

# Killers of a Certain Age

by Deanna Raybourn

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

Deanna Raybourn graduated from the University of Texas at San Antonio in English and History and an emphasis on Shakespearean Studies. She taught high school English for three years in San Antonio before leaving education to pursue a career as a novelist.



Deanna makes her home in Virginia, where she lives with her husband and daughter.

## Characters:

- **Billie Webster** – (60) – Retiring assassin. Worked 40 years for “the Museum,” one of the most elite assassin squads. Lives in Houston. Sideline is translating academic books. Impulsive. Good at fighting.
- **Helen Randolph** – Retiring assassin. Widowed. Her husband was Kenneth. Sideline was homemaker. Makes meticulous notes on everyone she meets/works with. Good pickpocket. Good with guns.
- **Natalie “Nat” Schuyler** – Retiring assassin. Brunette. Fashionista. Her sideline is being an artist. Has been married multiple times.
- **Mary Alice Tuttle** – Retiring assassin. The idealist of the group. She is married to Akiko. Sideline is accounting. Methodical.
- **Akiko** – Mary Alice’s wife.
- **Amphitrite** – Luxury yacht where the main characters are celebrating 40 years with the museum and their retirement.
- **Thierry Carapez** – In charge of Provenance (computer geeks/research) at the Museum. One of the Museum’s Board of Directors. (Second in Provenance is Naomi Ndiaye.)
- **Kevin Cochran/Brad Fogerty** – Younger agent of “the Museum.” Seen on the Amphitrite.
- **Martin Fairbrother** – Second in Acquisitions at the Museum. Always nice and helpful.
- **Vance Gilchrist** – Pilot in 1979. In charge of Exhibitions (field agents) at the Museum. One of the Museum’s Board of Directors. (The second position in Exhibitions is currently empty.)
- **Constance Halliday** – (70) – Head of project Sphinx in 1979. Code name “Shepherdess.” Richard Halliday’s sister.
- **Richard Halliday** – Retired Major. British. Recruits Billie for “The Museum” in 1978.
- **Minka** – Young woman who Billie takes care of. She lives in New Orleans in an abandoned convent. Ukrainian. Very good with computers.
- **Naomi Ndiaye** – Second in Provenance at the Museum. Pregnant.

- **Gunther Paar** – In charge of Acquisitions (supply and logistics/bombs) at the Museum. One of the Museum’s Board of Directors. (Second in Acquisitions is Martin Fairbrother.)
- **Charles Ellison “Sweeny” McSween** – Pilot in 1979. Retired Museum assassin.
- **Christopher Taverner** – Mission leader. The man Billie left behind.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Did you like the book? Why or why not?
2. The story is told from Billie’s point of view, but sometimes switches between present day and past assignments. Did you like the way the story was set up? Did you find it easy or hard to follow? Why or why not?
3. Which characters were the most “real” to you? Which ones had the most genuine characteristics? Which characters felt one-dimensional or unrealistic? Why?
4. The Museum is founded with the intention of bringing justice to those who have never been held accountable for their atrocities. Is this mission statement fulfilled?
5. How would you characterize the relationship among the four assassins? How do they each fulfill their roles with regard to their respective talents?
6. Each of the four is recruited very young, at a vulnerable point in her life. How does this make them susceptible to recruitment? Is this ethical?
7. Billie, Mary Alice, Helen, and Natalie each bring something unique to their missions. How would you describe them? Which do you relate to more? Which talents would you bring to a mission?
8. The foursome have spent their entire adult lives in the service of the Museum only to be betrayed by the organization to which they have given so much. How does this betrayal drive their actions?
9. How do each of the flashback missions relate to the current kills?
10. Naomi Ndiaye is a character who performs a critical role in the plot. How would you describe her? She allows circumstances to play out in order to secure the future of the Museum even though this puts the four assassins at greater risk. Was she right to do so?
11. Minka and Akiko are strong supporting characters. How does this network of women hold one another up? How does Constance fit into the idea of women who support other women?
12. How would you characterize the relationships the four assassins have with the significant people in their lives? Does keeping their occupations secret protect these relationships? Or does it prevent real intimacy?

13. Helen is having a hard time getting over the death of her husband. How does this affect her and her responses to the situation the ladies find themselves in?
14. Billie keeps a secret safe house in New Orleans. Does this make her wise or paranoid?
15. The four assassins have to “burn” their real identities and start over. Could you do this?
16. In chapter 5, the author says, “That’s the thing about being a 60-year old woman – no one notices you unless you want them to.” What do you think about that statement? Is it only true for woman? Are there certain other groups in society that get ignored? Why is that?
17. Much of the team’s success comes from being older and therefore overlooked and underestimated. What advantages did they have as younger women working in a traditionally masculine trade?
18. How would Billie’s life have been different if she had pursued a relationship with Taverner? Was he right to follow his dreams of marriage and fatherhood even though it meant giving up the love of his life?
19. What do you think is next for the four assassins?
20. ***Killers of a Certain Age*** was written by Deanna Raybourn. Will you read anything else by the author?

#### References:

- Fantastic Fiction – <https://www.fantasticfiction.com/r/deanna-raybourn/>
- GoodReads – <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/60149532-killers-of-a-certain-age>
- Novelist – <https://web-p-ebSCOhost-com.ezproxy.clevnet.org/novp/detail?vid=4&sid=6157cfde-7b86-4c5b-bacf-27aadff5e97e%40redis&bdata=JnNpdGU9bm92cC1saXZl#UI=11076966&db=neh>
- Penguin Random House – <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/653405/killers-of-a-certain-age-by-deanna-raybourn/9780593200704/readers-guide/>
- Deanna Raybourn’s Website – <https://www.deannaraybourn.com/>

## Deanna Raybourn's Books

### Series

#### Lady Julia Grey

1. Silent in the Grave (2006)
2. Silent in the Sanctuary (2007)
3. Silent on the Moor (2009)
4. Dark Road to Darjeeling (2010)
5. The Dark Enquiry (2011)
6. Silent Night (2014)
7. Midsummer Night (2014)
8. Twelfth Night (2014)
9. Bonfire Night (2014)
- A Mysterious Season (2020)

#### Spear of Summer Grass

1. Far in the Wilds (2013)
2. A Spear of Summer Grass (2013)

#### Jasmine

1. Whisper of Jasmine (2014)
2. City of Jasmine (2014)

#### Veronica Speedwell Mystery

1. A Curious Beginning (2015)
2. A Perilous Undertaking (2017)
3. A Treacherous Curse (2018)
4. A Dangerous Collaboration (2019)
5. A Murderous Relation (2020)
6. An Unexpected Peril (2021)
7. An Impossible Impostor (2022)
8. A Sinister Revenge (2023)
9. A Grave Robbery (2024)

### Stand Alone Books

- The Dead Travel Fast (2010)
- Night of a Thousand Stars (2014)
- Killers of a Certain Age (2022)

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### If you liked Killers of a Certain Age, try...

- Last Devil to Die – Richard Osman
- An Elderly Lady Is Up To No Good – Helene Tursten
- Spy Coast – Tess Gerritsen
- The Donut Legion – Joe Lansdale
- Murder Your Employer – Rupert Holmes