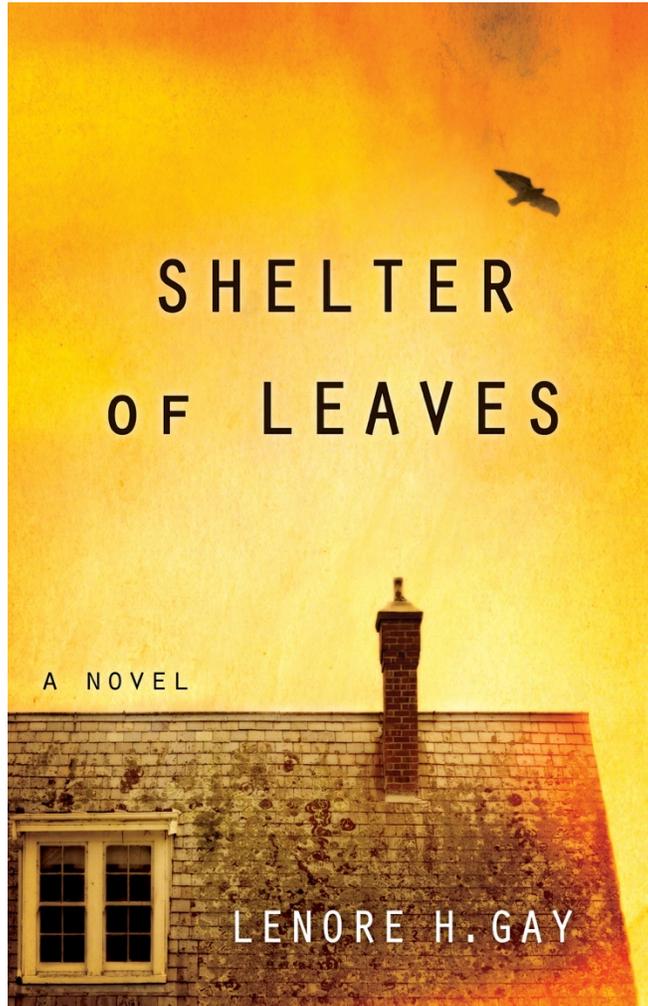


Media Kit

Shelter of Leaves
A Novel

by
Lenore H. Gay



She Writes Press



August 9, 2016
ISBN 978-1631521010

“*Shelter of Leaves* is written with a confident hand. The book blends humanity, story and style into a seamless weave of shadow and light. Not just action, not just character work, Gay mines every great trick of storytelling for a fast, yet deep, tale of a world and people on the brink.”

—David L. Robbins, *NY Times Bestselling Author*

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Publication Month: August 2016

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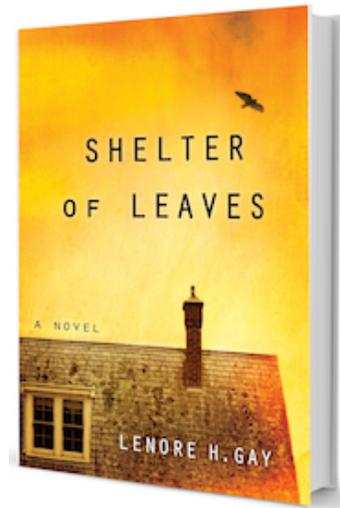
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Shelter of Leaves

Former Virginia Commonwealth University Faculty Member's Debut Novel Tells an American Story of Trauma, Family Secrets and Survival Set Against Dystopian Chaos

Every day the news is filled with images of people fleeing a battleground—running for their lives to escape war, terrorist attack, or violent insurrection. In America, it is easy imagine a peaceful life interrupted. But what happens for someone already suffering from trauma?

Shelter of Leaves (She Writes Press / ISBN 978-1631521010 / August 9, 2016 / Paperback \$16.95) is author Lenore H. Gay's debut novel, a captivating tale about one such character who is already coping with PTSD when bombings collapse the social order. Amid the horror of chaos, she must trust strangers to find shelter.



On Memorial Day, a series of bomb explosions shuts down major cities across the US. Her apartment in ruins, Sabine flees Washington DC and begins a grueling journey on foot that brings her to West Virginia, where she finds safety at an abandoned farmhouse with other refugees. For Sabine, family is a vague memory—she can't even remember her last name. Without an identity, she hides, but later slowly begins to recall her past and wonders if her family is alive. Even in harrowing times, Sabine's desires to belong and to be loved pull her away from shelter.

With literary prowess and a bold new voice, Gay sets twenty-first-century mores into sharp focus with keenly drawn characters. Informed by her experience as a Licensed Professional Counselor, Gay's narrative offers subtle insight into the human mind and spirit, and the longing to recover meaning in the aftermath of trauma. Readers who enjoyed Laura van den Berg's *Find Me* and Greg Hrbek's *Not on Fire, but Burning*, will be eager to read this novel about a deep personal mystery and a dark family tangle, set in a post-apocalyptic America. *Shelter of Leaves* delivers a unique and powerful human story that matches the pulse of our turbulent time.

#

Order Online: *Shelter of Leaves* is can be ordered now at [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com), [BN.com](https://www.bn.com), and [IndieBound](https://www.indiebound.com). Author Lenore H. Gay will be on a Fall Book Tour, giving readings at bookstores and libraries in her home city of Richmond, Virginia, and in other cities in the Mid-Atlantic States.

Praise for Shelter of Leaves

"In this taut drama we struggle along with Sabine who finds the strength to power on in a dystopian world, the mess and carnage of life mounting, as she rediscovers her identity."

—**Diana Y. Paul, author of *Things Unsaid: A Novel***

"...danger is ever present in the threat of intruders; the ongoing, nameless war; and the return of Sabine's memories. Gay's fast-paced, thrilling debut novel is ideal for lovers of post-apocalyptic fiction and *The Walking Dead*."

—**BOOKLIST REVIEW**

"Gay's characters all come across as everyday people who, like most, have a secret or two they keep to themselves. Her use of real cities that people will recognize also helps bring this story to life and give it the realistic qualities that will leave readers wondering: What if this really happened?"

—**SAN FRANCISCO BOOK REVIEW**

About the Author



Lenore H. Gay is a Licensed Professional Counselor with master's degrees in sociology and rehabilitation counseling. She has worked in several agencies, psychiatric hospitals and for ten years she maintained a private practice. She is retired from the faculty of the Virginia Commonwealth University, Department of Rehabilitation, where she taught graduate students and coordinated the internship program.

Now a full time writer, The Virginia Center of the Creative Arts (VCCA) has awarded her two writing fellowships. Her poems and short stories have appeared in several journals. Her essay "Mistresses of Magic" was published in the anthology *In Praise of Our Teachers* (Beacon Press). Her short story "The Hobo" won first place in *Style Weekly's* annual fiction competition. She is a volunteer reader at *Blackbird: An Online Journal for Literature & The Arts*.

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Shelter of Leaves

A Novel by Lenore H. Gay

Excerpt

1431 Word Excerpt from Chapter One

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DOGS OF SANITY

May 26, 2014. Memorial Day.

The last thing Sabine remembered was a flash coming through the window and a shudder like colliding subway cars. She woke sprawled on the floor, unsure where she was. She stumbled to the window. Buildings across the street swayed and her apartment building shook. She ran from room to room, avoiding flying glass, yelling. “Go, go, get out before the building collapses!”

At her bedroom door she froze. A backpack hung on the doorknob. As if from a great distance, she watched her hand pick up the backpack, toss in some clothes, then stash notebooks, cell phone, and wallet into the pack’s side pockets. She grabbed her jacket and favorite shawl from the closet and sprinted down the hall past the elevators. She lurched for the stairway exit, took the stairs two at a time, and burst out the front door. Against the building she caught her breath; her head pounded and her legs wobbled.

A body splayed across the bottom step. Shreds of green cloth came into focus, hanging from a charred leg. Half of the man’s cranium was missing. The mess of skull, pink matter, and blood made Sabine turn away. A dark-green uniform with gold braiding: it was the doorman’s. Samuel. Yesterday he’d told her all about taking his aging dog to the vet and they’d reminisced about pets they’d owned as children. Samuel.

She moved closer to his body and searched for something to hold on to, besides his kindness—always smiling, and opening and closing doors for others. She found it in his curled hands. Good-bye, Samuel.

Crumbling buildings. An assault of smoke and sirens. Burnt bodies sprawled on the sidewalk. A white van burned and rocked furiously, a dance of smoke and flames. Across the street a young woman leaned against a building, clutching her entrails, sliding sideways. Sabine staggered through a maze of scorched cars spewing the stench of oil and coolant, the poisoned air of batteries and tires. The reek of gasoline.

She stayed in the street to avoid falling debris. Drowned in panic, she wanted to move fast but couldn’t think with the screams of ambulances and fire engines. West could be the safer direction. East might mean people squeezing onto a margin of coastal land, the beach and the ocean thick with drowned people, sluggish waves rolling corpses onto fetid sand. Please don’t let me be the sole person left alive. Samuel’s gone. What a nice man. She would never know what happened to his dog, his only family. She wondered about her family. Did she have a family?

Out of habit, she flipped open her cell phone and punched the first contact. The name wasn’t familiar, but that didn’t matter, since the phone didn’t have a signal. Did neighbors in her apartment building need help? She couldn’t picture anyone; she had no memory of any names. Samuel was the only name she recalled.

Go back and check. She dodged debris all the way back, but couldn't enter the building. The fifth floor was blown open to the street. Her neighbor's apartment looked like a dollhouse living room: black leather furniture, an upended table, a refrigerator on its side. She turned, not wanting to see her personal belongings exposed. Go west.

She wanted a map. If you had a map, you couldn't really be lost.

A black SUV with a rifle stuck out of a back window smashed into an ATM. The SUV backed over a man crossing the street, then leapt forward to ram the machine again. Two men jumped out of the vehicle and rummaged through ATM debris while the driver shoved the rifle out the window. The man the van ran over lay bleeding; she didn't help. Would his raincoat fit her? No, she wouldn't steal a dead man's coat. Relief felt like joy, the robbers in the SUV weren't interested in hurting her.

A cramp caught her gut. No time to lean forward, she vomited onto her clothes.

A wet rag for her shirt and face. She stumbled forward. In a convenience store halfway down the block, she grabbed three packs of baby wipes, packs of gum and Nabs, and oranges and a banana, hoping their thick skins made them safe to eat. From the canned food aisle a teenage boy yelled, "More bombs! Run, run! More bombs!"

A kid wouldn't know *about bombs*. *He wants all the food for himself*. She pulled two jars of peanut butter from the shelf.

The image of the boy moved closer, running at her, screaming in her face. Something swung into her vision. Pain in her head, and the white linoleum spun. Then nothing, until she pushed herself off the floor. She stumbled toward cases of water bottles stacked on the floor. She took four bottles and stuffed them into her backpack. No cashier. She took off running.

She slowed her pace, cleaned her face with baby wipes, and dabbed at her shirt. Something had happened back in the grocery store. The wild look on the teenage boy's face when he ran up to her. Too fast to keep track of anything else.



Saturday morning, or maybe Sunday, she woke in a ditch beside a suburban road. Disoriented, lying in dirt and weeds, she mulled over a dream: she'd been wandering through an enormous park resembling DC's Rock Creek Park. Baby carriages flew through the air; children's legs and arms dangled from trees, small skulls surrounding the base of the trees like pale, grotesque flowers. She hadn't cared about the dead children, had been intent only on wandering, looking for more sights.

She was turning into a monster, uninterested in helping and oblivious to dying children. She detested children.

Drink water. Get up. She scrambled out of the ditch, turned her back on the rising sun, and set out. A piece of spearmint gum removed the foul taste in her mouth but not the chemical smell permeating the air. Since leaving the city, she'd discovered neighborhoods untouched by the blasts; in other areas, houses appeared whole but uninhabited. Had people put their cars in the garage, locked their windows and doors, and hidden inside, waiting for the danger to subside?

She came to a well-kept neighborhood and tried to convince herself she'd visited one of the large houses when she was a child. Hard to resist knocking on a door when the angle of a road or a shade of brick on a house stirred dim memories.

Christmas. The season she wanted her country to be celebrating. She didn't want to live through a summer of maimed people and corpses. How wonderful to drive her car into this neighborhood, park, and walk into one of these houses. Her parents, brothers, and sisters were gathered by the Christmas tree. Cinnamon and pine smells. Someone played carols on the piano, like in the movies. She'd entered a happy new life, where the chaos was merely a bad dream.

But she'd never visited these houses, because she didn't have a family. Or, if she did, she had no idea what they looked like, or where they were. If they were even still alive.

Five or six people in a front yard, talking in a tight group. She called out with a wave and walked over to them. She longed to join their picnic, to eat and talk and hear the news. But the adults either frowned or looked at her blankly, and most turned their backs. The first time she was shunned, she'd dismissed the reaction as an aberration. But then it had happened again. Twice children had run to greet her, but were stopped by the adults.

Eight days without much food, weak with hunger and enticed by the smell of hamburgers and steaks on the grills, she had to force herself not to approach anyone. The suburbanites appeared ordinary and sane, yet they gave her furtive glances, some outright stares. They had access to the news and knew things she didn't. It must be Sunday, or Monday. Her body reeked and her hair smelled worse. She ran her hand through the greasy tangles, wondering how she looked. *A wild-eyed hag in eight days*. If a woman walking alone created hostility and suspicion, only eight days—or was it six or ten days?—after the explosions, she dreaded what would come.

Find shelter indoors. Keep priorities straight. Do not think about dying. Think about something uplifting. Okay, okay, uplifting: at least I wasn't near a window during the explosion.

She had her life, water, and an intact face.

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