

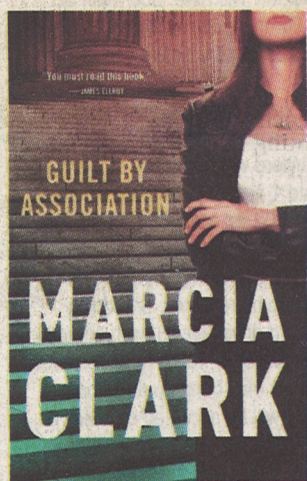
# GUILT BY ASSOCIATION

## Marcia Clark pens legal thriller using her 'avatar'

By Lisa Reisman 4/15/11  
Special to the Times

**M**arcia Clark is coming to Madison. Yes, that Marcia Clark. The feisty lead prosecutor who entered the national consciousness during O.J. Simpson's 1995 "Trial of the Century" and has maintained her place there, regularly weighing in on hot legal topics with Oprah, Larry King, and on the Today Show, in addition to acting as special correspondent for Entertainment Tonight and as a periodic contributor to The Daily Beast.

Little-known facts about one of the most recognized figures in the legal world: An accomplished ballet dancer, she briefly toured with a professional dance company. She considered a career in the State Department — she spoke four languages — but dropped the idea for law school when her interviewer asked whether she could type. And, while growing up, she read the Nancy Drew mystery series. Every single one of the 56 titles.



You might assume the woman who once held her own against high-voltage lawyers F. Lee Bailey and Johnnie Cochran in their famously stinging exchanges idolized the teenage sleuth for out-thinking the grown-ups and bad boys, as

Justice Sonia Sotomayor did. Or, like former Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, she identified with the girl detective's intelligence and sheer boldness.

Not so, said the 57-year-old in a recent interview.

"I used to think how cool it would be to write books like that," recalled the good-natured Clark, who will discuss her highly touted debut novel "Guilt by Association" at R.J. Julia Booksellers at 12:30 p.m. on April 20.

Career and motherhood intervened. Throughout 13 years of winning convictions against murder suspects in the Los Angeles District Attorney's office and establishing a reputation as a determined advocate for victims and for her innovative, daring courtroom style, "the born trial prosecutor," as she once was described by an adversary, never tired of what most lawyers view as the drudgery of drafting motions and appeals.

To judge from "Guilt by Association," the rich experience Clark gained since her childhood days poring over "The Hidden Staircase" and "The Secret of the Old Clock" has yielded her the material to realize her childhood dream. True, she authored the 1997 bestselling "Without a Doubt," a non-fiction account of the Simpson murder trial, but she prefers fiction.

"Having come from a life devoted to the

practice of law, it was a brand new and terrific thing to be able to add evidence whenever I needed it," she said. "So when it looked as if the case wasn't strong enough, I'd hit the backspace button and added... fingerprints! DNA! Fibers! Hair!"

And Clark delivers, with a gripping legal thriller that would make the writers of the Nancy Drew series proud. The page-turner intertwines two cases: the sexual assault on a young woman from a prominent Los Angeles family and the mysterious murder of a popular lawyer in the D.A.'s office. With fluid prose, a skillfully constructed plot, and a main character, the wisecracking L.A. district attorney Rachel Knight, who's as tough with suspects as she is sensitive to young victims, Clark takes us on a rollicking ride through L.A.'s criminal system and the world of power and violence that she formerly inhabited.

Asked whether Rachel Knight represents her alter ego, Clark acknowledged that she freely borrowed from her years as a prosecutor. But

only to a point. "Rachel's my avatar," she said. "She's better than me in every way possible—smarter, hipper, funnier, younger, and she leads a much more exciting life than I did. I'm jealous of her."

"Don't get me wrong," added Esquire Magazine's 1995 Woman of the Year. "She still has me in there. She's got a big mouth, an innate ability to say the wrong things to the wrong people. She's abrasive. She can be too direct. But at the end of the day she's a good friend, a good-hearted person, one who wants to do the right thing, and cares deeply about the victim and justice."

Not exactly the prim, upright Nancy Drew. Then again, just like the creators of her girlhood hero, she's produced a compelling, riveting story.

Marcia Clark will appear at R.J. Julia Booksellers, 768 Boston Post Rd. at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 20. Tickets \$5 which can be used toward purchase of book. To reserve a seat, 203-245-3959.

