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SILENCING SAM

A Novel

JULIE KRAMER

“VERDICT Best-selling author Kramer (*Stalking Susan; Missing Mark*) has delivered her finest Spartz novel to date; fiction readers will love this riveting, action-packed journey into television news investigations.”—starred, LIBRARY JOURNAL on *Silencing Sam*

**“Riley Spartz is a classic spunky investigator. She’ll have readers cheering for her gutsy determination to stop the killings—and boost her ratings.”
—USA TODAY on *Stalking Susan***

In her timely and provocative new thriller, **SILENCING SAM** (Atria Books; \$23.99; June 22, 2010), national award-winning investigative journalist Julie Kramer explores the fine line between news and gossip, an issue that the media struggles to resolve in these days of celebrity journalism, 24/7 twittering, and endless blogging.

In this latest sweeps month quest, TV reporter Riley Spartz must secretly investigate the murder of a newspaper columnist, whose sensationalist gossip items have given many targets -- including Riley herself -- good reason to want him silenced. As she digs deep to find the killer and clear her name, Riley's nose for news leads her to a controversial wind farm where gigantic turbines meant to ease the energy crisis are being blown up. Is the bomber trying to keep America dependent on foreign oil? Or are eco-terrorists behind the explosions? Dying bats and a headless corpse also find their way to the top of the newscasts as Riley battles for ratings and tries to restore her reputation.

"I wanted to write a topical thriller that incorporates some of the real life controversies in the news," Kramer said. "Stories about Tiger Woods, John Edwards, and Michael Jackson have put the gossip versus news debate on the front lines of journalism. And I was also curious about all the wind

farms going up across the Midwest and decided those environmental issues would make a fresh backdrop for my next book."

An avid reader and a veteran news producer, Kramer tired of fictional TV reporters always being portrayed as obnoxious secondary characters in books, who could be killed off whenever the plot started dragging. So she decided to do something about it. Her first novel, *Stalking Susan*, featured a TV reporter as the heroine.

"I wrote *Stalking Susan* because I'm a great fan of thrillers with strong female protagonists in interesting jobs," Kramer said. "I thought why should prosecutors have Linda Fairstein's Alex Cooper, medical examiners have Patricia Cornwell's Kay Scarpetta, and forensic anthropologists have Kathy Reichs' Tempe Brennan, while we TV news types have no fictional heroine? So I made one up."

And she succeeded fabulously! TV reporter Riley Spartz, the star of Kramer's debut novel, *Stalking Susan*, and its sequel, *Missing Mark*, is smart, funny, compulsively likable—and has readers clamoring for her next adventure.

Stalking Susan garnered high praise when it was published in 2008. The *Chicago Tribune* called it a "dazzling debut" and *Publishers Weekly* gave it a starred review claiming that "readers will look forward to seeing a lot more of the appealing Riley." Even *Kirkus Reviews* was impressed, saying "Kramer writes with heart and pizzazz. Her past as a TV producer lends authority to an entertaining story." *Stalking Susan* met with acclaim, winning the Minnesota Book Award and the RT Reviewers' Choice Award for Best First Mystery, as well as being a finalist for the Mary Higgins Clark, the Anthony, the Barry, and the Shamus Awards.

Missing Mark, Kramer's second novel starring the irrepressible Riley, was also well received. *People* magazine called it "a crowd pleaser," while literary powerhouse Tami Hoag exclaimed, "A fast pace, a smart heroine, and fresh voice, Julie Kramer has what it takes to keep readers turning pages."

IN THIS TOWN, GOSSIP KILLS

What does one dead gossip columnist have to do with wind turbines, dead bats, and a hot news story centered on a headless corpse? Investigative TV reporter Riley Spartz is about to find out!

She keeps a sharp eye out for stories that will boost Channel 3's faltering ratings as her—albeit long-distance—relationship with Homeland Security advisor Nick Garnett continues to develop. That is, until Sam Pierce, a local newspaper gossip writer and verbal terrorist, sets his sights on her. The latest victim of his "Piercing Eyes" column, Riley confronts him and throws a drink in his face after he

implies that she was unfaithful to her dead husband. When Sam is found shot to death with the column about Riley stuffed in his mouth, she is immediately placed on the top of the list of “persons of interest” in the case.

Meanwhile, someone is blowing up wind turbines near her home town and she is plagued by a new hotshot colleague who scoops her on a story about a headless corpse discovered in a local park. In the world of television ratings, dead bodies are better than toppled turbines, and Clay Burrell, the new reporter, is getting all the accolades. Determined to show him up, Riley focuses on the wind farm story that has a surprising twist—the bodies of countless dead bats are littering the area.

As evidence mounts against Riley in the murder case, she must race against time to discover who framed her as well as find out who is behind the wind turbine bombings. In typical Riley fashion, her investigative intuition leads her to uncover one lead after another on all three stories—until she is finally catapulted into an explosive showdown not fit for television audiences.

Wildly entertaining and replete with sharply drawn characters from the world of television news, *SILENCING SAM* once again proves that Julie Kramer is a masterful storyteller who has joined the ranks of today’s top mystery and thriller writers.

Julie Kramer is a freelance producer for NBC’s Today show and formerly ran WCCO-TV’s nationally award-winning investigative unit in Minneapolis. Her debut thriller, *Stalking Susan*, won the Minnesota Book Award and the RT Reviewers’ Choice Award for Best First Mystery. It was also a finalist for the Mary Higgins Clark, the Anthony, the Barry, and the Shamus Awards. *Missing Mark*, Kramer’s second novel featuring Riley Spartz, also received raves. She currently lives with her family in Minnesota. To learn more about Julie Kramer and her work, visit her website at www.juliekramerbooks.com

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By Julie Kramer

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