

Lee Adams Talks About Her New Novel, Nighthawks

by Sander Wolff | Culture Agent | 11.11.09 |

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hoping to regain some sense of proportion in this fresh enterprise of hers, this diner. But before she gets a chance to find out if she can pull that off, somebody gets killed and deposited at her front door, which complicates her attempts to resurrect and reconstruct the diner, and her personal life. At the point where this book starts, Julie isn't doing very well, physically, I mean. Her drug addiction has the better of her, I'm afraid.

Sander: *She is under the care of a doctor, though, and the drugs she's taking are for real pain, right?*

Lee: Any junky worth her salt could rationalize it that way, yes.

Sander: *The diner is located in one of the more run-down parts of Berle. How does that factor into its success?*

First, a mea culpa: I am a friend, and fan, of Lee Adams. She has more talent in the tip of her pinky toe than most amass in a life-time of effort. From her early days as a child performer, singing and dancing in a top hat and tails, to her later work as singer/songwriter/bandleader, she has brought artistry, intelligence, and class to everything she's done. Her work as a novelist is no exception.

On Saturday, November 14th, at 7 PM Lee will be celebrating the release of her second novel, [Nighthawks](#). Join her at [Porfolio Coffeehouse](#), located on the South East corner of 4th & Junipero, to hear her read, answer questions, drink some delicious coffee, and get your copy of the new book signed.

Even though it arrives just a bit after Halloween, [Nighthawks](#) is all about ghosts. It picks up about a year after her first novel, [5th and Vanguard](#), ends. Julie Page, still recovering from the whirlwind celebrity of her book about the enigmatic Maxene Montego, tries to make a home for herself in the run-down outskirts of her hometown, Berle.

Sander: *How does the story begin?*

Lee: A diner is resurrected in the middle of a three-block stretch of dirt precisely where it stood sixty years ago. The new owner is Julie Page, my heroine. She's dodging celebrity (from the freakish success of a book she wrote) and

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Lee: She rebuilt it where it stood, which happens to be in this desolate, oddly isolated part of Berle. I think there are other factors pulling her there. Disappearing into this black hole in the center of her hometown is a rather convenient way of allowing yourself all that's familiar while simultaneously "getting out of Dodge," so to speak.

Sander: *And, as such, many who live on the fringes find their way there.*

Lee: Other way around. She implants herself in the most subterranean part of the city. The hookers and trannies and drag racers, etc., it's their turf. And though that might sound like a scary bunch of neighbors, they're really not. She fits right in. There's very much a carny mentality in this book, in fact, there's an actual carny. But my point is that these people, the people who make up this corner of the Promenade where the diner stands, they take care of each other. And they embrace Julie as one of their own. I think she earns that cred by the openness in which she embraced them. No judgement, you know?

Sander: *For me, the unique relationships she establishes with this cast of characters is the heart of the book. They see something of themselves in her, but she wears it on the outside too.*

Lee: Absolutely. And I agree, that is, on a level, the very heart of it. That along with the idea of resurrection, physical, and metaphysical.

This heroine is very flawed. She never pretends to be anything other than what she is; very, very flawed. I'm not really interested in writing about people who eventually do the right thing and then everything is fabulous. Life isn't like that. And even being hopefully compassionate, moral people, we don't always do the right thing. Sometimes we do really shitty things. And then we have to live with those choices, and try to make better ones next time around.

Sander: *Also, sometimes, doing the right thing brings us nothing but misery.*

Lee: Exactly. For all that a reader could accuse Julie Page of, after reading this book, I believe she shows a very strong moral compass throughout much of the story. And it reveals itself, her compass, in tiny moments. Maybe with the band of kids that hangs out at the diner who latch onto her as their mascot or muse or something, to her - I want to call it a holy love - she shares with her fry cook, Carroll Sharkey, to her warm and respectful relationships with Peaches, the she-man who works down on Vincent and Crow, the kingpin of a drag crew that is responsible for more than drag racing. On and on.

Sander: *The book is also about the cost of success, don't you think?*

Lee: Yeah. I'm not sure she was really ready for the success she garnered from her book about Maxine Montego. That could probably be said of many writers, right? You write because you're compelled to do so, an unhealthy compulsion, despite the relentless poverty and anonymity it secures you with, as well as the occasional turn of fortune that pushed you into a party you weren't dressed for. Julie is no different.

Sander: *Another theme seems to be absence. For example, where is her handsome, horn tooting boyfriend?*

Lee: Well, we can't get into that too much, mister. But I will say that searching for things we've lost or things we've thrown away is inextricably linked with the idea of resurrection. I think we'd all love to believe even if we completely destroy something; a relationship, a career, a building, we can recreate it, start over, get it back. Or get him back, as the case may be. A-hem.

Sander: *With 5th & Vanguard, you assembled a crack production team. The evocative cover art for 5th was created by local artist Joanie Karnowski. Has she returned for this project as well?*

Lee: She did. I can't really imagine this series without her work on the front and back. She really

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understands the stories, the characters. There's something really magical about her work. Her choices are both gritty and poetic, if that makes any sense. She's brilliant. I'm honored to have her work in any way associated with mine.

Sander: *Aside from the obvious, what connects the two books?*

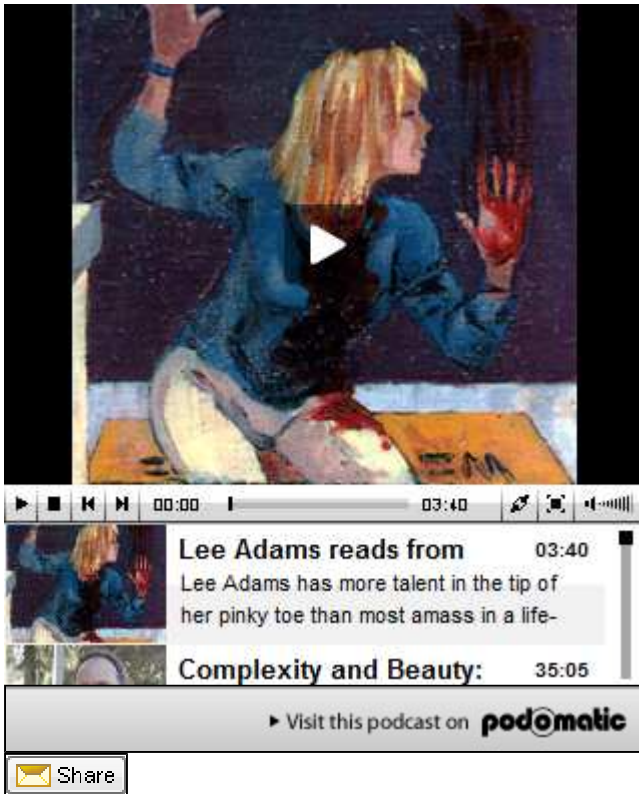
Lee: I think there's a parallel between 5th and Vanguard and Nighthawks in that they both deal with what is real and what is illusory. This time around, the distance between being haunted by actual ghosts and being haunted by your past is examined.

Sander: *Is there a practical difference between the two?*

Lee: I'll leave that to the reader to decide.

Lee's novels are available on [Amazon](#), [BarnesandNoble.com](#), and is on sale locally at [{open}](#). For more information about Lee and her books, visit [AJuliePageMystery.com](#).

Listen to Lee read a gripping excerpt from Nighthawks:



If the player doesn't work for you, try [downloading the file](#). You can also read [last year's interview](#), when Lee spoke about 5th & Vanguard, and a rather thorough [interview from 2003](#).

Related Stories: [Lee Adams, 5th & Vanguard, Portfolio Coffeehouse, {open}, novel, Julie Page, Nighthawks, Retro Row, \[ajuliepagemystery.com\]\(#\)](#)

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Great writer. Great read. Great interview! See you at Portfolio! -Jz

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Really enjoying 5th and Vanguard. Can't wait to read this.

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I look forward to the book reading! Lee is a fascinating and talented writer!

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Talk

Sander

The interview from 2003 has a really cute photo of Lee as a girl, dressed to the nines.

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