The Golden Girl vs. The Outsider: Author David Benjamin Explores Small-Town Culture and Rivalry in Jim Otis Crime Series



LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, September 28, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Small-town politics is almost always about who someone knows and where they came from. In Hercules, Wisconsin, a tight-knit community where long-standing connections make it easy for locals to get a pass, the least trusted inhabitant is almost always the outsider. Author and veteran journalist David Benjamin has turned these everyday dynamics into the engine of his acclaimed six-book crime series, following the release of its latest installment. At its center is an ongoing battle of wits between Police Chief Jim Otis, a disgraced former Chicago detective rebuilding his career in a suspicious town, and his ultimate nemesis, teenage mastermind Josie Dobbs.

“In a small town, an outsider is automatically suspicious, but a local with deep roots can be a total rogue and still get a free pass,” says Benjamin. “The bartender carries their tab, and the local cops look the other way. Most crime fiction fixates on big-city grit, but I wanted to explore the unique, fascinating world of small-town mischief and the people who pull it off.”

Raised in Tomah, Wisconsin, where his father was a well-known local bartender, Benjamin grew up accustomed to a life where everybody knows your name. Years later, he experienced the exact opposite dynamic as editor of the Mansfield News in historic Massachusetts, where he served as the ultimate outsider.

“I knew from the start that I could never fit in, so I didn’t try,” Benjamin recalls. “I focused on being the community’s tribune, covering the news and holding local politicians to account. Besides, there were plenty of folks who didn’t care where I came from.”

That personal duality shaped the two central figures of his series: Chief Otis, the isolated

lawman, and Josie Dobbs, the local high school golden girl who can do no wrong.

“Making Jim Otis the outsider came naturally because it’s a position I’ve occupied most of my life,” Benjamin explains. “The secret is not to try so hard to fit in that you come off as phony.”

Otis’s isolation makes him uniquely vulnerable to Josie, who weaponizes her flawless reputation against the defrocked Chicago cop across the series, serving as his primary antagonist. Benjamin says Josie’s character is timeless and indicative of the type of drama that happens in small towns where crime is sparse and gossip is plentiful.

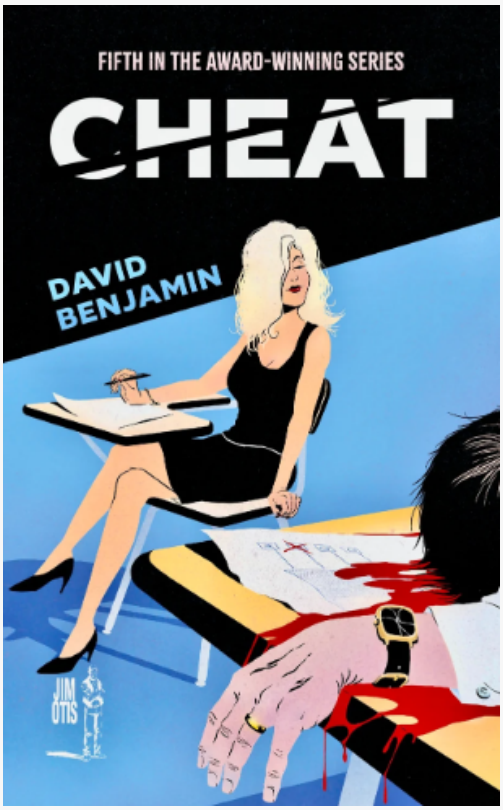
“I love that girl; she solves so many narrative problems,” Benjamin admits. “She seems sweet, but she's brilliant and ruthless, like Patty McCormack in The Bad Seed. She’s elusive, like Professor Moriarty, so she keeps coming back. Readers can’t resist a really good Bad Girl.”

The captivating storyline that follows has earned Benjamin international acclaim.

Reviewers praise the series, with Keith Mbuya of Readers’ Favorite writing in his review for Woman Trouble: “I could not stop laughing at the way the strong, lively personalities of the townsfolk and their rumor mill interfered with the chief’s job and personal life… This story has all the ingredients of a great Hollywood small country-town crime comedy movie.”

“Readers can’t get enough of the Jim Otis Crime Series,” Benjamin concludes. “Whether you come from a small town or a bustling city, these heartfelt narratives capture the essence of community and remind us of a simpler way of life.”





The Jim Otis Crime Series is available on Amazon and all other major book retailers. Click here to order copies: https://lastkidbooks.com/benj-book-list/

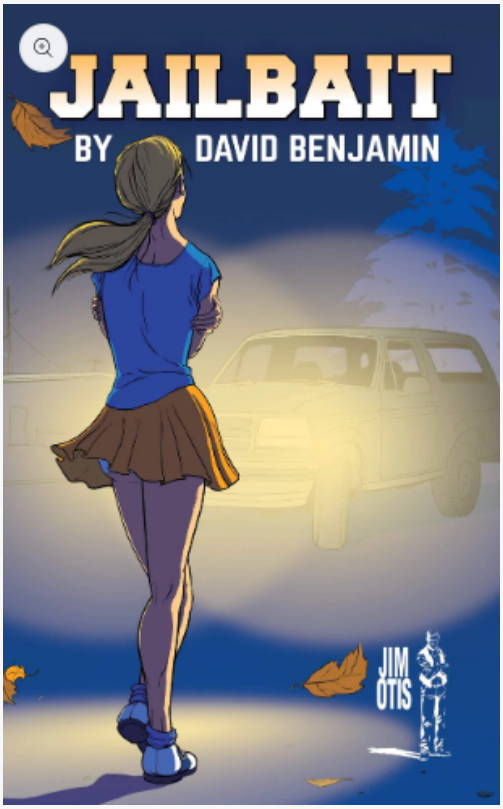
About the Author

David Benjamin is a novelist, essayist, and veteran journalist born and raised in Tomah, Wisconsin. His career spans small-town newsrooms in New England, metropolitan centers across North America, and international assignments in Europe and Asia. He is the author of several works exploring small-town culture, Midwestern history, and human quirkiness.

To learn more, please click here: https://lastkidbooks.com/

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