



# Transition to Murder

*Renee James*

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Winner of the Chicago Writers Association Book of the Year, Indie Fiction

“If he had killed me tonight, he’d be sleeping like a baby in an hour. I should be scared by that thought, but mostly I’m angry. Not stomp-your-foot angry. Get even angry. Put a knife in his gut and turn it angry.”

In this 2014 re-telling of *Coming Out Can Be Murder*, a beautiful young transwoman is brutally murdered. The media looks on blindly, the police go through the motions, but the victim's hairdresser goes ballistic. Bobbi Logan is so outraged by these events that she commits two bold and courageous acts: She comes out as a transwoman herself, sending her career as a hair stylist into a gut-wrenching tailspin, and she begins searching for her friend's murderer, an investigation that brings her into the vicious web of a powerful, seductive predator who is as charming as he is ruthless.

Originally published under the title *Coming Out Can Be Murder*, the book tells the chilling story of revenge when a suspected killer lives beyond the reach of the law. Bobbi Logan's bruising search for truth and justice takes her into the pulsating streets of Chicago's Boystown neighborhood, the colorful world of high-end hair styling, and the city's vibrant transgender community. Fast-paced and unsparing in hard details, *Transition to Murder* is a fresh, original portrayal of the life of a transwoman who is searching to discover her own "self" even as she searches for a killer.

Renee James is an award-winning journalist, as well as a writer, editor and licensed cosmetologist. She has been active in the Chicago transgender community for many years.

## Transition to Murder Details

Date : Published February 24th 2014 by Riverside Avenue Books (first published January 1st 2012)

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Author : Renee James

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# From Reader Review Transition to Murder for online ebook

## Lori Perkins says

This novel combines all the energy of a detective thriller combined with the self reflection of a trans woman finding herself and her confidence.

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## Ava Black says

When blood-lust drives a psychopathic sadist to murder his transgender lover, the client of super-stylist Bobbi Logan, Bobbi has only one choice; revenge. But stalking and killing one of Chicago's highest powered attorneys isn't easy, especially when you become the killer's next target.

Award-winning author Renee James knocks it out of the park with this raw and graphic tale of murder, lust, and betrayal. Each character is richly written with a voice unique to their personalities and arcs you don't see coming. Lifelike yet surreal, Transition to Murder unmasks those dark, dirty secrets we all hide away and hope no one finds. The dialog is sharp and clever while the narrative reveals truths about the effects of fear and ignorance on the psyche. Not for the faint of heart, this book will keep the pages turning until the final chapter is read.

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## M. says

3.5 rounded up -- This crime novel is written from the pov of Bobbi, an ambivalently trans hairdresser (more on the ambivalence in a sec). The murder of a friend in the trans community in some ways pushes her to come out--and also prompts her to take on the burden of investigating the murder (since the police aren't doing it) -- more vengeance tale than mystery. I loved Bobbi as a narrator, and as a trans protagonist who experiences doubt about whether or not she's trans (she is, obvs, though she's not sure about it for a long time) -- at the same time as she is taking huge leaps towards transfemininity, risking a great deal professionally and socially. Bobbi has a deep care of emotional wisdom and I loved spending time in her perspective. Bonus points for the Chicago setting and all the details on hairdressing (the author is a professional stylist and it shows). I also appreciated how the usual tropes of trans women as "deceitful men" in detective novels are played on here -- at one point (spoiler alert) Bobbi disguises herself as a man in order to trick the murderer. The writing is often a bit flat/not terribly elegant, and I esp had a hard time with the brief switches into the murderer's point of view, which is predictably viciously transmisogynist and dehumanizing--I'm not sure why we needed these passages given the many other ways in which transphobia figures into the book. CW for transphobia, violence, rape

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## D.B. Kennison says

Thank you, Renee James! I'm non-judgmental when it comes to how others live their lives. I have friends

who are bi-sexual, gay, lesbian, and as one friend puts it—just plain confused. While I've been witness to some of their inner turmoil, no matter how close they are to me, I will never fully comprehend what it's like to be in their shoes and all that comes with it. I'm certain that would also be the case if I had a friend who was trans. This novel was an eye-opener in that respect, giving me a deeper understanding of their struggle.

The author's uncensored honesty on the page shines a light on the life of a transgender person. For me, the fact that it's also a wonderful thriller is simply a bonus! Well done.

The protagonist, Bobbi Logan, is one in a cast of colorful characters. She is a dedicated hairdresser and has spent a lifetime trying to find herself. What woman doesn't, really? But since Bobbi is saddled with the unwanted body of a man, her trials are ten-fold by comparison. This character got under my skin fast, in a good way. She became the friend that I wanted to defend. Her patience with cruel people far surpassed mine. Okay...I confess to bitch slapping the e-reader a couple times. Don't get me wrong, Bobbi is no victim. We see the ups and downs of her day-to-day life as she makes it her personal mission to unmask a murderer and right a great wrong. Bobbi is brave, sensitive, and in the end, stronger than even she realized.

This book has got it all—insight into great hairdressing, grit, suspense, humor, and the dark side of humanity. At times so truthful and realistic that it was hard to read, and yet, I could not put it down. For so many reasons, I highly recommend *Transition to Murder*.

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### **Christine Keleny says**

What does a man, who really wants to a woman, do when she crosses paths with a killer? "Transition to Murder" illustrates the life and struggles of a person in the transgender community and brings Bobbi (the main protagonist) to life in a real and meaningful way. Add to that the interesting position of Bobbi's interaction with a sociopathic killer and you have one interesting story.

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### **Ije the Devourer of Books says**

I started this series by reading the books in the wrong order. I started with book two and I really enjoyed it, but now that I have read book one the series is much more meaningful for me.

Book one is darker than book two and much more violent. We get to see how this darkness and violence shaped Bobbi and how she evolves as a person as she transitions. Bobbi's life in book one is challenging as she transitions but it is the violence and murder of her friend and Bobbi's subsequent quest for justice that really shapes her. We see how Bobbi finds courage, strength, resilience and the determination to fight back against her oppressors even though she is vulnerable.

Book one also introduces us to other characters such as the violent psychopath Strand, the earnest Officer Phil and Roger the owner of the salon where Bobbi works. We also get to see the world in which Bobbi lives. This is the world of hairdressing and friends, learning how to live as a woman and drawing strength from the Trans community, but it is also a place of pain. A place of dealing with the judgement and insults of strangers and the daily realisation of family rejection. Bobbi finds ways of living with and inspite of this

pain. Bobbi also surrounds herself with love and support and most importantly she learns to love herself.

The mystery is really well written and it is gripping. We know who the murderer is but we don't know how and when he will strike. His mind is utter darkness and violence and it is quite horrifying to catch glimpses of his murderous thoughts.

I actually thought the beginning of the book was a bit too violent for me but then I realised that this is the kind of violence that women all over the world encounter in their daily lives. Women who were genetically born and women who transitioned have to grapple with gender discrimination and violence in our world today and the story simply depicts the reality of our world. The media overflows with stories about trans people who have been killed simply because they are different.

My heart bled for Bobbi and Mandy for the way their lives are cut short by others. I really disliked the police in this story. Even Officer Phil. I also felt frustration with the police as they ignored the lives of the Trans community and so easily took the aside if the oppressor. Seeing them here introduced some of the storyline lines in book 2 and enriched the series for me.

Bobbi is my champion. Her life is a life of hope. She will leave you wanting to hug her and meet her for coffee. I can fully understand Betsy because I would want Bobbi in my life too. Bobbi has become one of my favourite murder mystery characters and I am looking forward to reading book 3 very soon.

I will read as many Bobby Logan stories as the author is willing to turn out!

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## **Heather says**

I read this novel after learning about it in the course of researching detective fiction/crime fiction. Not only am I a big fan of the genre, but it intersects with my critical interests as a writer, teacher, and scholar.

\*\*\*What follows is an excerpt from my longer discussion of the novel, which appears as a chapter in my book about gender (and normativity) in detective fiction\*\*\*

Transition to Murder was released in 2014, but it's a re-working of another novel called Coming out Can be Murder, which Renee James published in 2012 (there are plot changes between the two novels, but the premise is more or less the same in each). Beyond the character development, what I really enjoyed about this novel is how Renee James plays with the conventions of crime fiction. The book comes across as part mystery and part memoir (with a bit of social protest splashed in). I recommend this book to fans of the genre because, beyond the story-telling (which is quite good), the book deserves attention because of James' portrayal of a transgender sleuth. Her protagonist Bobbi Logan comes across as unique in the way that she challenges stereotypes (at the same time as James moves beyond the typical formula which writes detectives as not only cisgender but also as conforming to traditional gender roles).

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## **Maxine (Booklover Catlady) says**

I got to 30% through this book and have had to give up and not finish. As I have not read even half of it I won't rate it. It's heavy on the transgender emotional and sexual side to the main character Bobbi Logan and not enough on any crime, at least not to the 30% mark. I felt like I was reading a memoir of a transgender

woman at times. Not for me this one. I note that this book was released in 2012 under a different title, so it's being re-released now in 2014.

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### **Juxian says**

It was a wonderful book, and I'm very glad I've read it. Not a kind of book I'd normally choose for reading, so I'm happy a friend recommended it to me. It was an amazing experience, both intellectually and emotionally.

The main character, Bobbi... oh, I can't imagine anyone might read this book and not to love, not to admire her.

There were many moments that were difficult to read - and moments that made me shake with anger, all those times when Bobbi is humiliated and mistreated. Sometimes it's hard for me to imagine that people - normal people, not some villains - can be this mean, but yes, I know they can. On the other hand, Cecelia was great, and Betsy, and Thomas, and Ray... well, Phil - I'm not sure I liked him very much. We don't see him much but... somehow I have a feeling he could've done more. But okay.

I think probably the parts about Bobbi's work as a hairdresser were my favorite ones - her interactions with different people, her struggles to bring back her clients and find new ones, her creativity in trying to find the best style for a client - it was fascinating. It also raised my respect to her to an entirely different level.

At first, I was not sure about the mystery part - (view spoiler)

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### **Melissa Weidner says**

Renee Jame's brilliant Bobbi Logan series will truly put you into the shoes of the transgender experience in Chicago. The experience is deep, heartfelt, brutally honest, and evoke a myriad of emotions in the reader. Joy, excitement, sympathy, fear, anger, sadness, hope, empathy, love, awe, inspiration... I could go on and on about the emotions it evoked in me!

I can completely envision this intense series into a fantastic movie or television series. These books are extremely important in understanding the transgender issues that have been and are at hand. It may be shocking for the reader, but it needs to be known these things can and do happen. And at this terrible time in our politically divided world, Bobbi Logan is a true heroine. Renee James is a true heroine. Her talented and poetic writing style engulfs the reader into a life-changing journey. She has enhanced my knowledge of the transgender experience and I am ever grateful.

The audience for these books does not need to read them in sequence. In my opinion, it creates a deeper bond between the reader and Bobbi Logan to read the series through, but it is not a must. Renee James is utterly brilliant in creating understanding of events, both past and present. The education she provides through her awe-inspiring writing is desperately needed in our world.

To the negative reviewers:

If you don't like this series, odds are you are simply squeamish about brutally honest murder thrillers, or you sadly live with hate in your heart! If you are part of the latter group, I especially suggest you read the series from beginning to end and learn from it.

I highly recommend everyone to read the Bobbi Logan Series:

Book 1: Coming Out Can Be Murder was published in 2012. It featured Bobbi Logan, a transsexual heroine, and it introduced many non-trans people to what transgender life was like early in this century. It won awards from the Chicago Writers Association and ForeWord Reviews, and was republished in 2014 with a plot change as Transition to Murder.

Book 2: The second book in the series was issued by Oceanview Publishing in 2016. A Kind of Justice picked up Bobbi's life five years later, in 2008 as she battled the Great Recession and a transphobic detective trying to pin a murder on her.

Book 3: Seven Suspects will be released on Oct. 3rd, 2017. It takes place another five years later, with Bobbi trying to mentor her pre-teen niece and find out who is stalking her and why.

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### Lena♥Ribka says

When I started A Kind of Justice I had no idea that it was a second book in Bobbi Logan Crime Novel series. But I loved the writing so much, that I immediately purchased the only other already published book by the author WITHOUT even knowing that it was the first book to the series. Can you imagine my surprise (and excitement) when I found out that there was a background, a BEGINNING story of **Bobby Logan**!

I normally do not read series backwards; it is not my art. And if I *unintentionally* pick up a book that is a part of the series, then I try to cope the situation and figure out what happened BEFORE by myself without giving up. But I NEVER go back.

Normally.

Renee James made me break my own rules. And I'm soooo glad she did it!

As an *experienced Bobby Logan's expert*, I dare to say, that you can read two books (I don't know if more will come, so I mean really only the first two books in the series), as a stand-alone, or in any order you like, you won't miss anything. The author succeeded to create two full length novels that are OF COURSE closely connected to each other, but every single one gives you a completed story.

I am though glad that I read it in the wrong order. If you think I knew everything already, and it made a suspense part for me less thrilling- you are WRONG!!! I thought I knew it, NO; I did not! I just can't say more, because a normal reader is supposed to read a series in a release date's order, so I am not going to spoil you anything.

Aside from an intriguing and interesting mystery part (as you know, I'm a big mystery fan), I enjoyed this book in the first place because of Booby Logan. If in the second book Bobby went already through a surgical operation and transition, in the first book she IS in her transition phase, and comes out to her hair dresser colleagues and to her ex-wife only at the middle of the book. The first person POV gives you very intimate insights into a world of a trans-woman. I have to admit though that I was surprised to meet unsecure Bobby after I already know her position from the second book. On the one hand, she is sure that she doesn't want to be Robert EVER AGAIN, on the other, she has doubts and fears about her decision. Though she knows that

it is the only way for her to be happy.

*"I don't want to spend my life pretending to be a man, not when I can spend it trying to be a woman."*

I didn't know that if a duration of hormonal treatments will exceed a certain time, there is a point of no return! It is why Bobby tries to go *celibate* through her transition phase, because she doesn't want her sex life be able to influence her decision in any way. But we all know that a real life has sometimes a different scenario. And it is actually where a mystery parts leads...

So, yes, **the driving force, the greatest strength, a true magnet of the series is the main character.**

Booby Logan maybe will not change your view on transsexuality, but she for sure expand your horizons and enrich your knowledge and understanding of transgender people. in the most charming and charismatic way, though I'm aware that reality for them is far away from a fairy tale. And THAT I learned also from this book.

P.S I'd like especially thank the author for her Author's Notes at the end of the book.

**Highly recommended!**

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### **Max says**

I don't know if I've ever read a book that was quite so raw and honest about the self-doubt and uncertainty of transitioning. I loved how James takes us deep into Bobbi's (intensely relatable) second-guessing of herself, while making clear that much of this stems from her issues with self-esteem and self-loathing from years of being subject to society's gender-policing and transphobia. I wasn't crazy about the specifics of the crime aspect of the book (especially the passages from the villain's PoV, because they are so, so nasty), but I did appreciate the emphasis on the mistreatment of trans women by law enforcement, and the nuance of showing that individual cops can be good people while still participating in a systemic culture of transmisogyny.

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### **Shelley says**

3.5 Stars.

I'm Bobbi Logan, transwoman, hairdresser, friend to any who will have me, enemy of none.  
I'm a good citizen and a good person and I'm a woman. All of you who disapprove can go fuck yourselves.

God damn I loved Bobbi Logan! That woman opened my blind eyes to the complete spectrum of life as a transwoman. This story brings to light the colorful transexual characters inhabiting Boystown Chicago and the dark demon who preys on them. But the focus for the most part is Bobbi's 'coming of woman' which is so deeply and thoroughly explored through the first person POV, in so much that we are 'told' what happens and how Bobbi feels and a lot of that hits someone like me who is unaware/ignorant of the prejudice toward



transsexuals really hard. It's a shocking account that draws attention to the misjustice of the trans society.

This topic is obviously a very personal one to this author and it almost eclipses the storyline of Bobbi's quest for vengeance and justice against an untouchable, formidable psychopath who preys on transwoman. This element was very good, and especially fascinating from a psychological perspective. We get to crawl inside the mind of this man whose blind lust and vicious vitriol for trans women fuels his monster. The author doesn't hide the violence and it is, very violent! Persons who cannot read about rape should not be reading this book.

Now I loved a lot of what this story is about, I got the message, I wanted to hug Bobbi, and infact, the next time a see a transwoman I'll ask if I could hug her too. But from a readers perspective I feel the message was (at times) shoved down my throat. I wished Bobbi could have stepped of his soap box and held up the middle finger to the world instead of preaching to it. I wish the pacing had been better. Too much of this was plodding through Bobbi's life as a hairdresser, like pages and pages of his passion for creating up-do's? But I loved the vengeance play, I loved the mysterious ending, and being the blood thirsty dark hearted girl I am, I loved the violence and psychological play too. This is not a romance if that's what you are looking for. This is original suspense exploring the life of a transsexual woman. It's good, fascinating,informative and quite heartbreaking too; but for me there was something missing from the writing, a special ingredient that I cannot pinpoint but it failed to make me love ALL of it.

I'll recommend it though, I really do like it for it's unique (to me) premise and the voice of Bobbi Logan and every transwoman he represents.

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## **Britt Marczak says**

*Received an ARC from Netgalley in exchange of an honest review*

I really, really, realllyyy wanted to like this one. Any book with a trans main character gets me excited. But it was also outside of my normal genre, being a mystery. Still, I enthusiastically hopped into it.

My biggest problem had nothing to do with character or plot. The writing was too dull for me. Maybe it's the mystery voice, as other mysteries I've read sometimes are too much "show" and not enough "tell", and leave me falling asleep.

I don't really have anything negative to say about this book, but I can't say I liked it, either. As a cis woman, I knew this would be uncomfortable to read. Trans people, mostly trans women, face horrible, truly frightening bigotry and hostility every day. Reading about it and experiencing it second hand just makes me stop and think that much more about the inequalities.

In that way, this book was enlightening on matters I'm already familiar with.

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