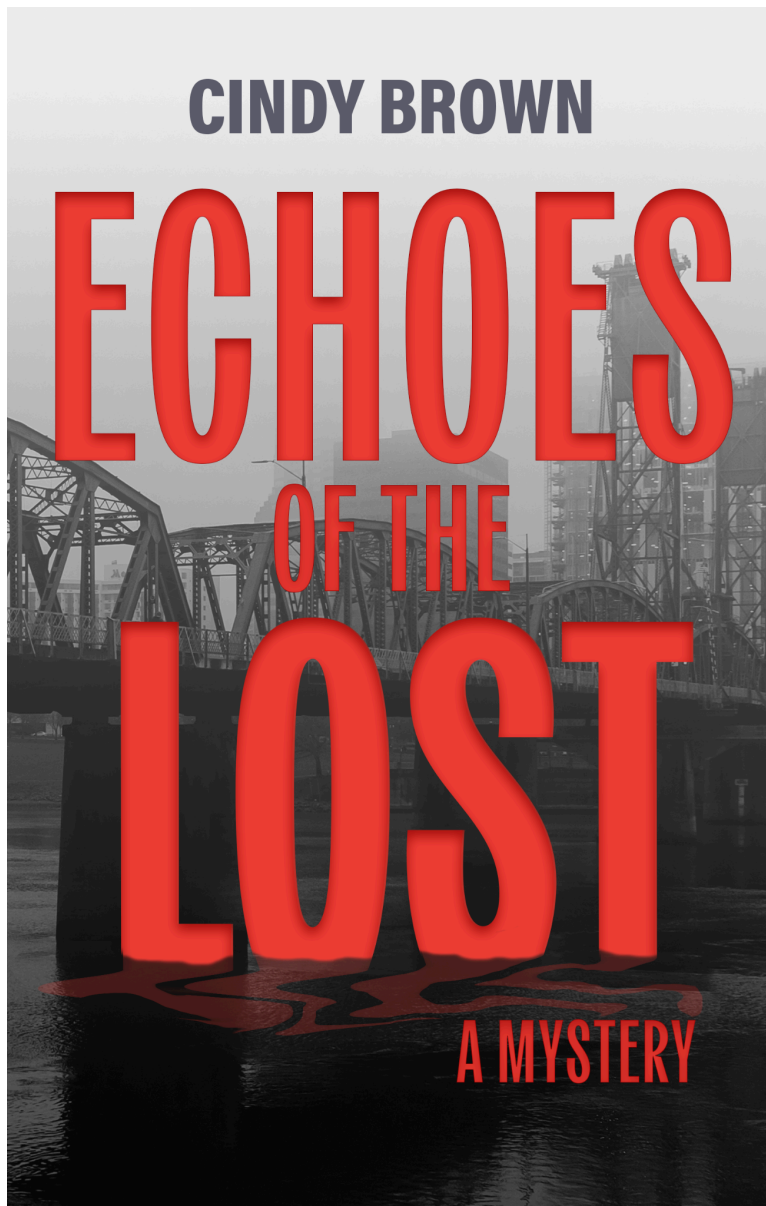


ECHOES OF THE LOST: A MYSTERY



By: Cindy Brown

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"Her feet touched down on the dock, slick underfoot. Nothing to hold onto here. The river ran dark and swollen underneath her. She imagined she could hear its voice, a pulsing shush. It wasn't scary like she thought it would be. More like a heartbeat, almost comforting."

— Cindy Brown, "Echoes of the Lost"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Cindy Brown Brings Suspense and Questions of Belonging to Portland in New Mystery Title "Echoes of the Lost"

Portland, Ore., May 12, 2026 - Ooligan Press is excited to announce the release of "Echoes of the Lost," a Portland-based mystery-thriller with heartfelt connections and insight into the nature of family and community.

Retired detective Ster McCaffrey has lived in isolation since the death of his beloved wife. Recently disabled from a traumatic brain injury, his quiet life is interrupted when he wakes in the dead of night to find a child sobbing on his doorstep. With no official investigation underway, Ster decides to solve the mystery himself. With threats to his home, new evidence found in the river, and signs pointing to murder — friends and enemies are closer than Ster realizes. Only one thing is clear: The boy is in grave danger.

The fast-paced investigation that ensues takes readers on a whirlwind journey through downtown Portland and into an array of recognizable venues. As Ster dives deeper into the case of the boy's missing mother, he amasses a number of investigative assistants — from librarians to priests, local law enforcement to Portland's homeless population — and his story touches on themes of grief, mental health, addiction, trauma, community, foster care and houselessness.

The unique view of family and community shown in "Echoes of the Lost" is sure to keep readers turning page after page to untangle the threads of mystery and discover what happens to Ster's cast of characters.

"Tense and tender, 'Echoes of the Lost' is a lot more than a whodunit. It's a story about found family, redemption, and the hidden corners of the city most people will never see. Cindy Brown makes you care as much about the people as about the puzzle. Impossible to put down."

— April Henry, New York Times bestselling author

Cindy Brown's body of work defies genre, yet her serious crime fiction, humorous mysteries, disability news stories and comedic plays all share themes of justice and community. Cindy and her husband live in their favorite city in the world, Portland, Oregon, where she writes stories that speak to her, hoping to shine a light on the goodness that surrounds us.

Ooligan Press is a student-run publishing press rooted in the Pacific Northwest dedicated to cultivating the next generation of publishing professionals.

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For more information, to receive a review copy, or to arrange an interview with Cindy Brown, contact Ash Duggirala, Ooligan Press, at ash.murray@ooliganpress.pdx.edu.

About the Book

One retired detective. One frightened boy. One daring librarian. The case that will unravel everything. A tense, emotional mystery perfect for fans of Michael Connelly and Liz Moore.

He usually had something to go on: a body, a name, a weapon . . . What did he have now?

Retired detective Ster McCaffrey has lived in isolation since the death of his beloved wife. Recently disabled from a traumatic brain injury, his quiet life is interrupted when he wakes in the dead of night to find a child sobbing on his doorstep—leaving him with more questions than answers.

After learning that the boy and his missing mother are unhoused with no official investigation underway, Ster decides to solve the mystery himself. To do so, he'll need to interview a community whose voice is rarely heard: the houseless of Portland, Oregon. Diving deeper into their tight-knit circle, Ster realizes trust is hard-won, and answers even more so. The further he goes, the more difficult it is to tell where the case ends, and his past begins.

With threats to his home, new evidence found in the river, and signs pointing to murder—friends and enemies are closer than Ster realizes. Only one thing is clear: the boy is in grave danger.

Follow Ster and a cast of characters in this suspenseful mystery full of twists and turns as he navigates a murder unlike any he's seen before. For fans of Cindy Brown's *Macdeath*, now comes a fresh take on classic crime thrillers.

Book Highlights

- **Proven Author Sales Track:** Cindy's sales for her previous books have both been steady and higher than Ooligan's typical range, and she has many media contacts in her genre that will help boost sales and promotion of the book.
- **Detective with Heart:** Broad appeal for classic crime readers as Ster works to solve the mystery of the boy's missing mother. The stakes are raised when Ster realizes his estranged daughter might be related to the case.
- **Relatable Main Character:** As Ster struggles with the loss of his beloved wife, he also learns how to be "retired," and learns to deal with his new disability. Additionally, he navigates caring for his new foster son. Many readers will be able to relate to Ster's struggle to find a new normal.
- **A Gloomy City, Perfect for Murder:** Explore Portland's underbelly and the rainy streets of downtown as Ster works to solve the case. Readers will enjoy how the city's dreary landscape adds to this tale of crime and intrigue.
- **Realistic Disability Representation:** The main character is navigating the difficulties of a traumatic brain injury. This perspective is a refreshing depiction of a person with a disability navigating through the world differently.
- **The Houseless are Heard:** Readers will feel intrigued by how Ster's investigation hinges on the testimonies from the unhoused on the streets of Portland.

About the Author



Cindy Brown's body of work defies genre, yet her serious crime fiction, humorous mysteries, disability news stories and comedic plays all share themes of justice and community. She has been shortlisted for an Agatha Award for her debut novel, "Macdeath," and has had over a dozen plays produced. She also was awarded a disability journalism fellowship by Women's eNews in 2024.

Cindy and her husband live in their favorite city in the world, Portland, Oregon, where she continues to write stories that speak to her, hoping to shine a light on the goodness that surrounds us. Connect with her via her website, cindybrownwriter.com.

Cindy can also be found on Facebook as [@CindyBrownAuthor](https://www.facebook.com/CindyBrownAuthor), Instagram as [@friendlybrown](https://www.instagram.com/friendlybrown), or through [The Slightly Silly Newsletter](#).

Other books by Cindy Brown include:

- "Macdeath" (2015)
- "The Sound of Murder" (2015)
- "Oliver Twisted" (2016)
- "Ivy Get Your Gun" (2017)
- "The Phantom of Oz" (2018)
- "Killalot" (2018)

Praise

"Tense and tender, 'Echoes of the Lost' is a lot more than a whodunit. It's a story about found family, redemption and the hidden corners of the city most people will never see. Cindy Brown makes you care as much about the people as about the puzzle. Impossible to put down."

— **April Henry**, New York Times bestselling author

"'Echoes of the Lost' is a rattling good page-turner, for a start, but it's also an absorbing character study and a brilliant depiction of a setting and community not often — if ever — found in crime fiction. Unflinching and compassionate, Cindy Brown brings Portland's unhoused citizens sizzling onto the page, showing both their individual humanity and the rich structure of their society. I was as charmed by the background to this excellent novel as I was by the twists and zings of the story itself."

— **Catriona McPherson**, multi-award-winning author of "The Dead Room"

"'Echoes of the Lost' is a heart-pounding and heart-wrenching tale of lost souls that will draw you in and hold you captive until the final page. I loved it and hope to see more of these characters in future books."

— **Annette Dashofy**, USA Today bestselling author of the "Detective Honeywell Mysteries"

"Cindy Brown's 'Echoes of the Lost' is a gripping, character-driven mystery whose sleep-depriving twists and turns will keep you guessing until the very last page. Brown also authentically and lovingly captures the heartbeat of Portland, a big-hearted city struggling to find humane solutions to homelessness. Don't miss this fine novel!"

— **Warren C. Easley**, award-winning author of "The Cal Claxton Mysteries"

"This is my favorite kind of hero! Damaged, caring, bearing both a parent's compassionate heart and a seasoned adult's confusion and commitment. This story is fast-paced and emotional in all the best ways."

— **Maria Kelson**, author of "Not the Killing Kind," winner of the 2025 WILLA Award for Mystery from Women Writing the West and the 2025 International Latino Book Award for Mystery

"Cindy Brown's 'Echoes of the Lost' clung to my heart while keeping me on the edge of my seat. From the very first page, I was swept into Ster's world — a former detective who is rough around the edges, weighed down by his own grief, but driven by an unshakable need to seek justice for those living in the shadows. Brown writes with such empathy and power that I found myself tearing up, especially as she shines a necessary light on the struggles and profound connections of the unhoused community. I cheered for Spidey and Bonnie, rooted fiercely for Fuzzy, Ster, and Harper, and felt deeply invested in every step of their journey. With a cliffhanger that left

me with new questions, I can't wait to see where Brown takes us next. This one is not to be missed!"

— **Ellie Alexander**, author of over 40 novels, including the bestselling "Bakeshop Mysteries"

"'Echoes of the Lost' doesn't shy away from the gritty realities of Portland street life, but it still manages to convey that hope, compassion and humanity are universal. Ster is wounded, grumpy and suspicious, but the vulnerability and trust of a toddler cracks his shell — and his heart — wide open. This is a timely and deeply human tale, and I hope a sequel is on its way!"

— **Jennifer Hanlon Wilde**, author of "Finding the Vein"

"In 'Echoes of the Lost,' Cindy Brown builds a compelling world around the character of Ster McCaffrey, a retired detective recovering from a traumatic brain injury. When he finds an abandoned child on his doorstep along with a tantalizing clue from his past, Ster throws himself into solving the mystery of the child's missing mother. 'Echoes of the Lost' is a gritty yet uplifting portrait of Portland viewed through the lens of the houseless community, the police patrolling the streets, a plucky librarian and a dedicated priest. Brown has written a taut, emotional thriller about memory, obsession and how far a father will go to find redemption."

— **Pamela Statz**, author of "Thorn City"

Discussion Questions

1. How is "Echoes of the Lost" different from other mysteries or thrillers that you've read?
2. "Echoes of the Lost" tackles difficult topics like homelessness, familial trauma and law enforcement. How does Ster's background as a white male and retired detective shape these narratives?
3. How might "Echoes of the Lost" have been different if the protagonist came from a different background?
4. Which character did you feel most connected to while reading "Echoes of the Lost"? Why?
5. Ster spends most of the investigation believing that Jane Doe's murderer was someone else from the streets. How does the revelation that the killer was actually one of his former coworkers change the narrative?
6. As Ster investigates the case of the boy and his missing mother, he amasses a number of unlikely investigative assistants. What lessons can we learn from these characters and their journeys?
7. How does "Echoes of the Lost" redefine community? Has it impacted your understanding of homeless populations?
8. How does Ster's admission at the end of the book that he has to give up the boy for his own good impact our understanding of what family means to him?
9. At the end of the story, it's revealed that Ster's daughter is alive after all — and that she even hopes to maybe come home someday. How might this story have unfolded differently if this was revealed earlier, or not at all? How does this revelation impact the sense of warmth and community at the end of the novel?
10. What are your main takeaways after reading "Echoes of the Lost"?

Q&A / Interview

1. It's clear that you have a passion for writing mysteries. What is it about the genre that calls to you, and what inspired you to write "Echoes of the Lost"?

I've loved mysteries since I was a kid. I think it's because I've always been interested in people and why they do the things they do. I also have a strong desire for justice, and mysteries satisfy that need, especially when the real world leaves it unfulfilled.

"Echoes of the Lost" was not inspired as much as ... downloaded. One day Ster's first scene just appeared in my head, and I transcribed it to paper. I've rarely had that sort of inspiration. The rest of the book unfolded almost like solving a mystery. I had to figure out why this small child was left on Ster's porch in the middle of the night and go from there.

2. What can readers expect from "Echoes of the Lost"? How is it different from your previous Ivy Meadows Mystery series?

The Ivy Meadows books have a screwball comedy sensibility, while "Echoes of the Lost" is serious but not grim. All my books are character-based, and though they are mysteries, they're also a chance to delve into issues I feel strongly about. I took a screenwriting workshop years ago where Michael Arndt said, "Write about what pisses you off." It's been good advice for me.

The "pisses me off" issue in "Echoes of the Lost" is the way society neglects our most vulnerable. The novel is a mystery: Why did someone abandon a little boy on a stranger's porch on a cold rainy night? It is also a hero's journey: The story of a tired, shut-off man who must open himself up to life, of the mystery that compels him to re-engage with the world, and of the outsiders who teach him that community can be found in the most unexpected places.

3. Your previous books take place in and around Phoenix, Arizona. What inspired you to move "Echoes of the Lost" to Portland?

I moved from Arizona to Portland in 2007 and fell completely in love with this city. Portland is very much its own character in "Echoes." Our weather, our mysterious changeable rivers, our houseless community, our police force, even our Central Library — the connections between them all figure prominently in the plot.

4. You were an actress for many years before you started writing — what inspired you to pursue writing? How did your experiences on and off stage influence your works?

When I was a teaching artist for a summer theater camp, I wanted scripts with roles for all my young students. I didn't find any, so I wrote them. People liked my plays ("Snow White and the Seven Aliens" was a special favorite) and asked me to write more. That's all it took: I became hooked on writing.

I'm big on dialogue (probably from starting out as a playwright), and my acting and playwriting background help me truly listen to how people speak. I was also a Shakespearean actor for years, which attuned me to the rhythm of language.

5. You've been involved with the disability community for decades, and your scope of work was expanded even further last year when you were awarded a fellowship in disability journalism by Women's eNews. How did your experiences working in the disability community influence the writing of "Echoes of the Lost"?

Since I've been part of the disability community for years, I sometimes forget that others are still uncomfortable with disability. This was brought home when an early reader reacted really strongly to Ster's disability, saying he "didn't want to read about that."

But I think it's important that we do read "about that" — about all aspects of being human, which includes disability. That's how we understand others and develop empathy for people unlike ourselves. The stories I hear from my disabled peers unfortunately tell me that our society still suffers from a lack of empathy, along with a glut of misinformation. Together, they make life harder than it should be for disabled people.

I learn about other ways of living by reading, and believe that representation matters. It's my hope that non-disabled readers of "Echoes of the Lost" will come away with new insights, and disabled readers will see a reflection of our community.

6. It's no secret that the publishing industry overall has a lack of disability representation. What are your thoughts on this, and what progress do you hope to see in the coming years?

[More than 25% of Americans live with some sort of disability](#) — more than one in four! And yet we are woefully underrepresented in mainstream media. We are slowly making progress, but I'd love to see more books where characters just happen to be disabled even though the story isn't about disability — sort of a Bechdel test for disability.

7. Grief and familial trauma are both central themes in "Echoes of the Lost." Can you share any advice for those who might be struggling with these things in their daily lives?

First of all, let me say that grief and trauma are real and hard and they absolutely suck. I'm really sorry anyone has to go through such a tough time. Apart from counseling (which I highly recommend), there is one piece of advice that may help. [It's backed by research](#) and found its way into "Echoes of the Lost."

Find community. Being part of a group where people know your name, where they miss you when you aren't there, where you are a piece of the whole, can help you heal. And community can look like many things, from a trivia group at your local pub to a bunch of volunteers working for a common cause. For me, community reminds me of the bigger picture and makes me part of it at the same time.

8. What books have you enjoyed recently? Are there any being published soon that you're excited to pick up?

I recently discovered British mystery author Gilly MacMillan and have been binging on her books. I also loved:

- Liz Moore's "The God of the Woods," a beautifully written mystery that explores the ways class affects justice.
- Chris Whitaker's "All the Colors of the Dark," which has an enviably perfect ending.
- "The Hunter," by my favorite author, Tana French, who's given the Western an Irish twist and wrapped it in a mystery,
- "The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store" by James McBride, who introduced me to a place and people that help me understand America a bit more.

And I'm looking forward to new books by some of my favorite mystery authors, including Louise Penny, Ann Cleeves, and Michael Connelly.

9. What do you hope your readers will take away from "Echoes of the Lost"?

I hope this book will humanize houselessness, so that readers can begin to see beyond the issue to the people affected by it.

As Reb, one of the characters in "Echoes" says, "No one wants anyone sleeping on the streets. But I think it's important, not just to offer what we can . . . but to help people recognize the street folk as individuals, to know that's Doris who always wears that ratty ol' wig, or Larry, who used to be a schoolteacher, who sits in the back pew during Sunday service . . . I believe seeing people as individuals is the first step toward alleviating the issue. Corralling people into groups makes it easy for us to think of others as 'them.'"

10. You've written six wonderful stories in the Ivy Meadows Mystery series and now an excellent stand-alone with Ooligan Press. Do you have anything in the works for your next book?

I've long thought that I'd love to write light-hearted books in the spring and summer, and more serious books in the rainy season. So that's what I'm doing. I'm shopping around a heartwarming novel about an aging actress who must rediscover her moxie to save her home — and the Golden Age celebrity ghosts who live there. I'm also working on another mystery featuring the characters from "Echoes of the Lost," with Spidey as the protagonist who's framed for murder. I also have a radio play in the works, and my new theatrical farce, "Have Yourself a Murder-y Little Christmas," premiered this past holiday season (and is available for next season)!

About the Press

Ooligan Press is an award-winning not-for-profit general trade press with national distribution. Founded in 2001, Ooligan Press is affiliated with Portland State University and staffed by students pursuing master's degrees in an apprenticeship program under the guidance of publishing professionals. Graduate students gain unique hands-on experience as they lead the publishing process, from acquiring manuscripts and designing covers to marketing and selling books. Located in the Pacific Northwest—a region recognized for its unique and innovative sensibilities—Ooligan Press aspires to publish works that reflect the diverse stories and experiences of everyone who calls this corner of America their home.

Our Mission

Ooligan Press is a student-run trade press rooted in the Pacific Northwest dedicated to cultivating the next generation of publishing professionals. We prioritize literary equity and inclusion. Ooligan strives to publish culturally relevant titles from our local, marginalized voices in order to make literature accessible and redefine who has a place within its pages.