

Beyond a Jacket: How Seasons Reveal Plot and Character



My first ride on the giant slide at the Wisconsin State Fair. I'm in the lead.

drop, bringing freeze warnings and advice to cover plants. The days are definitely shorter, lending a sense of urgency to use daylight optimally.

Because of these shorter fall days, I have several scenes that take place as day is breaking. This change of light gives me the opportunity to play with hiding and revealing. Two themes that run through the story.

Fall also brings a sense of ending in Wisconsin. For the most part, the growing season is over. Planting beds are put to rest, patio furniture is covered and tucked away until next year. Since my book is a cozy murder mystery, there are some lives that end permanently. And Jaine Spencer, my real-estate-agent-turned-sleuth, is facing the potential end of her business and loss of her home.

In my June newsletter, I celebrated the start of summer by promising myself some time to relax and indulge in long days so hot that I'm still sweating after the sun goes down.

That weather is a contrast to my novel, *Buried in Real Estate*, which takes in the fall. While the days are pleasant, they are short and the evenings are cool. The season of the year a novel takes place helps shape the story.

Fall is a season of change, and in Wisconsin, that change comes with the warming colors of turning leaves and cool evenings sitting around firepits. Over night, the temperatures

Not all is bleak about fall, though. Displays of fall foliage and produce, visits to corn mazes and pumpkin patches, and fall festivals highlight the season's best.



Fall view from the Holy Hill Basilica in Hubertus, Wisconsin.

And a new school year, brings the hope of fresh start with new teachers and old friends. A plan to do better and to be better. Jaine wishes she could do over one particular school year start: the day her daughter was supposed to leave for college. Instead, her daughter moved out of her life.

Whatever book you are reading right now, pay attention to how the writer uses the season to help tell the story or reveal who the character is.

Looking Toward the Future

It's no secret that writers often hide themselves away to focus on their writing. There are many paying opportunities for writers to gather with other writers to build skills, focus on writing, share their work, and get

feedback. These opportunities, like the Novel-in-Progress BookCamp I attended in June, are beneficial. But these opportunities cost money, and sometimes what a writer really wants to do, is write.

That's where writer retreats or residencies come in. These options offer free housing or free housing with food to support writers. These are often juried opportunities that require a writer to complete an application, submit written work, and even provide recommendations. After an application period closes, writers are informed if they have been awarded a residency.

I am excited to share that I was award a residency for Wisconsin's own Write-On, Door County for 2026. [Write-On, Door County](#) is a non-profit that focuses on the power of stories in connecting people. The organization has ongoing programs (classes, conferences, etc.) for writers and readers. Check out their offerings or make a donation to support their programming.



The writing center and the trails on the property are open to everyone. Stop by when you are in Door County. You might just find your story.

Book Review

Furbidden Fatality by Deborah Blake

When Kari Stuart won the lottery, she wasn't planning to purchase an animal shelter. But through some unexpected events, she finds herself the owner of one along with all the problems the shelter is facing, including an overzealous dog warden and unhappy neighbors. When the shelter is vandalized and a dead body is found at the shelter, Kari

seriously questions if she has bitten off more than she can handle.

This is a charming cozy with interesting characters. Grab your coffee and curl up this book. You'll like the people as much as you like the animals.

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