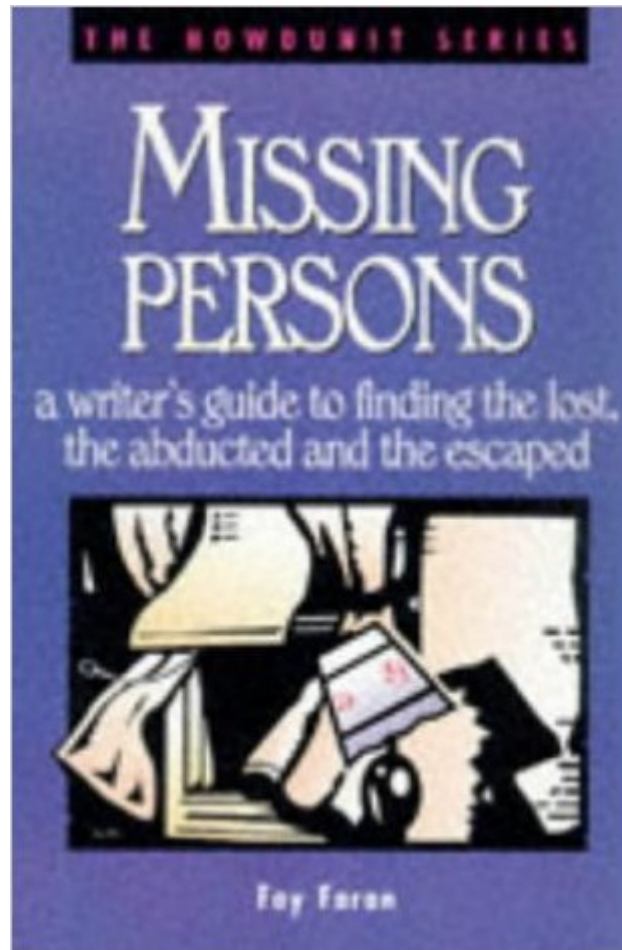


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# Missing Persons: A Writer's Guide To Finding The Lost, The Abducted And The Escaped (Howdunit Writing)



## Synopsis

With *Missing Persons* in hand you'll find the types that commonly become PIs - ex-cops, macho criminal wannabes, reporters; the easiest people to find (men, property owners and professionals) and the hardest (women, scoundrels and those with common names); profiles of the missing and profiles of those searching; how and why people hide; what can be gleaned from public record; secret and not-so-secret databases; and the lowdown on interviewing, surveillance and the benefits of a good scam. *Missing Persons* goes beyond the basic search, and details the process of looking for someone, typical clients and the reaction once the missing is found. There's more than a presentation of facts here. Faron backs up her clues with anecdotes from Rat Dog case files. As with any good whodunit, Faron's engaging style and true-life adventures will have you turning pages. In short, every gumshoe's search should begin here.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is one of the highlights of the "Howdunit" series: it's not only informative and thorough, but it's great fun to read too. Besides being an experienced and successful PI, Faron is a lively writer who knows how to choose an anecdote to make a point, so the book is engrossing as well as useful. She clearly knows the business inside and out, so she covers aspects of the subject that most of us don't know exist, and her remarks on the seamier sides of the PI's job are priceless. She occasionally seems to remember that she's writing a book for mystery authors, and tosses in a few suggestions for plots or episodes that I found rather pointless, but these don't detract from the

general helpfulness of the book. Her more "reference"-oriented final chapters are less entertaining, but I greatly appreciated her summaries of what kind of information is available from a particular source and how easily accessed it is: many books that purport to give information on how to find people are just unselective lists of sources without commentary. And her state-by-state breakdown of PI licensing laws and legal information was great: I'm working on a couple of mysteries set in the state where I used to live, and her guidance was very helpful. I hope Faron keeps the book updated: the Internet has transformed searching (for people or information), and some of her suggestions are already out of date. But, as a whole, this book is a terrific "checklist" of how and why people go missing and how to look for them, and well worth reading.

It's supposed to be a reference to find the lost, abducted and escaped. But the tips could help you become a missing person! Some of the most interesting sections include: "How People Purposely Hide Their Whereabouts" "The Four-Step Formula for Finding Someone" "Profile of the Lost Family Member" There's so much more to this book than you can imagine. You're sure to find it a nice collection to your reference library.

Faron strikes again in the Missing Persons volume of the Howdunit series. Faron's advice on tracking people down was extremely helpful to me, both as an aspiring writer and a police officer (Faron gives tips on locating the hidden that they definitely don't teach you at the Academy...simple, easily-overlooked stuff that involves very little research). Faron's laid-back writing style and personal anecdotes make this an entertaining, as well as informative, read.

A how-to book on tracking missing persons is a needed reference for crime writers, but in my opinion this one doesn't measure up. The author Fay Faron is so busy wisecracking about her own experiences as a private investigator that the substance for writers of how to write about missing persons cases is minimal. What is excellent about the book is the outline of subjects covered which seems full. Too bad that the author isn't serious about actually helping writers. It seems that writers' needs are subordinated to the author's need to be clever.

Missing Persons would be a worthwhile read just for the entertainment value--like Anne Wingate, who wrote *Scene of the Crime*, Fay Faron has a cockeyed sense of humor that I can definitely appreciate. But, like *Scene of the Crime* and *Private Eyes*, *Missing Persons* also offers a wealth of information about not only how to track down the missing and what resources are available, but the

different types of missing persons--those who don't know they're missing, those who don't want to be found, and those who want to be found but are being hidden--and how likely a given missing person is to be findable. Definitely a worthwhile reference.

This gives you a good idea both of what a private detective's work is like, and of how they go about tracing missing people. It probably won't come as a surprise that it is not as glamorous or dangerous or exciting as it looks on TV and the movies. Much of the work involves looking through records and cross-checking information. Sometimes the PI makes an occasional phone call to get some info (often under a false pretext), and sometimes they even ring a doorbell or two to confront someone's long-lost lover or relative. Many of their clients (and the people they are seeking) have serious problems. Most people-tracing cases, says Faron, involve a lonely soul remembering a long lost lover, perhaps someone who dumped them, and wanting to see what they are doing and if there is still a spark. The book was written in 1997 and could use an update. There is virtually no mention of the internet here, and I would wager that a lot of the searching PIs do today involves perusing various online databases. There is nothing about this work that seems particularly oriented toward writers - this would be a good title for anyone curious about the subject, but who would be most likely to be curious other than someone who aspires to be the next Raymond Chandler? For instance, there is no reference here to any famous missing person case, either actual or fictional. It might have been interesting to see her thoughts on some of those. But give Faron credit for apparently telling it like it is, and also for fleshing out her book with some interesting stuff that is indirectly related to the subject. The section title "Profile of the Scoundrel" is a good one, and features information on con games, hustles, deadbeat clients and the like. The entire book is peppered with interesting anecdotes drawn from Faron's career, all told in her world-weary, wisecracking voice. And she is a good storyteller (even if there could have been a little more detail in some of her yarns) - she sticks to the facts, and includes a lot of seen-it-all wit. Overall, this is a good member of the Writers Digest Howdunit Series - I hope to read more of them. It certainly does illustrate that there is a world of difference between a well-crafted missing person mystery and the actual work of an investigator trying to trace someone.

If you plan on constructing a plot for your novel that centers around finding a missing individual, then this book offers in-depth explanations of the people involved in conducting searches. It's convenient to possess this information in one book that is informative.

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