

## Freezin' with Friends

In my October newsletter, I mentioned that my amateur sleuth, Jaine Spencer, and her friends were at Station 51 brewpub. This group of friends who've supported one another through the roadblocks, sharp turns, dips, and crumbled pavement of life are inspired by a similar group of friends that I've been lucky to have in my life. We met each other through work, but before long, we discovered that we had shared interests and compatible personalities. Shortly after that, we planned biannual girl's weekends in various Wisconsin rentals. We supported one another as our work careers and families changed: sometimes for the better, sometimes not. In January, a group of us visited the friend who rents a home in Destin, Florida each winter.

I knew the panhandle of Florida didn't have bikini-warm weather in January, but I was looking forward to a couple of days in the 50s, wearing a lighter jacket, walking along the beach, and not having to wear gloves. You probably know where this is going, right?



The day we arrived, a cold front settled in. By day three, the panhandle of Florida experienced a generational snowstorm. The area was essentially shut down for the next two days. The few inches of snow they got would have been a mere blip in Wisconsin, where road salt

reserves lay in wait and snowplows are tuned and ready. But Destin had to wait for mother nature to do her magic and melt the snow. And wait we did.

We could have whined (Okay, we did a little), but we embraced the time we had there. We layered up our clothes, pulled on our gloves and went for walks whenever road conditions allowed. We spent nights playing games. In between, we shared cooking and cleanup duties. We even managed to get in a little shopping. All the while, sharing what was happening in our lives and what our plans were for the coming year. With these friends, it didn't matter if I was feeling strong or vulnerable. I could just be.

While our issues were weather-related and mostly annoying, the stakes are higher for the group of friends, which Jaine refers to as The Crew, in my first novel. While solving the murder of one friend's fiancé, Jaine uncovers the secret another member is hiding. What else will she learn?

Time spent with good friends, no matter the weather, is time well spent. Thanks to my crew—you know who you are.

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## Staying on Track

One of my favorite winter activities is attending the garden train exhibit at the Mitchell Park Domes, officially they're called the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory. If you're not familiar with the Domes in Milwaukee, there are three 86-foot-tall glass domes each with a unique ecosystem: tropical, desert, and a rotating seasonal show. In the first quarter of the year, the show dome transforms into a garden train exhibit with a different theme every year. This year's theme is the Age of Steam which combines the age of steam trains with the steam punk. (The show runs through April 6.)



January is a great time to visit the domes, not just because of the garden train exhibit, but because it's awesome to be "outside" with



nature while being inside, out of the elements. This year, I enjoyed not only the domes, but the model railroad show as well. My grandson, husband and I were delightfully surprised that the model railroad exhibit was the same day we visited. What a treat! The passion the model railroaders have for their hobby, the time and effort they put into their displays, and their willingness to take time to set up their displays and share them with the public is inspiring.

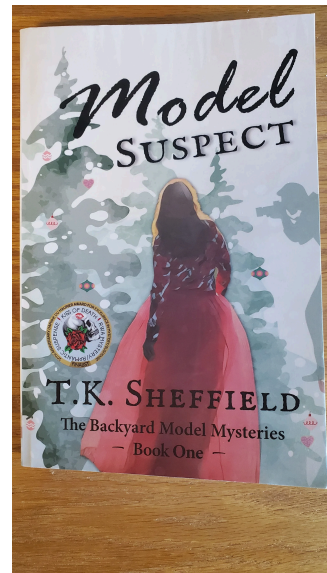
That is the same passion and dedication to my craft that I am pouring into writing my novel and into sharing the journey with you.

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## Book Review

*A Model Suspect* by T.K. Sheffield

It's the holiday season in Cinnamon, Wisconsin, and Melanie Tower, former model turned local business owner, is readying her craft mall and herself for the influx of holiday shoppers and Cinnamon's holiday events, kicking off with the Cheese Ball. The book is chockful of characters and enough puns to make you chuckle. The first in the series, this light, easy read will keep you smiling while you're snug inside watching the temperatures and the snowflakes fall.



In addition to writing my murder mystery, I've been working on articles and short stories. One article is out for submission. I hope to have an update on that for the next newsletter.

Also, you can now find previous versions of the newsletter on my website. Newsletters from 2024 are available. I'll update the list once a quarter.



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