

#1 BESTSELLING AUTHOR

EMILY
HEPDITCH

Murder on Painted Place

A NOVEL



PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

The Woman in the Attic

“Described as a ‘claustrophobic psychological thriller,’ *The Woman in the Attic* is a novel that I simply could not put down until I turned the final page. Emily Hepditch does a superb job at developing true-to-life characters through a storyline that mirrors the lives of real-life people in rural Newfoundland. Readers can’t help but feel compassion and empathy for Hannah as she is faced with the tragic realities that having a parent diagnosed with dementia brings but also feel the same torment, anguish, and sadness that is revealed bit by bit as the plot develops. Through beautiful writing and wonderful use of figurative language, Hepditch creates vivid sensory images for readers, inviting them to become participants in the story.” — STEPHANIE COLLINS, FIRESIDE COLLECTIONS

“Emily Hepditch has taken a classic haunting format and given it a fresh and youthful makeover. The brooding atmosphere in the house, the building tension in the weather outside, the erosion of land at the edge of the cliffs: all the required elements are assembled and re-animated and peppered with her own energy and wit.”

— JOAN SULLIVAN, THE TELEGRAM

“When I read *The Woman in the Attic*, I couldn’t put it down because it was so good. Emily Hepditch is such a fine writer, crafting her story with exquisite emotion and daring.” — BONNIE KOGOS, SUDBURY STAR

MORE PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

The Woman in the Attic

“Hepditch builds the suspense nicely to a dramatic conclusion, and the setting makes the story all the more intriguing. This is a solid first effort from an author who will clearly make her mark in the mystery/suspense genre.” — DENISE FLINT, DOWNHOME MAGAZINE

“*The Woman in the Attic* is a psychological thriller that takes you on a ride of unexpected events that lead to an ending you would never imagine. Spine-tingling! The characters are well-developed with surprises popping out at you along the way. You think you have it all figured out and, lo and behold, the author takes you along a narrow, twisting path that makes you hold your breath. The surprises bring the reader to tears and anger. A suspenseful read from a young author who has talent!” — DARLENE KETTLE, WRECKHOUSE WEEKLY

“I’m chucking down my pen, so to speak, before I ‘slip’ and reveal all. Finally, a promise—at times *The Woman in the Attic* will give you the shivers.”

— HAROLD WALTERS, LOTP: LIFE ON THIS PLANET

MORE PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

The Woman in the Attic

“So, as I have mentioned many times before on my blog, thrillers are not my favourite genre of books. But this book has made me rethink that statement! *The Woman in the Attic* was easily one of my favourite books—even though it is a thriller! The unique setting of rural Newfoundland added a level of intrigue for me and will help the book always stand out in my mind. This is a must-read for fans of the thriller genre!”

— ERIN WOLF, SLEEP LESS READ MORE

“*The Woman in the Attic*: On the coast of rural Newfoundland, the prizewinning, terrifying mystery titled *The Woman in the Attic* by Emily Hepditch, published by Flanker Press, had me nuts and turning pages for days. This is Emily’s debut novel, writing about how Hannah’s mother has lived her life in near-isolation. Hannah must return to the lonely saltbox house on a cliff overlooking the water to prepare her mother for transition into assisted living. Packing her mom’s things, Hannah discovers a trap door to the house’s attic. Blinded by curiosity, she finds a mysterious bedroom riddled with dark secrets. As she scrambles for answers, a new truth emerges. I was thrilled that I couldn’t put it down. Now I’m afraid to pick up her second thriller, *Alone on the Trail*, also a bestseller.”

— BONNIE KOGOS, SUDBURY STAR

MORE PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

Alone on the Trail

“Organized into thirteen parts as opposed to traditional chapters, Hepditch utilizes her creative licence to cleverly detail a tightly woven tale in the form of a series of first-person character monologues. This organizational technique is central to the development of the four characters, allowing readers an opportunity to really get to know the internal conflict that each character brings to the developing storyline. Struggles with acceptance, dealing with loss and abandonment, and narcissistic jealousy and gaslighting are revealed bit by bit over the course of the story, revealing just enough for the reader to gain an accurate understanding of the growing tension experienced by the four friends as they attempt to survive while on their ‘trip of a lifetime.’ By divulging the frailties of each of the characters in such a way, readers will discover that they themselves experience responses ranging from happiness, to disappointment, excitement, and anger. The struggles are real and relatable, and the experience of riding that roller coaster of emotion is palpable. *Alone on the Trail* by Emily Hepditch is a must-read! This riveting account has great cinematic appeal and [is] one that I would sure love to see in living colour!”

— STEPHANIE COLLINS, FIRESIDE COLLECTIONS

MORE PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

Alone on the Trail

“Taut with suspense, *Alone on the Trail* will have you holding your breath until you see just who will make it out of the woods alive . . . if anyone does at all. With an ending that will leave you reeling, this book is a cannot-miss for 2021.” — NICOLE LITTLE, AUTHOR

“This strong follow-up to Hepditch’s debut, *The Woman in the Attic*, proves she’s no one-hit wonder. She’s setting standards (and a schedule) for an accomplished output.” — JOAN SULLIVAN, THE TELEGRAM

“I picked up *Alone on the Trail*, about four friends deciding to take a seemingly safe backpacking hike in the backcountry of western Newfoundland. As soon as I met the four characters and began to understand them, my reading became intense, fascinated, as they encountered each other and . . . well, just buy this book, and plan to spend a weekend encountering their dangers, making your own assumptions, and hanging in to the end. Thank you, Emily Hepditch. I am eager to read your next book!” — BONNIE KOGOS, SUDBURY STAR

MORE PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

Sweater

“I am beginning to think that there is nothing that Emily Hepditch can’t do. Ask any child from Newfoundland and Labrador and many of their favourite recollections of their grandmother is often the smallest thing; helping to bake bread or Nan always having something yummy in the fridge. But, more often than not, it’s the memories of the fuzzy socks or the warm mittens or scarves or woolly sweaters, knitted with love and worn with pride even if they are a little itchy. ‘I love it!’ declared my six-year-old after reading *Sweater* with her dad. In fact, she loved it so much she chose to write about it for her homework that week. I then had to go searching all over the house for the book, eventually finding it on the desk in my eleven-year-old’s room so I could finally read it myself. What I’m saying here is: this book appeals to people of ALL ages. This heartwarming, delightful tale takes us all back to that special place and time when we felt cherished by the love of a Nanny, wrapped up in a hug or snuggled up in a sweater—warm and safe. The illustrations in this book are charming and sweet. The verses are fun to read out loud and engage both reader and listener. This story of young Alexander, and his discovery that the gift his Nanny has given him is not so terrible after all, is a wonderful message for children and adults alike. A gift given in love is truly a treasure. I can’t wait to see what’s next for this author!”

— NICOLE LITTLE, AUTHOR

MORE PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

Sweater

“After reading the picture book *Sweater*, written and illustrated by Atlantic Canadian Emily Hepditch, it’s hard to believe that this was her first attempt at a children’s book. With an adjective-rich text, I found it to be a perfect children’s read-aloud book. The description of Alexander’s sweater was priceless. It was ‘big and itchy and sweaty and scratchy, and it makes him look like a marshmallow.’ The illustrations were colourful and matched the text perfectly. Without spoiling the story, I will say that grandmas know best in the practical vs. fashionable debate, and to be warm on a ‘blustery, snowy, wintry day’ you often do look like a marshmallow. I’m sure *Sweater* is just the beginning of a long and very successful career for Emily, as both a children’s story writer and illustrator!”

— SUE SLADE, DARTMOUTH BOOK EXCHANGE

“I was so excited to get my hands on this new picture book from Emily Hepditch—I love her novels, and I was excited to see her children’s story (which is both illustrated and written by Emily). It is such a sweet story, with beautiful illustrations; a great addition to any child’s bookshelf.” — ERIN WOLF, SLEEP LESS READ MORE

“A sweet-flavoured dilemma of a boy’s unexpected gift from his beloved Nanny . . .”

— JOAN SULLIVAN, THE TELEGRAM

MORE PRAISE FOR EMILY HEPDITCH

Sweater

“Author of two bestselling novels, *The Woman in the Attic* and *Alone on the Trail*, *Sweater* is Emily Hepditch’s first children’s illustrated book. This fictional story intended mostly for children . . . is simply written with an engaging storyline. Emergent readers (and their parents!) will easily identify with and relate to the character Alexander and understand the conundrum in which he finds himself. After all, who hasn’t been the recipient of a well-intentioned homemade gift that didn’t seem to fit just right? Hepditch does an excellent job at having the illustrations and text work together to tell the story. The pictures are well-placed and allow young readers to contextualize the story by giving visual cues to the words on the page. The illustrations are colourful and simple, and the pages are presented in a clean and clutter-free manner, clearly depicting the emotions of the character and the well-paced story. As a new illustrator of children’s picture books, I was impressed with Hepditch’s work and felt the style was well-suited to the story. I particularly liked the intricate sensory details of the gable knitted sweater and the ‘warm woolly mittens’ and blanket. *Sweater* is a timeless story to be enjoyed by both children and their caregivers. Hats off to Emily Hepditch and her first foray into the world of children’s literature . . . a talented young writer AND illustrator!”

— STEPHANIE COLLINS, FIRESIDE COLLECTIONS

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We acknowledge the [financial] support of the Government of Canada. *Nous reconnaissons l'appui [financier] du gouvernement du Canada.* We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, which last year invested \$153 million to bring the arts to Canadians throughout the country. *Nous remercions le Conseil des arts du Canada de son soutien. L'an dernier, le Conseil a investi 153 millions de dollars pour mettre de l'art dans la vie des Canadiennes et des Canadiens de tout le pays.* We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation for our publishing activities. Also, we acknowledge the support of Celebrate NL, a Crown corporation within the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation for its support of arts organizations in the year 2024, Year of the Arts.

For my cousins, Kai and Noa

Always remember you are loved from the shores
of Newfoundland to the tallest mountaintops of
Japan.

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part one

When the letter arrived at Alistair's house, for twelve long hours it sat neglected on the island, collecting stray crumbs and droplets of coffee. The ivory paper looked around from the marble, its curl-icue inscription grinning upwards like a set of crooked incisors. From every angle, despite Alistair's attempts to avoid it, the letter watched. Threatened to cut his hands with each of its four corners.

The day had arrived. The beginning of the end.



Risa's letter had barely made it through the mail slot of her front door before she tore its envelope into a pile of feathered shreds. Heart pumping, she leaned back against the door, her hand between the sheets of paper. Her fingertips grazed the typed inscription.

From where she stood in the mudroom, *Hansel's* green eyes watched her from his canvas across the hall.

Her watcher. Protector. He beckoned her to go ahead and open the folded sheet of paper, but she was frozen. For what had felt like her entire life, she had awaited this moment. Now that it had arrived, she didn't know what to do.

She pinched the thin sheet of parchment and drew a trembling breath. As Hansel watched, she read the letter. And then she started to cry.



Florence was not ordinarily called “Flossie,” only sometimes, in certain letters. Letters like this one.

For a long time she sat on the cushioned swing on her porch, listening to her husband snore on the living room couch through the open window. She held the unopened letter on her knees, admiring its loopy address.

To Flossie Frank.

The envelope bore familiar penmanship, on familiar parchment, and had arrived at a familiar time of year. And yet, as the breeze brushed the light coils of white hair off her forehead, Florence knew everything had changed.



Tobias's letter wasn't found until the day after it was delivered. It had been concealed by a glossy stack of fast-food coupons and nearly thrown out with the trash.

He had noticed it in the bottom of the bin just by fluke, when the ivory white corner sliced a hole in the garbage bag and stuck out at the bottom like a thorn. He'd reached down to col-

lect the culprit slasher, and it was then he noticed the letter was addressed in elegant cursive to a Tobias Cherrywood—Tobias's surname from many years ago.

To Tobias Cherrywood.

Printed on Cherrywood stationery, from the address of 1 Cherrywood Place. How very odd it was indeed.



Claude and Therese's letter came together, addressed to the Alderblossoms, like their marriage had merged them into a single lump sum. Claude's hands had been slick and blue with wet paint when Therese had entered the studio, her face aghast.

She took the narrow paintbrush her husband held between his teeth and, with its pointed edge, sliced the envelope cleanly open.

Letter in hand, she read it aloud.

Dear Friend —

If you have recieved this note, it is in the event of my imminent death.

It comes as no secret I have lived a long and fortunate life. Though undoubtedly, it has been a quiet life, in which I have embarked on few opportunities to make lasting relationships.

Though our relationship, (as all my relationships tend to be) may be subject to strain, or anguish, or complication, or distance; it is for your troubles in life that I invite you to Painted Place in celebration of my death. There, my possessions I shall bequest to those who have been most influential to me, over the course of my life.

Please find enclosed directions for transportation to Painted Place.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur Barnaby Cherrywood

part two

Thick grey clouds hung in the sky like gauze, dipping down toward the earth into mist. The captain stood on the end of his wharf, gazing along the gravel parking lot ahead. One by one his group of travellers assembled, arriving in yellow taxis, lugging oversized bags, sporting inadequate jackets and wary, scrupulous faces.

In truth, the captain was surprised to see such a crew. The artist who lived on the island had never been a man of much company. He had never chartered the captain's services for more than one visitor at a time. And none of those visitors, for the whole long career the captain had spent journeying to and fro the island, had ever been introduced as *friends*.

Hans, my good man, if you might honour me once more in escorting my friends safely to my Place.

My friends. Yes, the wording had been cause for pause. But here they were, now, a whole six of them, standing with their bags all ready to go.



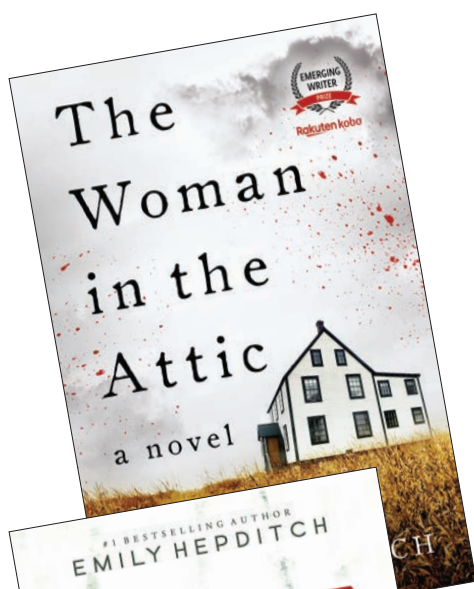
PHOTO BY CATHERINE MORET

Emily Hepditch is an award-winning author from Mount Pearl, Newfoundland.

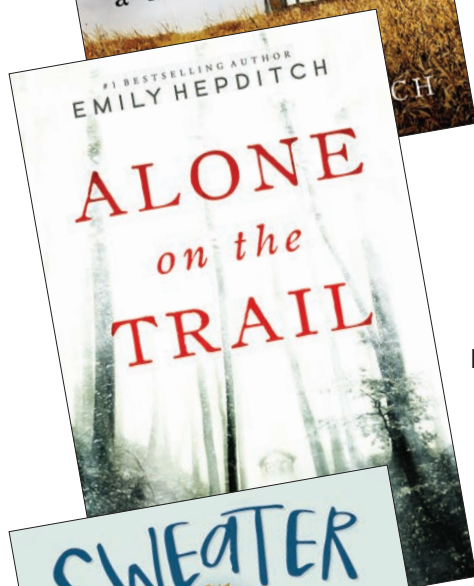
In 2020, her debut novel, *The Woman in the Attic*, was published by Flanker Press and quickly became the #1 bestselling book in Newfoundland and Labrador. The book remained on the *Atlantic Books Today* top five bestsellers list for the next two years. Emily's second thriller, *Alone on the Trail*, is also an *ABT* top five bestseller. *Sweater* is her first children's illustrated book.

Emily is a recent graduate of the University of New Brunswick, where she studied law. When she is not writing novels, she is training to be a lawyer, working on an illustration, or camping in the woods.

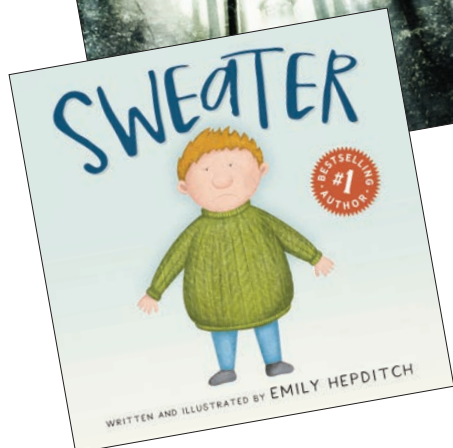
ALSO BY EMILY HEPDITCH



On the coast of Newfoundland, Hannah Fitzgerald's mother has lived her life in near-total isolation. When Hannah returns to prepare her mother to transition into assisted living, her childhood home is anything but welcoming. Hannah discovers a trap door to the house's attic, the one she believed had been permanently sealed shut. Blinded by curiosity, she enters the attic and finds a mysterious bedroom riddled with dark secrets.



Four best friends spend a week hiking in western Newfoundland, tackling a remote route through the Long Range Mountains. But when they stumble upon an illegal hunting shack, they witness a crime that leaves them with dangerous knowledge, and they are then hunted by two expert poachers.



Alexander loves his grandma and all of the wonderful things she makes for him. But when she surprises Alexander with a present that's *not* so wonderful, he has to make it to the end of picture day wearing his itchy, sweaty, scratchy, woolly sweater.

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