

Big Name Fan

Ruthie Knox

Annie Mare

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Women stars on a detective show reunite and confront a real death in Ruthie Knox and Annie Mare's sparkling romance novel *Big Name Fan*, about the underestimated crossover between fan fiction and reality.

Craven's Daughter was once a hit television show. Years later, Bex, who played a private investigator, joins her costar Sam, who played a former FBI agent, for a podcast series to garner enthusiasm for a televised reunion. Their intense on- and off-screen chemistry, though, never culminated in the relationship of fans' fevered expectations. And unresolved pain concerning the death of the show's makeup artist, combined with the network's coy handling of the teased-at LGBTQ+ undercurrents within the series, provoke the pair to go rogue: they think their fans deserve fresh answers.

Fueled by the tension between producers, who want the magic to rekindle for ratings, and the actors, who feel misled, the novel alternates between behind-the-scenes industry drama—including on-set sabotage—and Bex's home life. This astute back-and-forth opens facets of her character, revealing the extent to which she has forged her identity around being responsible for her younger siblings while denying her own dreams. Sam unsettles Bex, drawing forth their long-unspoken passion. Their connection is steeped in their shared history.

As Bex and Sam sleuth for the facts, online fan fiction proves perceptive. The women's acceptance of, and even enthusiasm for, the worlds within worlds made up by others is a heartening acknowledgment of their ability to inspire others through their craft. Television nostalgia and frisson meld with dark ambitions in this Tinseltown mystery, revealing the harms wreaked by keeping certain secrets—and the joys found in revealing others.

Big Name Fan is a romance novel featuring stars of a crime show who find a second chance to rewrite their own ending.

KAREN RIGBY (January / February 2025)

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