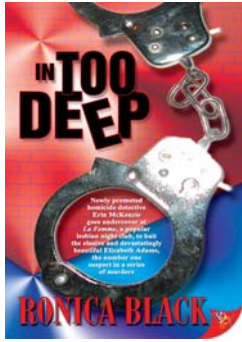


Book Review: October 2005

by Kathi Isserman (reviewer at [IGW](#))



In Too Deep

Ronica Black

ISBN: 1-933110-17-1

Trade paper, 336 pp, \$15.95

September, 2005

Lesbian Romance/Intrigue

Bold Strokes Books, Inc.

www.boldstrokesbooks.com

Independent Gay Writer

Ronald L. Donaghue

Editor-in-Chief

Ronica Black's debut novel *In Too Deep* has everything from non-stop action and intriguing well-developed characters to steamy erotic love scenes. From the opening scenes where Black plunges the reader head first into the story to the explosive unexpected ending. *In Too Deep* has what it takes to rise to the top.

Erin McKenzie is the newly appointed homicide detective who goes undercover as a lesbian trying to coax night club owner Elizabeth Adams into confessing. Adams is suspected of several grisly, very personal murders. Erin, who is straight and separated from her husband, gets help from veteran detective Patricia Henderson. As Erin's liaison, Henderson, as a lesbian, works to make McKenzie believable before she embarks on her first trip to La Femme, Adam's night club. During these sessions together with Henderson, McKenzie begins to question her sexuality while Henderson develops more than professional feelings towards her colleague. To make this even more difficult for McKenzie, she needs to get Adams interested in her without showing any desire on her part. This way she can gather information on Adams who has an airtight alibi for the last murder. While undercover, McKenzie gets more than she bargained for, jeopardizing her career and possibly her future.

Black does an outstanding job of developing parallel plots of suspense and romance. They are intertwined seamlessly and flow as one. She creates pages upon pages of built up desire with Henderson, McKenzie and Adams, constructing a convincing triangle of angst, passion, and jealousy. Their conflicts are heightened as business and pleasure are intermixed, crossing boundaries, and leaving the reader with many questions as to who the bad guys are in this story. The tantalizing love scenes, especially in the swimming pool, will leave the reader wanting more.

In Too Deep has solid portrayals of the characters, and their interaction with each other sizzles. Adams is an enigma, fiercely loyal and protective, but vulnerable. McKenzie is naive and confused about her sexuality, but when pushed, she stands her ground. Henderson fueled by an inner rage from past associations and craving a love that is lasting, ends up coming through as a solid cop and friend. This cast is unbeatable as they move the story along with its plot twists.

Black has a winner with *In Too Deep*, one that will keep the reader turning the pages until the very last one.

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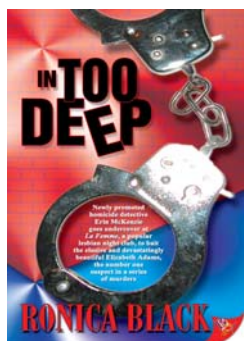
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Book Review: October 2005
by Richard Labonte (reviewer atQ Syndicate)



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Q Syndicate

Book Marks

E-mail:

BookMarks@qsyndicate.com

Richard Labonte

"This is a challenging murder mystery. ...Black juggles the assorted elements of her first book with assured pacing and estimable panache...[including]...the relative depth-for genre fiction-of the central characters: Erin, the married-but-separated detective who comes to her lesbian senses; loner Patricia, the policewoman-mentor who finds herself falling for Erin; and sultry club owner Elizabeth, the sexually predatory suspect who discards women like Kleenex...until she meets Erin."

-Richard Labonte, Book Marks, Q Syndicate, has been reading, editing, selling, and writing about queer literature since the mid-70s.

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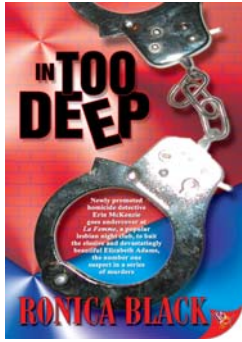
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Book Review: January 2006

by Cheri Rosenberg (reviewer at [MBR](#))



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James A. Cox
Editor-in-Chief

Ronica Black's debut novel, *In Too Deep*, is the outstanding first effort of a gifted writer who has a promising career ahead of her. Black shows extraordinary command in weaving a thoroughly engrossing tale around multi-faceted characters, intricate action and character-driven plots and subplots, sizzling sex that jumps off the page and stimulates libidos effortlessly, amidst brilliant storytelling. A clever mystery writer, Black has the reader guessing until the end.

Called in to investigate a murder, newly appointed homicide detective Erin McKenzie of the Valle Luna, Arizona PD, ends up going undercover as bait to investigate a rash of serial murders. The suspect is none other than the affluent, powerful, sexy, skilled seductress and positively drop-dead gorgeous elite lesbian nightclub owner Elizabeth Adams. It is Erin's job to lure Liz hoping to get close enough to the woman for a confession. In addition, who better to teach a straight married woman how to be a "lesbian on the prowl" than a lesbian, namely, detective Patricia Henderson. Patricia knew Erin before the assignment but when she notices Erin's wedding ring is missing she is intrigued. In fact, Patricia can't help but notice everything about Erin, including her sexy vulnerability and good looks; she becomes more than just smitten--protective seems more like it. She even contemplates that a commitment would be a dream come true.

Patricia wonders if her attraction to Erin is just "...so desperate that a polite 'how are you feeling?' could leave her panting and ready to pounce" [p. 36] or is there really more to her feelings? It doesn't help that the two women have to work very closely on the case, which has Erin questioning her sexuality as new feelings surface. Emotional floodgates threaten to open after Erin meets and falls hopelessly in love or at least lust for Liz Adams, while still having feelings for Patricia. The fact that she is in the throes of divorce from her cheating husband, investigating a high-profile murder, all the while questioning her "previously unsuspected attraction to her own sex," [p. 76], and you have the makings of a complicated romance with Erin torn between two desirable women.

Erin searched Patricia's face, a note of desperation in her voice. "This doesn't mean I'm gay...does it" [p. 37]. She feels like she "had been given the key to a whole new world. The door had been unlocked and she was seeing what she had never noticed before--the allure of the female body..." [p. 46]. As if the investigation of a potentially dangerous murderer isn't enough, Erin has to deal with her own confused feelings.

Is Liz Adams really the calculated killer the police have made her out to be or is there a human and very innocent woman just hungering to be let out? Black does a convincing job of leaving plenty of room for doubt. The reader is on a merry-go-round when it comes to whom Erin should stick with, Patricia or Liz, but knowing that Erin's happiness is the most desired outcome.

Ronica Black uses metaphors like an Olympic swimmer gliding through water snatching up Gold. From the very first absorbing page to the last, there is a richness in the text that resonates in each sentence, bringing the reader that much closer to the character's actions, emotions, and the vivid setting in which they live. Black makes everything clearer when she describes Erin's attraction to Liz, "Liz swallowed hard, and Erin noticed. She was noticing everything now. The beauty of the woman before her, the fragility masked by indifference and distance, the delicate pulse that beat just beneath the damp skin on her neck. She was human. And that was something it seemed no one had ever considered before" [p. 163].

Every time the reader has a handle on what's happening, Black throws in a curve, successfully devising a good mystery. The romance and sex adds a special gift to the package rounding out the story for a totally satisfying read.

In Too Deep, by newcomer Ronica Black, is emotional, hot, gripping, raw, and a real turn-on from start to finish, with characters you will fall in love with, root for, and never forget. A truly five star novel, you will not want to miss *In Too Deep* and will look forward to Black's next novel, *Wild Abandon*, coming out in 2006.

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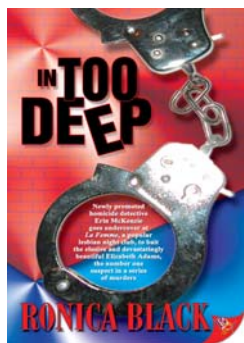
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Book Review: June 2006

by Anna Furtado (reviewer at JAW, author of *The Heart's Desire*)



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Just About Write

Web site:

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Nann Dunne

Editor-in-Chief

& Publisher

Just when you think you know who the good guys are in Ronica Black's *In Too Deep*, everything shifts. Flawed white hats, black hats with underlying goodness, people who have been hurt and used and abused abound in this story and everyone's just trying to find some peace—and maybe a little love—in their lives.

When Detective Erin McKinsey (Mac) is assigned to go undercover to get information on a suspected serial killer, Elizabeth Adams, the beautiful, tough-as-nails owner of La Femme nightclub, she gets more than she bargained for in the process. Soon to be divorced from her philandering husband, with whom she has never experienced any kind of deep relationship, Erin finds herself irresistibly drawn to Liz Adams while risking her life trying to find out if the nightclub owner is the killer of a string of men who have been shot and mutilated.

There is no lack of suspects, and some characters that are introduced and shrugged off as minor players in this dangerous game early on, come back to haunt the main characters again and again. Even a cop's motives begin to be suspect, but in the end, all we want is for Erin to find herself and find true love. Oh, yes, and finding the real killer would be nice, too.

In Too Deep is one of the 2006 GCLS "Goldie" finalists in the Mystery / Action / Adventure / Thriller category. It is a page-turner of the highest magnitude. Black doesn't disappoint in this well written, exciting story.

-Anna Furtado, author of *The Heart's Desire*

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