

Mash together some strawberries and pesticides, a beautiful teacher, a priest, and a demigod, true love and wild sex, ghosts, Native Americans, illegal immigrants, gang bangers, surfers, billionaire ag boys, and salmon. Stir it up in a national marine sanctuary. What have you got? How do you spell D\*E\*A\*T\*H?

# *THE DEATH OF THE GECKO, Fruit of the Devil*

An Eco-Thriller from California's Central Coast

.... coming soon

by Mary Flodin

[maryflo@bluebirdcreek.net](mailto:maryflo@bluebirdcreek.net)

831 423-2824

**A thriller based on the true story of parents and teachers who fought back against the corporations poisoning school children... and it's not over yet.**

**More than a Roman á Clef... A large and mythic tale, infused with the romance and legendary beauty of the Pacific Northwest.**

*"El Gecko? That's his placa – his gang tag, you know. A street name. Kind of like a nickname his homeboys call him."*

**comparables: Erin Brokovich, Nevada Barr, Sylvia Day and Margaret Coel go salsa dancing with C.J. Box, the Lorax, and Neil Gaiman's *American Gods*.**

**What would you do if you knew that your child were being exposed daily at school to a known Category 1 acute toxic chemical – a carcinogen, estrogen disruptor, neurotoxin, mutagen and more? That is happening right now in hundreds of schools throughout California.**

**The body of a murdered priest** is discovered at the mouth of a river that flows into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary. A year before the priest is murdered, at summer's end, 1998, Father Francis Hilman, known to the local gang bangers as El Gecko, is assisting his friend, Sheriff's Detective Sergeant Charlie Rosa, in the investigation of the gang-related murder of a child. The investigation leads to Prudenciana Elementary School where female protagonist, Ms. Aurora Bourne teaches.

Beautiful and intelligent yet naïve and emotionally wounded Ms. Aurora Bourne, a surfer, environmentalist, artist, mystic, feminist, and bliss bunny, dabbles in all things eclectic and edgy that her Central California coastal town has to offer. She is immediately attracted to El Gecko, the handsome and ethical priest, who is bound not only by his vows to the Church, but also by his genetic and cultural ties to the Ohlone Native American community of Indian Canyon.

As the new school year begins, Aurora and her colleagues realize that the strawberry fields surrounding their school are being fumigated with a pesticide that has turned the school into a cancer cluster and is endangering

the salmon in the nearby creek. But when Aurora and her colleagues begin to ask questions, they are silenced by the school administration and threatened by powerful and mysterious corporate forces.

El Gecko cooperates with his friend Detective Sergeant Rosa and California Fish and Game Warden Kelli Cavanaugh to uncover a drug and human trafficking ring, and he aligns with Aurora and the people of the river valley in a fight to save the salmon and the valley from billionaire ag boys.

The teacher and the priest realize that not only does the valley need to transition from petrochemical agribusiness to organic farming, but the farmland itself must be saved from development pressures that threaten to pave over much of the fertile land and convert it into a bedroom community of strip malls and gas stations for nearby booming Silicon Valley.

Ms. Bourne and Father Francis try to persuade a prominent and wealthy farm family, William and Malone Baker and their spoiled son Billy, to cooperate with the Open Space Alliance and protect their farmland with a conservation easement. But danger mounts when word comes down from Sean Stark, billionaire head of the powerful multinational Diecal Pesticide Corporation, a subsidiary of Mitsinto, that the teacher and the priest must be silenced.

The plot threads of multiple crimes and conflicts weave together and tighten in a nexus that climaxes when the priest is murdered. The reader finally learns which one of the many antagonists threatening the priest actually pulls the trigger, and connections between the underworld of gangs, drugs, human trafficking and high level corporate crime are revealed. The last scene of the novel returns the reader full circle to the discovery of the priest's body on the beach.

In a surprising and romantic denouement, Aurora realizes that the stakes she faces are far more profound than merely her own personal life or death. The forces she is up against – Global Climate Chaos, spiritual bankruptcy, and the poisoning of the planet – threaten to disrupt the very fabric of life on Earth. Will Aurora find the courage to pursue the truth about who murdered the priest, what is poisoning the valley and its people, and why? Will she live to tell the story? And will she be able to inspire others to take action?