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Long Gone Man

BY [DEATHBECOMESHER](#) · SEPTEMBER 9, 2013 · [POST A COMMENT](#)

FILED UNDER [CANADIAN CRIME FICTION](#), [GULF ISLANDS](#), [LONG GONE MAN](#), [PHYLLIS SMALLMAN](#), [SHERRI TRAVIS](#), [SINGER BROWN](#), [THRILLER](#), [UNHANGED ARTHUR AWARD](#)



Written by **Phyllis Smallman** – The Canadian crime writer Phyllis

Smallman has already garnered a loyal following for her series of mystery novels featuring Florida bartender Sherri Travis. In 2007, the author was the first recipient of the Crime Writers of Canada's Unhanged Arthur Award for unpublished authors, and was shortlisted for the Crime Writers' Association's Debut Dagger.

Long Gone Man is the first in a new series featuring Singer Brown. And what a great character Singer is! She isn't a private eye, a police officer or even a psychologist. Singer is... cue drum roll... a singer! We first meet her as she drives her run down old van, nicknamed The Beast, off the ferry at Glenphiddie Island, in the Pacific Northwest.

The fog is thick and Singer is a newcomer to the island, but she has a destination in mind and is determined to get there, fog or no fog. The Beast contains all of Singer's worldly possessions and is her home, so she is devastated when she manages to skid, leaving her beloved Beastie teetering in a very precarious position at the edge of a precipitous drop. It's a dark and dangerous night, but Singer hitches up her voluminous Indian cotton skirt, shakes her greying locks and sets off in search of help and shelter.

She is on Glenphiddie Island to find the man who ruined her life. But when Singer eventually arrives at his home, he is already dead – and his newly widowed young wife appears to be holding the murder weapon. Lauren says she didn't do it, and Singer is inclined to believe her, but it soon transpires that there are a number of people who could have committed the murder of John Vibald, leader of the rock band Vortex, better known to Singer as Johnny Vibes. He was adept at making enemies.

The scene is set for a good old fashioned whodunnit, with Singer and Lauren both high on the list of police suspects. We readers know it wasn't them, but we're kept guessing right to the end in a well-drawn plot designed to confuse and deceive. We even have a denouement worthy of Agatha Christie, with all the suspects being summoned to a meeting at the isolated Vibald house, where the murderer is dramatically revealed.

The author deftly drip-feeds us Singer's back story as the novel progresses, and she is to be congratulated for creating such a fascinating and engaging character who is more than capable of taking centre stage. Singer is middle aged, dresses like a hippy and is homeless except for her beloved Beast. She keeps the wolf from the door by busking and much prefers the hustle bustle of the city to the tranquil rural Gulf Islands setting she finds herself in. Mind you, with all the drama that unfolds, tranquil is perhaps the wrong word to use about Glenphiddie Island. The book takes its title from Vortex's greatest hit of the same name – and that song is definitely at the heart of this most enjoyable story. Singer is also mourning a long gone man of her own – a fact which makes her all the more engaging and loveable.

The book is out now for Kindle and iBook, and on 17 September in print. The iBook version is just £3.99 at the moment so if you have an iPad grab that one. I can't wait to see where Singer's adventures will take us next!

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Print/Kindle/iBook

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CFL Rating: 5 Stars