

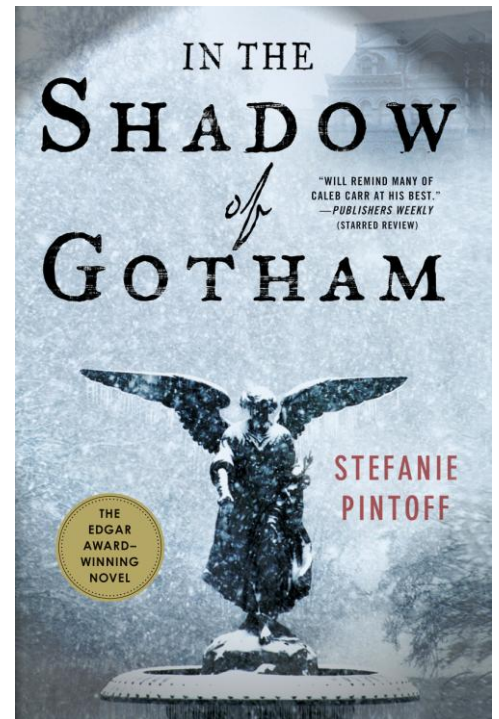


# *In the Shadow of Gotham*

*by Stefanie Pintoff*

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## About this Guide

The following author biography and list of questions about *In the Shadow of Gotham* are intended as resources to aid individual readers and book groups who would like to learn more about the author and this book. We hope that this guide will provide you a starting place for discussion, and suggest a variety of perspectives from which you might approach *In the Shadow of Gotham*.

## About the Book

Stefanie Pintoff's acclaimed and award-winning debut is the taut historical tale of Detective Simon Ziele, a man who lost his fiancée in the 1904 General Slocum ferry disaster and thereafter flees New York City for Dobson, New York, to escape the memories of her death. But months into his tenure, he catches the worst homicide of his career: a young woman brutally murdered in her own bedroom in the middle of the afternoon. His investigation quickly takes him to Columbia University criminologist Alistair Sinclair and one of his patients. But what could lead this Michael Fromley, with his history of violent behavior, to target such a proper young lady? Is Michael really behind the murder or is someone mimicking him? Ziele must discover the truth in this story of a haunted man on the trail of a killer while on the run from his own demons.

## Praise for *Stefanie Pintoff*

### Praise for *A Curtain Falls*

“Mystery lovers might just have found the next Caleb Carr.”—*The Huffington Post*

“In her second novel, Stefanie Pintoff shows how the best in historical fiction not only unveils our past, but shows how our modern concerns evolved... Her comparison to Caleb Carr is well earned, although Pintoff shows a wider range and deeper affinity for storytelling than the author of *The Alienist*. Pintoff’s meticulous research captures the heart of the era, but her detailed characters and gripping plot about greed, jealousy, and obsession for fame set *A Curtain Falls* on a higher plane.”—Oline Cogdill, *South Florida Sun-Sentinel*

“This worthy sequel to Pintoff’s acclaimed Edgar Award–nominated debut, *In the Shadow of Gotham*, brings to life New York’s theater world at the turn of the twentieth century and the fledgling science of criminology.”—*Library Journal* (starred review) on *A Curtain Falls*

### Praise for *In the Shadow of Gotham*

“Superior historical mystery... She does an outstanding job of blending historical detail with engaging characters and a suspenseful plot.”—*The Denver Post*

“Pintoff’s debut... will remind many of Caleb Carr at his best.... The period detail, characterizations, and plotting are all top-notch, and Ziele has enough depth to carry a series.”—*Publishers Weekly* (starred review)

## About the Author

STEFANIE PINTOFF is an Edgar Award winner for Best First Novel as well as a nominee for the Anthony and Sue Feder Historical Mystery Awards. She is also a graduate of Columbia University Law School and has a Ph.D. in literature from New York University. The author of three novels, she lives with her husband and daughter in New York City.

Visit Stefanie online and sign up for her newsletter *Piecework* at <http://www.stefaniepintoff.com/>



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## Discussion Questions

1. A key element of the novel is the relationship between Detective Ziele and Alistair Sinclair. There is an obvious tension between the two, yet they need each other to solve the brutal murder at the center of the book. Is their budding partnership borne simply of necessity, or is there more to it than that?
2. Another relationship central to the novel is that between Detective Ziele and Isabella Sinclair. While there is clearly an attraction between the two that is greater than mutual admiration, it is harnessed by the social dictates of 1905 New York and the awkwardness of Isabella's relation to Alistair. Discuss how their attraction is authentic, and how it is masked by the tragic losses each has experienced in the recent past.
3. Detective Ziele has seen more than his share of tragedy. How have these events shaped him into the man we first meet in the novel?
4. On page 72 of the novel, Alistair explains the science of criminology in layman's terms: "Criminals are best understood through their crimes," Alistair clarified with a slight smile. "But you can flip it around, and say that crimes are best understood through criminal behavior at the crime scene." This premise is the focus of Alistair's studies at his Research Center at Columbia University. Discuss the impact of Alistair's knowledge of criminology in the murder investigation into Sarah Wingate. Does it help them to solve the crime? Or is it an impediment to Detective Ziele's preference for tried and proven investigative methodology?
5. There are two very strong women at the center of the novel—Sarah Wingate, a brilliant young mathematician, and Isabella Sinclair. Yet they exhibit their strength in very different ways. Sarah is bold, a leader in a man's field, and not willing to keep in step with society's dictates. On the other hand, Isabella prefers to stay within accepted boundaries, but her inner strength is no less remarkable. Discuss the differences between the two women and their roles in advancing women's issues at the turn of the century.
6. The ethical dilemma at the heart of the novel is best described on page 200. "I need to know just one more thing," I said quietly. "Had you known about Moira Shea from the beginning, would you still have facilitated the dismissal of charges against Michael Fromley and accepted him into your custody?" His answer was important to my judgment of him, for in my mind, the question of his intent was crucial. Had Alistair made reckless decisions along the way because he had been blinded by the importance of his research? Or was his hubris so large that he believed his own intellectual pursuits were all-important, and the rest of the world be damned? There was a long moment's pause as I waited for his reply. Finally, he looked at me, and I saw both honesty and fear reflected in his eyes as he replied, "I do not know." Does Detective Ziele judge Alistair too harshly for his decisions? What would you have done had you been in Alistair's shoes?
7. How is contemporary life at once different and yet surprisingly the same as life 100 years ago? Interesting areas of comparison include: cuisine, dress, social dictates, technology, modes of transportation, and entertainment.

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