

# She's a crafty one!

**Karen Bamford** interviews author Camille Minichino about her fictional crime-fighting miniaturist Geraldine Porter



Crime writer and miniaturist Camille Minichino.

If you enjoy a good detective story, the chances are you'll love amateur sleuth Geraldine Porter, who solves mysteries in between working on her many and varied dolls' house projects. The sixth book in the *Miniature Mysteries* series is launched this month and sees 'crafty' Geraldine battling crime once more with her beloved granddaughter Maddie.

Author Camille Minichino told me: "I'm a lifelong miniaturist and also a mystery writer. A few years ago my publisher asked me to do a mystery series featuring a miniaturist. Under the name Margaret Grace, I created Geraldine Porter, a retired high school English teacher, and her 11-year-old granddaughter, Maddie. Together they work on dolls' houses and solve crimes in their fictional town of Lincoln Point, California."

In the first book of the series, *Murder in Miniature*, we discover that Gerry's world of tiny country cottages and cosy roomboxes is far from trouble-

free. Even before the doors open to the craft fair that she has

organised, there's a snag. Geraldine's friend and fellow crafter, Linda, has failed to appear. Also missing is the last piece of furniture

Linda built, a miniature desk.

By the time the week is over, Geraldine and Maddie have dealt with robbery, fraud and murder, all



Someone has been reading crime fiction with a shotgun close to hand.

wrapped up in the world of the very small. Running alongside the "whodunnit" plot are frequent references to Gerry's world of miniatures with snippets about how to make some of the pieces that she is working on. There is even a section on miniaturists' tips at the back of the book.

There are also miniaturists' 'in-jokes', such as this one-liner: "Misfortune followed Linda like a string of melted glue from a low-end glue gun". And book three in the series, *Malice in Miniature*, opens with: "My new house didn't have western exposure in the kitchen. It was almost criminal. I couldn't imagine working at the sink or stove without benefit of the late afternoon sun. Fortunately, it was an easy problem to fix. I picked up the house, rotated it about ninety degrees, and set it down in its corner. Only a couple of items fell over in the operation – a small lamp and a vase of flowers that apparently weren't glued

down properly. I righted them and peered through the picture window."

On a more sentimental note, the first book also sees tomboy Maddie encouraging her grandmother to begin work again on the miniature apartment built by her late husband, Ken. The model is a replica of the couple's first home together and Gerry has been unable to face furnishing it since Ken's death.

This April sees the launch of the sixth book in the *Miniature Mysteries* series, *Mix-up in Miniature*. Gerry is thrilled to meet author and miniatures enthusiast Varena Young. The celebrity seems to seek friendship with Gerry and her craft group, and makes a generous offer of a house from her collection for a fundraiser. But Young is murdered and Gerry is left to investigate the crime. She and Maddie delve into Young's mysterious past and find a clue to her murder in a secret room... of a dolls' house.

Find out more at [www.minichino.com](http://www.minichino.com) ■

