

### Author Biography

Mark Willen's fiction draws on a career in journalism, an interest in ethics, and a graduate degree in creative writing.

Willen, author of the Jonas Hawke series of novels, received a BA in political science from Dartmouth and an MA in creative writing from Johns Hopkins.

After almost 40 years as a Washington journalist writing and editing stories about government and politics, he now divides his time between writing fiction and volunteer work. As a former graduate-level teacher of journalism ethics, he also tries to help people figure out the right thing to do in difficult situations through his blog, TalkingEthics.com

Visit Mark's website to learn more about Mark's books, to read his reviews of other contemporary novels, and to sign up for his newsletter.

markwillen.com



**Mark Willen** 

#### **Book Details**

**AUTHOR:** Mark Willen

**CATEGORY:** Mystery, Psychological Suspense/Thriller

**PUBLISHER:** Pen-L Publishing

Washington D.C. newspaper columnist Sam Turner, known to his readers as Mr. Ethics, faces his toughest moral dilemma yet: Can murder ever be justified?

That's the question posed to him by a mysterious young woman who says she is being stalked and harassed by an ex-lover too powerful to be stopped any other way. Sam knows that journalists should never get personally involved in a story, but he finds he is being drawn deeper and deeper into this one whether he wants it or not.

So when Senator Wade Morgan turns up murdered, Sam fears the worst. Worried about his own involvement, the man who normally has all the answers is now the one making questionable decisions.

As his investigation into the Senator's death begins to spin out of control, Sam finds he can't let go—even as the case grows more complicated and the threats against his life become more immediate.

With the fate of a young woman at stake and his own life in jeopardy, Sam can't back down until the killer—whoever that may be—is brought to justice. But this is D.C., and justice can be in short supply.

### Chapter Excerpt

#### **EXCERPTED FROM CHAPTER ONE**

Sam reads the email a second time, then a third, not sure whether to dismiss it as a prank or call the police. He prints it out and then reads it again, looking for some clue to the sender's frame of mind.

It's probably a stunt. Sam gets more than his share of cranks and weirdos. There's something about writing a newspaper column and calling yourself "Mr. Ethics" that attracts them. Some people just take offense at the notion of a guy sitting behind a computer trying to tell them there's a right way to behave.

He takes a deep breath and reads the email again, a blue felt-tipped pen in his hand. He studies the words, the grammar, even the sentence structure, looking for oddities or inconsistencies. Nothing jumps out.

He doesn't need this. Not now.

But then maybe he does. Maybe it's just what he needs. Something to take his mind off of Lisa, not unlike the migraine that makes you forget the sprained ankle, at least for a while.

He looks up from the sheet of paper in his hand and glances at the poster that hangs in front of him. It's filled with quotations on writing, and although it's the kind of thing a college kid would hang in a dorm room, he's always liked having it near. And he didn't have much else to stick on the wall two years ago when he was awarded his own office, a privilege he didn't especially want and still hasn't adjusted to. He loves the column, both for its intellectual challenge and for the feeling that he may be helping people, albeit in small ways, to make the world a better place.

He turns back to the email. He needs another opinion and knows it should come from his boss, but he doesn't want to lose control. Brenda would be cautious and call in the executive editor or a lawyer, maybe both, and that would mean days of delay. He's not going to use the email in his column, so whatever he does shouldn't come back to hurt the

#### Excerpt cont.

#### **EXCERPTED FROM CHAPTER ONE**

newspaper. He wants to help if he can, and he doesn't want anyone to get in his way. He's too old for bureaucratic gantlet.

But he does want another opinion.

He gets up, grabs the printout, and walks down the hall to the newsroom. It's eerily quiet, nothing like the newsrooms he grew up in. Gone is the chaos of constant motion and loud conversations carried on from opposite ends of the room. Gone too are the ugly metal desks shoved together so close you can smell the whisky on your neighbor's breath, hear him belch or argue with an official or a source on the phone. Some had hated it, but Sam thrived on the synergy it produced, the bonds it created, the shared excitement of doing something he believed—still believes—is important.

Now, in its place he sees what the younger reporters view as high-tech paradise, with desks crowded with laptops and other electronic devices. The reporters and editors are stuck in a maze of mini-cubicles with three-foot high, sound-absorbing barriers to create a sense of privacy. They need to stand up to see another person.

He's acutely aware of how much journalism has changed in the thirty years he's been practicing it. Not that it was ever pure and not that all its practitioners had less than selfish motives. But many did. Now it's nothing more than a business, a fight for internet clicks or a spot appearance on TV, just when facts and truth matter the most because they're in such short supply. It's one of the reasons he was ready to give up reporting and editing to take on the ethics column, but that's not to say he doesn't miss the thrill of unraveling an important story.

#### Sample Interview Questions

01

Ethical dilemmas play a key role in all of your books – why is that?

**02** 

How did you first get interested in ethics?

03

You also write a blog on ethics - tell us about that.

04

There are a few short scenes in the book involving Sam's graduate seminar in journalism ethics. I know you taught a similar seminar – are these scenes based on your classes?

Does your protagonist bear any resemblance to you?

06

Your novel includes a bit of commentary from Sam's point of view on journalism and the media – some of it complimentary, but more of it critical. Does that represent your personal view?

07

This is your fourth book – how would you compare it to the earlier novels?

08

You were a journalist for many years and have written a lot of nonfiction – what made you switch to fiction?

09

Which do you enjoy more; journalism or writing fiction?

10

What's your next project - will we be seeing more of Sam and Molly?

#### Target Audience

#### **FANS OF CRIME THRILLERS**

Readers who enjoy suspenseful mysteries will find themselves engrossed by this story that follows columnist Sam Turner's investigation as he faces his toughest moral dilemma yet, which causes him to begin making questionable decisions of his own.



THE QUESTION IS MURDER | MEDIA KIT

#### Main Characters

**Sam Turner:** Protagonist, a newspaper journalist, age 55, now writes a newspaper column providing advice on ethical issues. Also teaches journalism ethics at university graduate level. Separated from his wife of 30 years for two months, hoping to get back together with her, but she has asked for time apart. Over the course of the novel, he realizes it won't happen and he has to move on. Has grown children.

**Kelly Lancaster:** Age 26, ex-lover of Senator Wade Morgan, who is found murdered. Kelly has been stalked and harassed and the victim of revenge porn since her breakup with the senator. She wrote to Turner asking if it is ever ethical to commit murder (justified homicide), which makes her a prime suspect.

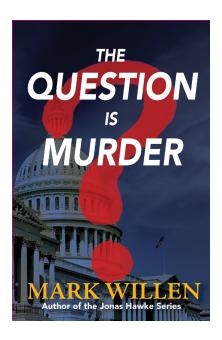
**Molly:** Age 28, newspaper reporter, protégé of Sam Turner. She and Sam lead the newspaper's investigation into the murder of Sen. Morgan.

**Lisa Turner:** Estranged wife of Sam Turner. She's a lawyer and Sam turns to her for advice and not so subtly in an attempt to rescue his marriage. They remain friendly.

**Peg Morgan:** Widow of the murdered senator, also a suspect.

**Carl Wasserman:** Referred to as Antifa Man, a far-left agitator who threatened the senator and is also a suspect in the murder.

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