



BETSY ASHTON

Born in Washington, DC, Betsy Ashton claims she was raised in Southern California where she ran wild with coyotes in the hills above Malibu, even though her mother challenged her memory.

She writes in multiple genres: mysteries, including the Mad Max Mystery series, *Unintended*

Consequences, *Uncharted Territory*, and *Unsafe Haven* (all republished in 2021): serial killer psychological suspense, *Eyes Without a Face*, published in 2017: and literary or women's fiction, *Out of the Desert*, August 2019, the closest thing to a memoir she'll write. Her latest, a suspense novel, *Betrayal*, published in 2021 has won two prizes, Firebird Book Award Winner, 2023, for suspense, and Silver Distinguished Favorite Certificate in the suspense category from Independent Press Award 2023. Her short stories and poetry have appeared in several anthologies including *Murder By the Glass*, *50 Shades of Cabernet*, *Candles of Hope*, and *Reflections on Smith Mountain Lake*. She is the past president of the commonwealth-wide Virginia Writers Club and remains active in the literary communities in Roanoke and at Smith Mountain Lake. Her closest friends know her as Buckshot Betsy. Email her at betsy_ashton2005@yahoo.com if you want the full story.

www.betsy-ashton.com

Too many story arcs? Too many characters? Tools for plotters and pantsers to keep their stories moving forward

My workshop focuses on using two simple Excel tools: a character index and a shot or scene index. To help writers get inside the heads of their characters, the character index outlines a series of traits for each named character: tics, physical looks, hobbies, speech patterns (standard vs. substandard English), relationships. The scene or shot index lays out the people, location, timeline, movement within scene, reason for the scene to exist, and questions to be answered in the scene or in later scenes. By returning to these tools frequently, writers can avoid problems with names, places, and timeframes.