

RECAP
An Unlikely Drama
Book #3: The Unlikely Murder Club Series

SPOILERS! SPOILERS! SPOILERS!

An Unlikely Drama follows the experiences of former confidence artist Agatha Shadewell (who uses the alias Sarah Connor, among others) as she manages her new life in Unlikely, New York, while simultaneously navigating a murder investigation, an attempt on her life, and a hunt for buried pirate treasure.

It begins with incarcerated true crime author JJ Urquhart contracting a tall, pony-tailed man named Travis, who is soon to be released from prison, paying him to murder Agatha Shadewell. Urquhart is incensed because Agatha's continuous criminal and crime-solving activities repeatedly delay the publication of his exposé, *The Gift of Grab: The Agatha Shadewell Story*. Travis agrees to kill Agatha, who is living under a strict ankle monitor radius in Unlikely, for \$10,000.

Agatha, meanwhile, is busy as the production manager and set builder for the local amateur theater group (UACT), preparing for the play *Lady Pirate: The Tale of Coldwater Belle*. Agatha is supported by her beloved dog, Chance, and frequently visits retired FBI agent Martin Kopp, who is recovering from experimental hip surgery. The surgery was necessary after a fall shifted a toxic bullet lodged in his hip for three years. Martin, irritable and emotional due to pain and painkillers, finds himself excluded from Agatha's activities and feels jealous of her popularity.

The play focuses on Captain Jane Belfair, a Robin Hood-style pirate (Coldwater Belle) from the 1840s whose legacy is tied to Unlikely. Agatha notes the irony that the town tolerates her own criminal past, much like how their ancestors accepted Belle after she settled in the village.

Agatha discovers UACT director Royce Belfair, a seventy-five-year-old descendant of Coldwater Belle, murdered on the theater floor. A metal staple is embedded between his eyes, and Agatha's battery-operated brad nailer lies nearby. Detective Cecil Kopp, Martin's son, is reluctantly forced to bring Agatha onto the case as a consultant due to limited police resources, emphasizing that Martin must be excluded to focus on his recovery. Echo Augustus-Kopp, Martin's granddaughter, joins the official investigation, creating a "murder book" and leveraging her formidable tech skills.

The initial suspects are interviewed, revealing complex motives centered around the theater property:

- Samantha Park, the lead actress, wanted Royce to sell the Belfair Bijou theater to developer Richard Goodnight.
- Ambrose Belfair, Royce's grandson and sole heir, stood to inherit the money and the property if Royce died.
- The Thorne sisters ("The Karens") held a grudge against Royce for staging a play they deemed immoral.

A crucial breakthrough occurs when Royce's grandson, Ambrose, recovers a video from Royce's cloud account that was filmed during the murder. Echo analyzes the video, establishing the exact time of

death as 9:30 p.m. and identifying a “ghostly hand” captured in the footage as a hand covered in phosphorescent paint used on the set. Agatha realizes that Samantha Park, who claimed an alibi across town taking real estate photos at 9:30 p.m., faked her alibi by resetting multiple clocks to the same time.

Meanwhile, Martin, excluded and determined to contribute, uses a tip about a neighbor’s trail cam. He secures infrared footage that captures Samantha scaling a fence in dark clothing (presumably leaving to commit the crime) and returning later, revealing the glowing phosphorescent paint on her hands, confirming she was the killer. Samantha is arrested shortly after the play’s single performance.

Feeling sidelined, Martin focuses on solving the mystery of Coldwater Belle’s hidden treasure. He breaks into the Bijou to take Belle’s journal. Echo digitally scans the journal, and a faded document he found hidden in Belle’s desk. The document is a “mapoem” containing coded instructions. Martin uses research to crack the first clues, identifying “Treaty Lake” and a “stone that bears a clue” that resembles a bear. Agatha realizes the final clue, “William Frenchwater’s whipping arms,” refers to a weeping willow tree (Will-eau).

Martin, Agatha, Echo, and Ambrose travel to the small island on Treaty Lake by canoe, locating a natural seven-step staircase leading to a cave. An iron chain pulled from a sinkhole opens a hidden mechanism, revealing a wooden chest. The chest holds gold, silver, chains, jewels, and a false bottom containing uncut diamonds. They take the treasure to the police station, where Royce’s lawyer, Hector Felspar, informs Ambrose that he owns the island and is the legal heir, though state law limits his claim to the gold and silver. A hidden letter inside the false bottom reveals that Coldwater Belle and her captor, Ambrose Saltbeard, conspired in her escape, and he was the father of her child. Ambrose sells the diamonds to pay off the theater’s mortgage and joins Echo on a trip to Europe.

With the murder solved and the treasure found, Agatha returns home, only to find the door lock expertly picked. Inside is Travis, the man hired by JJ Urquhart. Travis confirms Urquhart paid him \$10,000 to kill her to complete his book. Agatha offers Travis \$1,000 not to kill her, but only if he agrees to one specific task: kill her.