

# Everyone In My Family Has Killed Someone

by Benjamin Stevenson

## Author Bio: (from Fantastic Fiction & Authors Website)

Benjamin Stevenson is an award-winning stand-up comedian and author. Off-stage, Benjamin has worked for publishing houses and literary agencies in Australia and the USA.



He is the author of the globally popular 'Ernest Cunningham Mysteries', including *Everyone In My Family Has Killed Someone*, which is currently being adapted into a major HBO TV series. His books have sold over 750,000 copies in twenty-nine territories and have been nominated for eight Book of the Year awards.

## Characters:

- **Ernest Cunningham** – (Ern or Ernie) – (41) – Writes “How to Write Mystery Books” books. Testified against Michael during his trial. Married, but separated, from Erin.
- **Black Tongue** – A serial killer who kills by forcing his victims to breath in ash which clogs the lungs and suffocates the victim. The victims end up with black tongues.
- **Brian Clarke** – Police officer who died in the gas station shooting.
- **Darius Crawford** – Police officer who first comes to investigate the body found at the Sky Lodge Mountain Retreat.
- **Erin Cunningham** – Married to Ernest, but currently separated. Her Mother died when Erin was young. Currently dating Michael.
- **Jeremy Cunningham** – Ernest’s younger brother. Died when Ernest was 6. The boys were left in car on a hot day.
- **Lucy Cunningham** – Michael’s ex-wife. Michael and Lucy divorced while Michael was in prison. Still loves Michael. Lucy works for an MLM (multilevel marketing) company selling products to her friends and family.
- **Michael Cunningham** – Ernest’s older brother. Gave Ernest a duffle bag with \$267,000 in it. Michael hit a man (Alan Holton) with his car (Alan had already been shot) and buried him in a national park. Spent 3 years in prison.
- **Robert Cunningham** – Ernest’s father. Was killed by a police officer during gas station robbery when Ernest was small. Robert shot and killed a police officer during the robbery.
- **Audrey Garcia** – Ernest’s mother. Worked at the bank as a teller when the boys were young. Currently married to Marcello Garcia. Blames Ernest for Michael being in jail.
- **Marcello Garcia** – Ernest’s stepfather. Sofia’s father. Married to Audrey. Famous corporate attorney. Very well to do. Had his shoulder reconstructed by Sofia. Wears a Rolex which technically belongs to Michael and Ernest.

- **Sofia Garcia-Cunningham** – Ernest’s stepsister. Marcello’s daughter. Doctor – Surgeon. Is currently suspended pending a malpractice suit.
- **Gavin** – Owner of the SuperShred resort on the other side of the mountain from Sky Lodge.
- **Juliette Henderson** – Owner of the Sky Lodge Mountain retreat.
- **Alan Holton** – Former police officer. He was a drug dealer and career criminal. The police officer who shot and killed Robert Cunningham. Hit by Michael’s car after being shot and stumbling out into the street. Michael gets 3 years in prison for this crime.
- **Allison Humphrey** – Former Police detective turned consultant. Killed by the Black Tongue serial killer.
- **Rebecca McAuley** – Little girl who was kidnapped, ransomed for \$300,000, but never found. The primary detective on the case was Allison Humphrey.
- **Edgar & Siobhan McAuley** – Older couple staying at the SuperShred resort. Parents of Rebecca McAuley.
- **Katherine Millot** – Ernie’s aunt. Ernest’s father’s sister. Married to Andy. Sets up a family reunion at the Sky Lodge Mountain Retreat for the family. An over-preparer. Teetotaler. Best friend died in a drunk driving accident where Katherine was driving. She has a limp. Has a daughter, Amy, who is in Italy.
- **Andy Millot** – Katherine’s husband. Mild mannered. Horticulturist.
- **Sabers** – Group of petty criminals. Robert Cunningham was a part of this group, but wanted to leave when the crimes began to escalate and became too violent.
- **Mark & Janine Williams** – Fish & chip shop owners. Foster parents. Killed by the Black Tongue serial killer.

### Who did each family member kill?

- |                     |                        |                |
|---------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| • Father (Robert)   | • Stepfather (Marcelo) | • Uncle (Andy) |
| • Mother (Audrey)   | • Stepsister (Sofia)   | • Wife (Erin)  |
| • Brother (Michael) | • Sister-in-Law (Lucy) | • Ernest       |
| • Brother (Jeremy)  | • Aunt (Katherine)     |                |

### Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. The story is told as a narrative where the author “breaks the 4<sup>th</sup> wall” and talks directly to the readers. Did you like the way the story was set up? Did you find it easy or hard to follow? Why or why not?
3. Did you enjoy the pre-emptive reveals of events in the book (i.e. the page numbers)? Does knowing what's coming, but not how or why, increase or decrease suspense?

4. What do you think of Ronald Knox's 10 Commandments of Detective Fiction? Do you feel they are relevant today or old fashioned/predictable?
5. Are Knox's rules often broken in modern crime? Do you view this as a positive or negative thing? How well does Stevenson stick to the rules?
6. As well as being an author, Stevenson is a stand-up comic. Did you find the book funny? Does a humorous tone work in crime fiction?
7. The book is set in Australia. Did that have any effect on how you viewed the book?
8. Should Ernest have testified against Michael during the trial? Why or why not?
9. Ernest says that "A busy schedule and routine is used to fill in the gaps of grief and lessen the burden of decision making." (Chapter 20). Do you think that is true? Does it work? Why or why not?
10. Do you think that Audrey was responsible for what happened to Jeremy in the car? Would you have done the same thing Audrey did? Why or why not?
11. When Ernest finds a second skeleton in the coffin, what did you think? Who did you think the second body belonged to? Why?
12. Do you think that Siobhan McAuley knew about Edgar's involvement in Rebecca's kidnapping? Why or why not?
13. Marcello is responsible for the "truck-sized hole" in the plot. What do you think about his involvement in what happened to Ernest?
14. Were you surprised about the identity of "Green Boots"? Why or why not?
15. What do you think about what happened to Lucy?
16. What do you think about what happened to Michael?
17. Did you suspect the true identity of Black Tongue before it was revealed? What clues were given?
18. Do you think the readers were given enough clues to figure out the microdot aspect of the novel?
19. Discuss how the kidnapping pictures went from Robert to finally ending up with Ernest. How did the movement of the pictures effect events in the book? Did you suspect any of the locations?
20. In the end, did Ernest kill somebody? Why do you believe that?
21. How do you feel about the way the book ended? If you could change the ending, how would you have it end?
22. **Everyone In My Family Has Killed Someone** was written by Benjamin Stevenson. Will you read anything else by the author?

## References:

- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/s/benjamin-stevenson/>
- GoodReads – <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/59799026-everyone-in-my-family-has-killed-someone>
- Novelist – <https://web-p-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=3&sid=52d3203f-cdb4-45d7-b87b-472e3ceb553a%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#AN=11059673&db=neh>
- Penguin - <https://www.penguin.com.au/book-clubs/3381-everyone-in-my-family-has-killed-someone-book-club-notes>
- Benjamin Stevenson website - <https://benjaminstevensonauthor.com/>

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## Benjamin Stevenson's Books

### Series

#### Jack Quick

1. She Lies in the Vines (2019)  
*aka Trust Me When I Lie / Greenlight*
2. Either Side of Midnight (2020)

#### Ernest Cunningham

1. Everyone In My Family Has Killed Someone (2022)
2. Everyone On This Train Is A Suspect (2023)
3. Everyone This Christmas Has A Secret (2024)

### Stand Alone Novels

- Greenlight (2022)
- Fool Me Twice (2024)

### Novellas and Short Stories

- Find Us (2021)
- Last One to Leave (2022)
- Don't Hang Up (2023)

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### If you liked Everyone in My Family Has Killed Someone, try...

- A Bad Day for Sunshine – Darynda Jones
- The Appeal – Janice Hallett
- Home Is Where the Bodies Are – Jeneva Rose
- Murder Your Employer – Rupert Holmes
- Morewood Family Rules – HelenKay Dimon
- The Paradox Hotel – Rob Hart

## **Ronald Knox: 10 Commandments of Detective Fiction (1929)**

<https://www.writingclasses.com/toolbox/tips-masters/ronald-knox-10-commandments-of-detective-fiction>

1. The criminal must be someone mentioned in the early part of the story, but must not be anyone whose thoughts the reader has been allowed to follow.
2. All supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course.
3. Not more than one secret room or passage is allowable.
4. No hitherto undiscovered poisons may be used, nor any appliance which will need a long scientific explanation at the end.
5. ~~No Chinaman must figure in the story.~~ (This commandment was redacted in the novel for being culturally outdated historical wording.)
6. No accident must ever help the detective, nor must he ever have an unaccountable intuition which proves to be right.
7. The detective must not himself commit the crime.
8. The detective must not light on any clues which are not instantly produced for the inspection of the reader.
9. The stupid friend of the detective, the Watson, must not conceal any thoughts which pass through his mind; his intelligence must be slightly, but very slightly, below that of the average reader.
10. Twin brothers, and doubles generally, must not appear unless we have been duly prepared for them.