

Updates from the **ANIMAL KINGDOM**

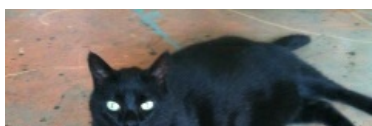
Did everyone have a spooky and safe Halloween?



Autumn is my favorite season. Aren't these gourds simply stunning?



My talented great-niece Jordan just celebrated her 18th birthday.



Dear Friends and Readers,

October is a big month of birthdays in my family. My mother and grandmother shared a birthday, the 24th. My brother David turned a page Oct. 30, and Jennifer and Jordan both celebrate Oct. 7 and Oct. 6, respectively. This was a landmark year for Jordan. She turned 18.

Fall is my favorite season, and October is the first of autumn, at least down in the South and if we're lucky. This year, it seems as if the month has simply flown by. October has been dry and lovely—perfect. But now it's time to put in the winter rye and we need some rain. The hay is in the barn, the pastures are browning—old man winter is letting us know he's on the way.

I spent a lot of the month finishing *BONFIRE OF THE VANITIES*, the 2012 *Bones* book. Roscoe was a hit in [BONES OF A FEATHER](#), so I'm hoping you guys will take to a wily black cat named Pluto. As you know, I have my very own Coal Shaft Haines, and Pluto's character is based on him.

Some people view black cats as an ill omen, but I've had one for most of my life. When I first moved to the farm, I had the incredible E.A. Poe. He was very loving, but he would also bite my ankles in the morning when I got up if I didn't give him his breakfast fast enough. Coal Shaft is just as determined about things, but he is more demanding when he wants love. He head butts me and makes his wishes known.

Coal Shaft came to me from the neighbor's house. They found him seriously injured in their garage, and they didn't really want him. He'd hung his front leg in his collar (putting collars on cats can be dangerous so get the breakaway kind). The nerves to the leg had been damaged, and the leg was seriously atrophied and unusable. Because the front leg was extended beside his mouth, he hadn't been able to eat for quite some time.

We thought at first the leg would have to be amputated, but Dr. Lynne Leonard worked with Coal Shaft and felt we could try to save his leg. It was a real mess. Every joint was frozen and twisted. We had to break up a lot of scar tissue, and Lynne sedated the cat a few times so she could limber the leg without so much pain. She also used acupuncture.

Jeannie Holmes ([BLOOD LAW](#), [BLOOD SECRETS](#)) was my student at the time and she came out to help me give the cat therapy. We would work with



Coal Shaft poses for the camera.



So happy to announce that SKIN DANCER is now available in both the Amazon Kindle Store and in Barnes and Noble's NookBook Store.



What are you going to do with your leftover Halloween candy?

him, flexing his joints, gently breaking up the scar tissue and manipulating the leg, trying to get it to work again.

Lo and behold we were successful. It is still amazing to me that his poor, deformed leg could be brought back. Now he has full use of it (and trust me, he uses it to bat the snot out of the dogs if they are not suitably subservient!).

So Coal Shaft ended up living with me. The only real evidence of his terrible ordeal is the fact that he is a too-plump kitty. I think days of starving messed up his metabolism (he does not eat a lot, but he is still portly). And he doesn't care to go outside. He might stroll through the roses on lizard patrol, but he wants to come right back inside, which is fine with me.

So now you know the story of Coal Shaft Haines and the fictional character, Pluto, who is based on him.

In other book news, [SKIN DANCER](#) is up and available on the [B&N](#) and [Amazon](#) sites for \$2.99. I tried for two weeks to upload it to the ibookstore and Google Books—without success. So I have turned it over to professionals (that would be Priya!) to do so. I have no talent for this.

Plans for [Daddy's Girl Weekend](#) go forward. I'm getting excited. A lot of people are saying they're coming. I know we're going to have a blast. So save the weekend after Easter for the Mobile gathering. And remember the theme night will be "What Would Jitty Wear?"

Dean James (writing as Miranda James) will be with us again, and he will have another new book out about that time. Dean has hit the NYT bestseller list with the last two "[Cat in the Stacks](#)" mysteries. It couldn't happen to a nicer guy, and a lot of that is due to you guys who bought his book the first week it came out. Thank you!

More news next month. I'll be in West Point for a library event. I was supposed to be there earlier in the summer, but as Eugene Walter would say, "Life intervened."

Don't eat too much candy tonight! And don't open the door to anyone wearing a hockey mask and carrying a knife. That's just good advice for every night of the year.

Love,
Carolyn

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