakes were eradicated in Maine more than one hundred years ago. Here’s an excerpt to [“Snakebit”](#) and a link to my [review](#). By now you probably understand that saying words like *no*, *never* and *not possible* is waving a red cape to bull-headed Mike Bowditch. Here’s Mike’s response when the commissioner in Augusta tells him no pictures of the rattlesnake are to appear online because “she won’t have folks panicking about “poisonous snakes in Casco”.”

It was generally known in the building that no one talked back to the commissioner, least of all a junior warden.

“Poisonous means that they’re dangerous to eat. *Venomous* means that they secrete toxins to paralyze and kill their prey.”

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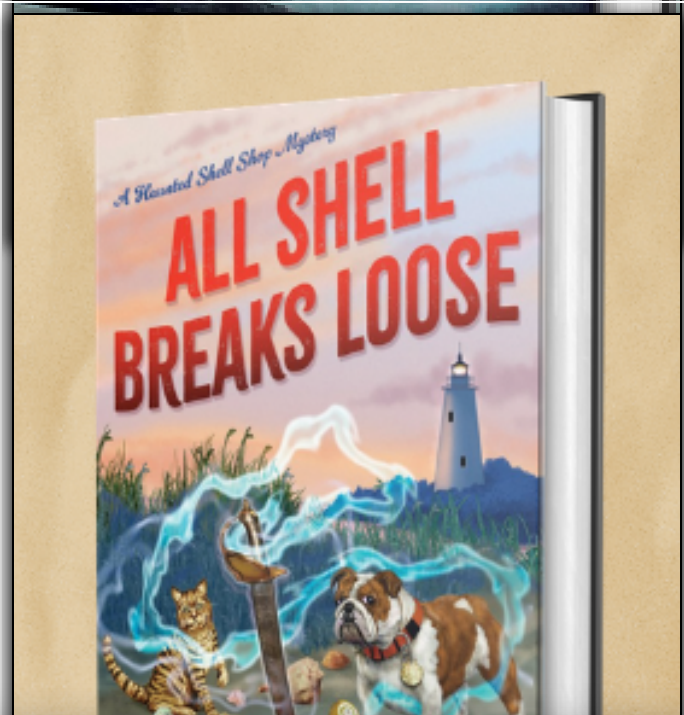
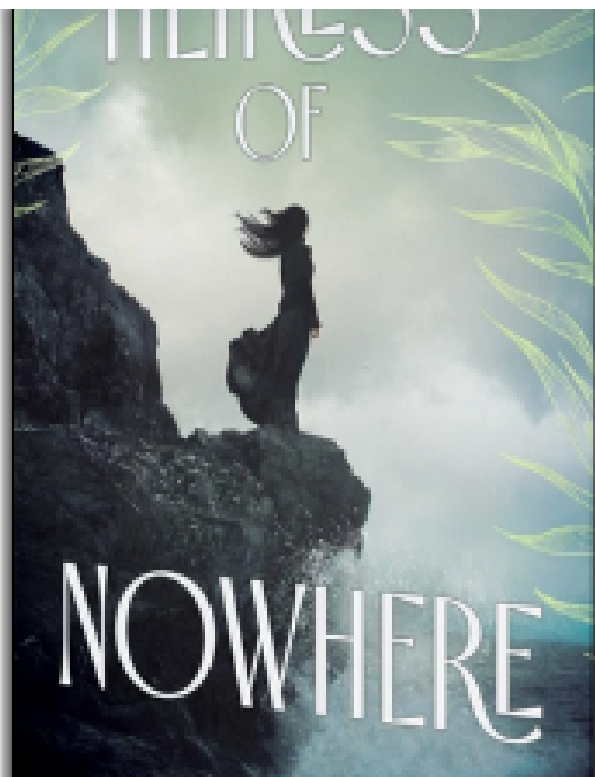
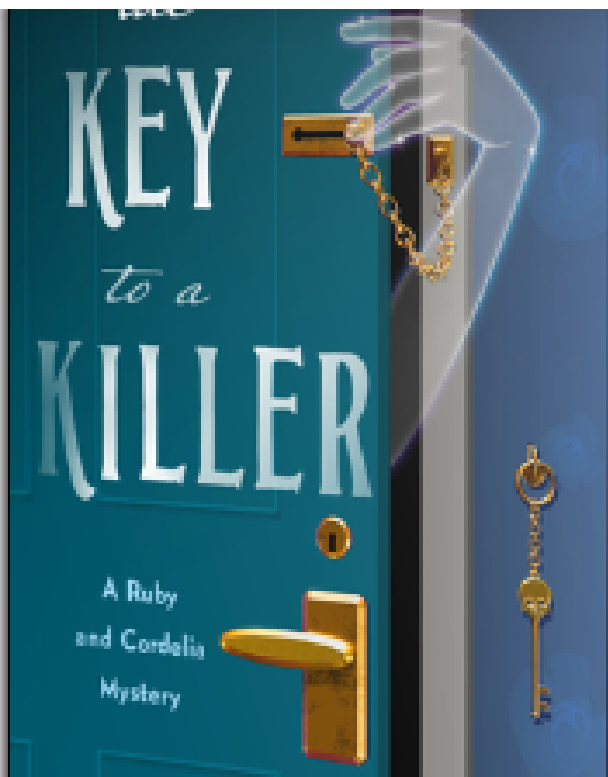
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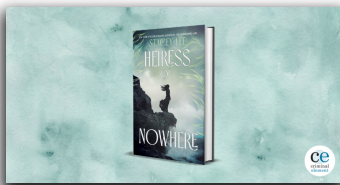


Janet Webb

Janet Webb aka [@janetwebb.bsky.social](#) has unpredictable opinions on books. Stories on royals and politics catch my eye. Ottawa born/East Tennessee now. Grew up on the books of Helen MacInnes, Mary Stewart, Dorothy L. Sayers, and Anne Perry . . . I'm always looking for a great new mystery series.



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By CRIME HQ

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Chapter One Dolores stared at the words with an odd shade of fascination. They seemed unfamiliar, somehow, more magical than any combination of letters in the English language. Hocus-pocus. Abracadabra. The lawyer cleared his throat. “Miss Diaz?” Dolores looked up. A painting hung on the wall, of blindfolded Lady Justice, which wouldn’t have looked out...

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