

## Chapter 1

“You’ll never guess what I heard!” The voice on the other end of my cell phone was breathless, giddy, surprised, and quite delighted. I was immediately suspicious and immediately started to set up emotional barriers to protect myself from what I knew was coming.

“Gracie Blanche, take a deep breath and slow down.” Much as I was already mentally starting to kick myself, I couldn’t help it and asked, “What did you hear?”

My stomach tensed, my body stiffened, and I could feel a headache coming on. The good news was I had just poured a cup of Wake-Up Call coffee, my latest coffee-of-the-month club selection.

Holy Moly, that stuff was strong! I poured a wee bit in the sink under the guise of “saving some for Jesus.” I added some hot tap water to my cup to dilute it a little so my eyes could refocus and I didn’t look like a meth addict.

“I heard that Anne and Chauncey might have a Fabergé egg they will display at the Full Moon Spring Solstice Antique Show. Oh, think how glorious that will be! We’ll have national news coverage and more people will come to our town to see how wonderful it is here.”

An unsolicited groan slipped through my mouth and over my lips before I could stop it.

Gracie Blanche barely noticed it since she was blathering on about another full moon antique show. Po'thole, technically pronounced Poat, like goat, Hole, was called Po Ho by the natives and Pothole by anyone north of the Georgia state line, had more full moon antique shows and festivals than there were moons during a normal calendar year. Rarely did the antique shows ever fall on an actual full moon.

I guess the original organizers thought it might be fun to thumb their noses at the suckers who would attend a full moon show even when the moon was only a quarter full. Of course, they might have been imbibing some donkey punch at the same time they were setting up the schedule for the various festivals.

Silently berating myself for the uncontrollable thoughts that were already sliding through my mouth, I said, "Why would Anne and Chauncey bring a Fabergé egg to a no-nothing antique show in Po'thole when they could go to a much larger city and show it off there? That doesn't make any sense."

A snort, a deep inhaling of air was coming from the other end of the phone. Gracie Blanche is my oldest friend since fourth grade and our love-hate relationship going has been going on for years. We have each other's backs on important issues but we also vie to see how much we can annoy the other one without severing our friendship. This was one of those times where I could yank her chain a little.

I recognized the sounds of her deep breathing techniques to calm herself. She had learned these from Yogi Parmesana when he blew into town a number of years ago. She thought he was the greatest thing since sliced bread. He thought the same thing.

The River County Sheriff's Department didn't think so since they arrested him on fraud charges and escorted him out of town several days later...into the FBI's loving arms.

Turns out he was flim-flamming people across state lines and the FBI takes a rather dim view of that type of entrepreneurial spirit.

Yogi Parmesana, real name Albert Thomas, is now residing at a permanent government-funded state resort for the next four years or so. He can continue his meditation practices to his heart's content. Although rumor has it he's not happy there.

Who recognized the yogi for the fraud that he was and turned him in? I would have guessed it was someone from the largest Baptist church in town, but it turns out that it was Mary Jane of the infamous Lady Gatoresses.

Turns out that Mary Jane had taken yoga classes when she lived in Atlanta and she knew there wasn't a yoga pose called swimming turtle or resting crab. But she had him for sure on the snapping gator pose. He did the Gator Chomp in class.

As a founding member of the Lady Gatoresses, Mary Jane lived, breathed, and embodied everything having to do with the University of Florida Gator football team. She was past being an ardent fan, she was a rabid, fanatical fan.

Doing the Gator Chomp and trying to pass it off as a snapping gator yoga pose was the kiss of death for Yogi Parmesana. He was lucky she hadn't killed him right there in front of the other half dozen women twisting their bodies around in unnatural positions wearing their fashionable stretchy yoga pants with matching headbands.

I later surmised the only reason why she hadn't was because she could definitely be identified as the murderer and I knew for a fact she didn't want to spend any time incarcerated at the new River County jail facility.

Mary Jane had actually called me wanting to know who I knew at the FBI so she could report this travesty and have this menace removed from society. Yes, I gave her the names of several FBI folks who could help her with this. And, no, Gracie Blanche does not need to know I was ever involved in this. Some things are just better left unsaid. Plus, I value my life.

Let me back up here a moment and introduce myself. I am Parker Bell, owner of a computer security consulting firm and national bestselling crime author. After escaping from the confines of a rural, economically depressed, and limited thinking little town located on the beautiful St. Johns River in Northeast Florida to the large metropolis of Atlanta, I created a very successful computer security consulting company. Believing that both sides of my brain needed to be balanced, I started writing true crime novels. No one was more surprised than I was when my books became New York Times bestsellers.

I'm in mid-thirties...or maybe a year or two older...I'm not particularly vain about my looks, although I do have my moments. I'm the height of your average female, five foot four inches to those of you not in the know. I can be somewhat sarcastic at times. Okay, most of the time, but I do try, sorta, to keep my mouth under control. Sigh, it's pretty much a losing battle.

I have baby fine brown hair that refuses to conform to any type of beauty treatment, better known as I gave up on trying to do anything with it, and it's straight as a board...unless I don't run a comb through after a shower and then it looks like I've stuck my finger in an electrical outlet. Oh, yeah, I have brown eyes.

My exercise routine consists of bending my elbow numerous times throughout the day with my very large coffee mug and doing senior exercises with Deron at

GrowYoungFitness.com. Hey, I'm lazy and he has great exercises I can do while sitting in my chair.

While I tolerate my photo on the back cover of my books, I would prefer never to see my picture on the FBI's most wanted list. I don't take a good picture and the FBI is not known for their aesthetically creative posing skills.

I try hard not to go back to Po'thole. I didn't like it when I grew up there, I sure didn't miss it for the some twenty years I managed to stay away, and I sure as heck didn't much care for it the two times when I went back last year.

Inquiring minds are asking why on God's green earth did I ever go back to Po'thole when I disliked it so intensely? Well, the answer is that tiny little person on the other end of the phone who was trying to control her anger with me about the Fabergé egg comment, Gracie Blanche. What she lacked in height, she's only four feet eleven inches, she more than made up for it with tenacity. She was downright scary when she was focused on something.

Deep down, and I was never going to admit this to her, I actually have a lot of fun teasing her but I'm always there for her. These silly antique shows were her latest hobby and what's a friend for if you can't help support your friends in their latest endeavors.

"Because," apparently, she had gotten herself under control with the deep breathing exercise. "Anne and Chauncey like this area and they probably think they can help to bring in tourists which will help our economy."

I detected a somewhat guilty tone in her voice.

"Have you talked to them yet?" I asked.

“Oh, I’m sure they’ll be agreeable to showing off their egg,” Gracie Blanche said defensively. “After all, they do winter here.”

“What does their being a snowbird have anything to do with displaying an egg?” I asked.

She harrumphed, “Well, if they come here to live for several months, I’m sure they want to promote our area.” A slight pause, “And their egg.”

“Wait! You mean you haven’t even *talked* to them yet and you’re already making plans for *their egg*?!” I was almost shouting. “Gracie Blanche, you can’t do things like that!”

Apparently, she could, and she did.

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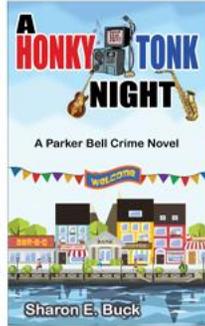
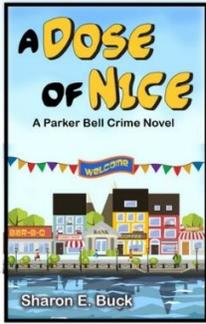
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## The Fabergé Easter Egg



## About Sharon E. Buck

Sharon Buck writes clean, funny, cozy mystery books. She resides in northeast Florida although she is somewhat concerned she may have to move suddenly if people in her hometown realize that her Parker Bell series is loosely (very loosely, according to her attorney) based on them. When Sharon isn't doing her favorite thing...writing...she enjoys walking her little rescue dogs, traveling, reading books, and cracking her friends up with funny stories and her wicked sense of humor. See more of Sharon at [SharonEBuck.com](http://SharonEBuck.com).