



Author Jennifer Quashnick, with her dogs Avi and Bella, has just released her fourth Mountaingirl Mystery, and the two dogs are also characters in the book.
COURTESY/JENNIFER QUASHNICK

Who dunnit?

Jennifer Quashnick

There's something about a big lake

surrounded by the woods that just cries out for a mystery. It's something that Tahoe author Jennifer Quashnick certainly heard calling, and she now has four books to show for her efforts to make Tahoe front and center in intrigue and compelling storytelling. Her fourth mystery, *Sierra Nevada Burning Revenge*, has just been released.

Quashnick grew up about 45 miles from Sacramento in a small town called Galt. She discovered Tahoe at a young age, as her family had a cabin there and would often venture east on the weekends and during the summer. She's been writing for most of her life, starting in her teen years and through college, where she graduated with a degree in environmental science.

That's the primary work she still does in Tahoe, and it was during a hike in the Sierra Nevada with her dog, Bella, when she got the idea for her first book, *Sierra Nevada Trail of Murder*. Bella even features in the book, which begins when Tahoe resident Rachel Winters discovers a body on a mountain trail that leads to her being pursued as part of an environmental crime cover-up.

All of Quashnick's books have environmental advocacy themes informed by her work and interests in life. She said it was difficult to write about it at first.

"I didn't want to go overboard and start preaching in the book," she said. "I was trying to find that nice balance between the story everyone likes and putting in something about environmental issues. I put as much as I could in there that would still make sense for the characters and give you something to think about."

Quashnick said mysteries seemed like a good place to start a series, and that she's "always liked authors that have scientific subject matter."

She said her co-workers and friends weren't aware of her novel writing aspirations. "I think the people that knew me were a little surprised at first, but everyone seemed to enjoy the story and the local love," Quashnick said.

Two more books followed in the Sierra Nevada Mountaingirl Mysteries series—*River of Lies*, which is partially set in Reno; and *Dangerous Developments*. Like her first three books, *Burning Revenge* has been published through online retailers and local bookstores.

The fourth book in her series also features Waters, a detective named Luke Reed and Bella. Plus, there's a new dog named Avi (and, yes, Quashnick also has a second dog named Avi in real life). In *Revenge*, there are interweaving themes of arson, murder, the mining industry and a missing firefighter.

For the fourth time, Quashnick will also host a reading at the South Lake Tahoe Public Library. She goes beyond just reading from the latest book, showing Powerpoint slides of the settings and also talking about the nuts-and-bolts of the publishing world.

It's all a presentation that points to the reasons why Quashnick sets her mysteries so close to home.

"It's just a unique place that's well known to everyone, and it's so beautiful," she said. "It's just fun to write about these areas. I think we have a small-town feel, so it's been kind of fun weaving that in." □

Jennifer Quashnick talks about *Sierra Nevada Burning Revenge* during a presentation at 6 p.m. Jan. 28 at South Lake Tahoe Library, 1000 Rufus Allen Blvd., South Lake Tahoe, California. Learn more about all of Quashnick's books at mountaingirlmysteries.com.

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