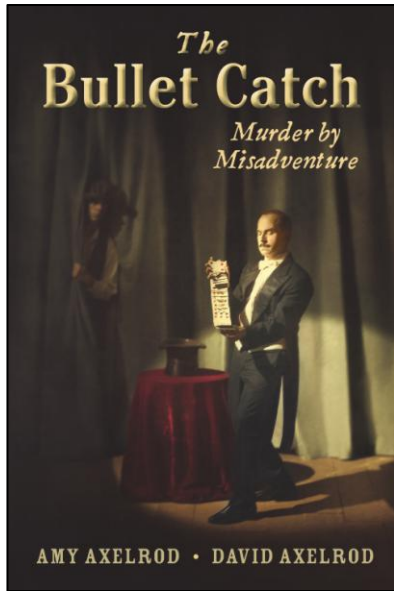


The Bullet Catch

Murder by Misadventure



A conversation with creators
Amy Axelrod and
David Axelrod

This spellbinding novel chronicles the coming-of-age of a resourceful young man who must refashion his destiny amid murder and misadventure in the golden age of magic.

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Amy and David, please tell us about your new book, *THE BULLET CATCH: Murder by Misadventure*.

THE BULLET CATCH: Murder by Misadventure tells the story of Leo, a boy whose life has been shaped by circumstance and bad choices. Leo survives in 1917 New York City by being a gifted pickpocket. Fate leads Leo into the world of magic, where magicians lie, steal, cheat and maybe even murder their way to the top.

Where did you get your inspiration for this story?

The first draft of the book was written in 2006 and was much, much different from what wound up being published. There were so many twists and turns and different viewpoints in making the book that it would be impossible to point to one inspiration. But we both have a real love of magic.

***THE BULLET CATCH* takes place in New York City during the WWI era. Tell us about your research into New York and magic during this time period.**

We did a ton of research, and there was always more to do. We combed through the Houdini archives of the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas in Austin. They

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had news clippings and personal correspondence and all artwork. We looked online at old maps of New York to trace the elevated train routes. We constantly had to convert costs of things into 1917 dollars. Sometimes we would run into a situation where we didn't even know if a certain technology existed, like radio. Radio did exist back then, but it was very early in its use. Most people didn't know about it. Every part of the book needed to be researched.

In *THE BULLET CATCH*, Leo becomes an apprentice of a has-been magician, Barzini, and uses Harry Houdini's *The Right Way to Do Wrong* as a reference for survival. Tell us about your own interest in magic and the life of Houdini and other renowned magicians.

As a family we would go to magic shows frequently. We'd go to the circus and see whatever big magic act was coming through town, or in New York. Old New York has its own allure, and the golden age of magic is equally as intriguing. It conjures up images of fantastic stage shows and mysterious people. Becoming interested in that world is very easy.

Tell us about the process of collaborating and writing this book together. What did you find most challenging and most rewarding?

Writing the book was hard work. We alternated writing chapters and then passed those back innumerable times for edits and comments and tweaks. But in the end we were both really happy with the final result.

What do you hope readers gain from *THE BULLET CATCH*?

Leo is put to some big challenges in the book, and he grows into a different person — one who is more understanding and more complex. Maybe readers will see his transformation and think about their own lives and friendships a little bit. Or maybe they will really enjoy the story and have fun with the book. Both would be great.

What made you decide to become authors?

Amy: I began to write when David was an infant. I'd read to him and his older brother and was always buying children's books for them. Creating stories for children was a natural extension of this early part of my life.

David: At some point I realized it was the only way I could get away with whatever I wanted.

What advice would you give to young authors?

David: There are really only two pieces of advice to give to any writer, young or old: read a lot and write a lot. But I might also add: don't be afraid of nonfiction. It's not boring.

Amy: David said it all: read, read, read and read in all genres.

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AMY AXELROD was born and grew up in Massachusetts. She studied sociology and German at Brandeis University and received a master's degree in linguistics from Columbia University. She has written one novel for young readers, *Your Friend in Fashion, Abby Shapiro*, and many picture books, including the best-selling *Pigs Will Be Pigs* math series. She lives in the Hudson Valley in New York State with her husband.



DAVID AXELROD, Amy's son, grew up in New York's Hudson Valley. He has written several critically acclaimed books for young adults under pseudonyms and currently works in book publishing. He lives in New York City with his wife.

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