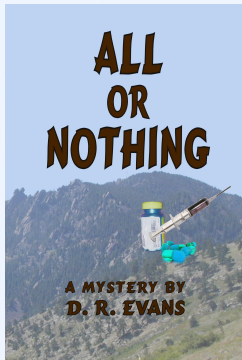




# ENGINE HOUSE BOOKS

## BOOK BITS #7



### ***ALL OR NOTHING*** by **D. R. Evans**

*ALL OR NOTHING* IS CURRENTLY AVAILABLE IN  
A RETAIL EDITION ONLY  
(ISBN 978-1-936211-01-2)

EHB: Tell us a bit about *All or Nothing*.

DRE: After writing *The Writings of Penny Smith Logan*, which was a very demanding book, I felt the need to write something much simpler and more accessible — easier for both the reader and the writer. I wanted to produce something that had a simple, enjoyable story that would entertain without raising the kinds of difficult issues that were at the heart of *Writings*.

EHB: You had already written a taut thriller and a successful fantasy. Why not another one of those?

DRE: Both of those books were structurally quite complicated; getting the timelines right for all the characters was quite a demanding exercise. For this book I wanted something that had a much simpler structure: essentially a single timeline with a strictly limited cast of characters. That led me to the idea of a cozy mystery, since those books often adhere to that simple pattern.

EHB: So *All or Nothing* is basically a whodunnit?

DRE: In the sense that there's a death at the

beginning and a (unexpected, I hope) dénouement at the end, yes. However, really the book is about the developing relationships among the characters. The death (and it's not even certain that it's a murder for much of the book) is what brings the characters together and gives them a common task.. You can read the book either as about relationships developing against the backdrop of an unexplained death, or as a cozy mystery in which the characters aren't as static as is usually the case. Or maybe that's over-analyzing things: perhaps it's really just intended to be a good story.

EHB: There is a long history of detective series; will the characters return in another book?

DRE: I doubt it. Modern mysteries, especially those that make it to TV or movies, tend to be more about the (exaggerated, artificial) relationship between the people who are trying to solve the case than they are about the case itself. That's not a new phenomenon: just think of Holmes and Watson, for example. That sort of characterization lends itself to a series, where the characters evolve (if they evolve at all) only slowly. While those kinds of characters can be interesting and/or



entertaining, they really aren't very realistic (can you imagine any real police department putting up with Inspector Morse for very long?) In any case, even though some of the characters in *All or Nothing* are professionals, there really isn't the sense of a crime-solving team as is usually the case on TV. Instead, we have a group of characters who are thrown together and who have a common interest in solving the case. The intent is that these be recognizable as ordinary people with lives outside the case, not static, quirky characters with clearly-defined rôles from which they will not deviate. Incidentally, please don't take this to mean that I don't enjoy a lot of what I might call TV-orientated mysteries. I do. I just wanted to write something with characters that were a little more ordinary.

EHB: Anything you'd change about the book if you had the chance?

DRE: I knew you would ask that question and I've given it some thought. I really don't think there's anything I'd change. I think it's a light, entertaining read, which is exactly what I intended.

EHB: Any more cozy mysteries coming?

DRE: I have an idea for a character that might be strong enough for a series (you see, I really *don't* object in principle to quirky protagonists). I'm not sure whether he'll ever see the light of day, though. I have several other books that will take precedence.

EHB: What was the most difficult thing about writing *All or Nothing*?

DRE: It was much the easiest book I've written to date. I think the only thing that I had to be careful about was to ensure that no other character supplanted Martin as the principal protagonist (if that isn't a tautology). It would have been easy to let Henry Clarence Madison expand to fill a lot more space than I intended for him. Even as it is, he tends to dominate

scenes in which he appears, so keeping him in check was a bit tricky. But really that was a minor issue.

EHB: Why did you choose to set it in a ski resort... in *summer*?

DRE: Simply because I'd never read a book with that setting. I'm sure some have been written, but I've never come across any. I wanted to make the point that there's more to ski resorts than the winter glitz.

EHB: To conclude, can you tell us three factoids about *All or Nothing*?

DRE: One: Right up until publication of the second edition, the character who died was called Michael (instead of Matthew).

Two: The fictional town of Pinetree is loosely based on Vail.

Three: Smith Computers, the company for which Martin works, plays a substantial rôle in *The Writings of Penny Smith Logan*.



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