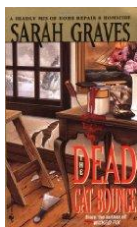


The Home Repair is Homicide mystery series by Sarah Graves



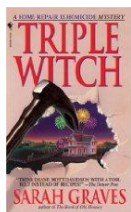
The Dead Cat Bounce (1997)

dead cat bounce *n.* Stock market jargon for a small, temporary rise in a stock's trading price after a sharp drop.

Since she bought her rambling old fixer-upper of a house, Jacobia Tiptree has gotten used to finding things broken. But her latest problem isn't so easily repaired. Along with the rotting floor joists and sagging support beams, there's the little matter of the dead man in Jake's storeroom, an ice pick firmly planted in his cranium.

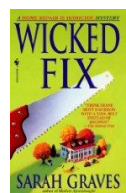
Not much happens in her tiny Maine town, but that's about to change. Jake's unknown guest turns out to be a world-famous corporate raider, local boy turned billionaire Threnody McIlwaine. When Jake's best friend, quiet and dependable Ellie White, readily confesses to the murder, cops and journalists swarm into snowbound Eastport.

Jake smells a cover-up, and begins poking into past history between McIlwaine and Ellie's family. But someone doesn't like nosy neighbors...and Jake's rustic refuge may become her final resting place.



Triple Witch (1999)

A crime wave is sweeping the quiet island town of Eastport, Maine. After discovering the dead body of Kenny Mumford, the town's petty thief and ne'er-do-well, Jacobia "Jake" Tiptree and her best friend, Ellie White, set out to catch the killer. Meanwhile, Jake attempts to start a new life after quitting her job on Wall Street and moving to Eastport with her teenage son, Sam, are thwarted as two creeps from her past show up: her philandering ex-husband, Victor, and Baxter Willoughby, a crooked stockbroker from New York whom Jake helped put in prison. Between repair jobs on the old house she's renovating and trying to keep Victor from moving in next door, Jake comes across two more bodies and evidence of drug dealing and smuggling.

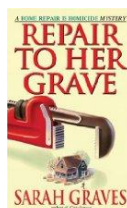


Wicked Fix (2000)

For ex-Wall Streeter Jacobia Tiptree and her teenaged son, Sam, September promises tranquil days winter-proofing their rambling handyman's special of a home in Eastport, Maine. But there's nothing idyllic about this Down East

autumn. For starters, the return of truly vicious native son Reuben Tate stirs up the town. And when somebody slits Reuben's throat and hangs his corpse on the cemetery gate, the police trace a bloodied scalpel to surgeon Victor Tiptree – Jacobia's former husband. Yet Jake knows her troublesome, trouble-prone ex is capable of just about anything except murder. Proving that, though, is another matter.

Eastport is packed with tourists and former residents for the annual Salmon Festival-and Jake soon realizes any Eastporter, past or present, has motive for Tate's murder. To nail the real killer, Jake and her best friend, Ellie White, must probe a past as rotten as crumbling clapboard, while a secret hatred builds toward a series of murders even more brutal than Reuben Tate himself...

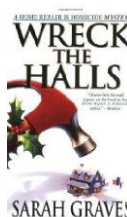


Repair to Her Grave (2001)

Jacobia Tiptree and her teenage son are used to their Eastport, Maine, home attracting more than its share of houseguests. This year Jake is hoping the plaster dust will keep them away while she finally gets her gem of a fixer-upper into shape – from doorknobs and chandeliers to leaky pipes to ghostly phenomena.

But when the charming and mysterious Jonathan Raines appears on her doorstep – and then just as suddenly disappears – remodeling the house becomes the least of Jake's problems. Could Jonathan's disappearance have something to do with his quest for a cursed violin – the one that local legend says was hidden by a long-ago owner of Jake's house before he too vanished without a trace?

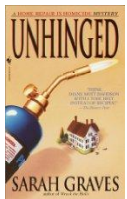
Soon Jonathan's grief-stricken girlfriend arrives downeast, and Jake needs to strip Eastport's past of its idyllic veneer – before a killer paints her very dead indeed!



Wreck the Halls (2001)

People hardly ever lock their doors in Eastport. So when Jake and her best pal, Ellie, arrive at Faye Anne Carmody's kitchen door, they knock and walk right in. But though Christmas is just two weeks away, what they find is far from festive: a dazed Faye Anne covered with blood, and her no-good husband - the town butcher, Merle - nowhere in sight. Nowhere, that is, until Jake discovers his body - tidily wrapped in his own butcher paper... It doesn't take long for news of the murder to race through the small town, and just about everyone has a theory about the grisly crime that has robbed Eastport of its least-

liked citizen. But while police chief Bob Arnold considers it an open-and-shut case, Jake and Ellie aren't convinced of Faye Anne's guilt. Jake has enough going on in her life without trying to investigate a murder. After all, she's just married her longtime love, Wade, and the pair plan to spend the winter rehabilitating the paint-encrusted windows in Jake's old house. But Jake has to admit that there are a lot of details that don't add up: for example, Faye Anne's complaint that she was being stalked, and blood-splattered evidence at the crime scene that just doesn't make sense. Then there is the diary that Faye Anne's secret, sometime boyfriend claims is hidden somewhere in her house. Could Faye Anne's own journal be the key to unlocking an even more fiendish murder plot, or is her double-crossing lover trying to frame her? When yet another Eastport citizen turns up dead, Jake realizes the murderer's trail began long before the night Merle Carmody died. But what keeps eluding her and Ellie is the motive behind the mystery. The truth is so close, they can almost taste it - but can they stop the shrewd killer before he chisels another victim's name onto a tombstone?



Unhinged (2003)

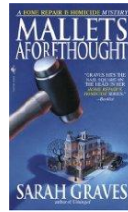
It began with the mysterious disappearance of Harriet Hollingsworth – Eastport's snoopiest resident. Everyone is convinced the old busybody bolted out of town to escape her creditor – everyone except Jake and her best friend Ellie who know Harriet would never leave home without her most prized possession. But before Jake and Ellie can persuade police chief Bob Arnold to open an investigation, they'll need to come up with proof more sinister than a pair of abandoned binoculars.

Just as Jake starts poking around for clues, things suddenly take a troubling turn for the worse. A suspicious accident nearly kills her teenaged son, Sam, and her husband, Wade, just misses getting his head blown off. Jake is prepared to attribute these incidents to a spate of bad luck – until another "accident" leaves a visitor to Eastport unmistakably dead.

Most perplexing, all this mayhem coincides with the unexpected arrival of a man from Jake's past: a former New York City cop. Harry Markle claims he has unintentionally brought an unwelcome guest into Eastport: a crook determined to knock off everyone with ties to Harry.

Twenty-four hours ago, Jake's only worry was fixing her broken-down gutters and downspouts before the big storm swept into town. Now, everything seems to be falling apart all around her. Jake knows from experience that the truth is usually as messy and complicated as do-it-yourself remodeling. As it becomes chillingly clear that appearances in this quaint community are more

misleading than ever, she'll have to find a way to lure a homicidal maniac into the light – before he nails another victim.

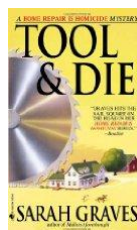


Mallets Aforethought (2004)

It's Eastport's most notorious landmark: the old Harlequin House. Named for the disgraced physician Chester Harlequin, it was used as a hideout for gunshot gangsters and their molls during Prohibition's heyday. Now fixer-upper enthusiast Jake Tiptree and Harlequin's only living descendant, Ellie White, are refurbishing the mansard-roofed mansion to host the local Historical Society's upcoming gala. But when stripping down old wallpaper reveals a secret door to a room containing not one but two corpses, Jake and Ellie once again find home repair leading to homicide.

One of the bodies is a skeleton dressed in 1920s flapper chic. But the other is that of real-estate mogul Hector Gosling, and in his pocket is a paper bearing the single word "Guilty." The less-than-scrupulous tycoon has been poisoned, and when it's learned that the offending substance is the poison that Ellie's husband George has been using to kill red ants, he is immediately taken into custody. Then it develops that George had recently accused Gosling of a scheme to scam George's vulnerable old aunt out of her life savings – and George out of his inheritance.

With George held for murder, Jake and a pregnant Ellie swing into action. In between Ellie's Lamaze sessions, baby showers, and CPR classes taught by Jake's ex-husband Victor, the two amateur sleuths must sift their way through a trail of seemingly contradictory clues. Then another corpse surfaces and suddenly Jake and Ellie realize they must find this killer fast. A clever culprit is not only building an airtight case against Ellie's husband. He – or she – is planning to nail everyone who stands in the way.



Tool and Die (2004)

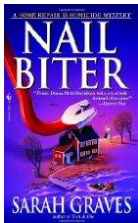
It's a bright June afternoon and old-house-fixer-upper Jake Tiptree is driving through downeast Maine on an unusual errand. She's getting ready to interview a large, angry man with a criminal history. Jim Diamond may or may not be harassing his ex-wife with life-threatening letters, but Jake promised her new housekeeper, Bella Diamond, she'd look into the matter. An ex-con and a deadbeat, Jim Diamond doesn't have a history of violence...that is, not until Jake arrives at his

apartment and discovers that a killer has been there first.

Suddenly Jake and her best friend, Ellie White, find themselves at the center of a murder with too many suspects and too few clues. And as if that's not enough, Jake is now saddled with the manic Bella, whose certainty that she'll be the next victim is fueling a supercompulsive neatness – one that threatens to clean Jake and her long-suffering husband, Wade, out of house and home.

Add to that a moose in her kitchen, a rebellious son with a habit of dumping Miss Right for Miss Wrong, and a troublesome ex of her own, and Jake is already at wit's end. Then she gets word that a horde of her dad's long-lost relatives mean to descend on Eastport, intending to be put up at her far-from-fixed-up fixer-upper.

When the killer does strike again, it's not where Jake expects...and the victim couldn't be more of a surprise. For this is a case bigger than the usual angry—ex-spouse variety, and now that Jake and Ellie have gotten themselves involved, they've each won a special place in a ruthless murderer's master plan of greed, deception, and death. And the prize? A pair of eternally private rooms – six feet under!

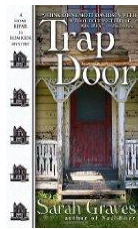


Nail Biter (2005)

Buying a beachfront fixer-upper to lease out to Eastport, Maine's, burgeoning tourist crowd seems like a good idea to Jake Tiptree and her best friend, Ellie White. But working double-time as landladies to a coven of wannabe witches isn't what they had in mind. And it only gets worse when Jake is called out one stormy night to make a repair – and stumbles on a dead body in the utility shed.

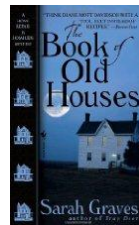
A small-time thief and street preacher with a particularly violent message, the deceased was no favorite of Jake's – nor of anyone else in Eastport. But what's he doing shot to death on Jake's property? Jake's bewitching tenants – including an ex-cop, a con man, and a mute teenage girl – claim to have been too busy conjuring spells to have heard or seen a thing. Then a member of the coven disappears without a trace and Jake doesn't think it's a case of witchcraft – but a kidnapping...or worse.

Scandal, secrets, and a mysterious box buried deep in the foundation of her own home are just the beginning of a mystery that threatens to bring Jake's house – and life – crashing down. Now she and Ellie are racing to find a missing girl who may be the key to it all...or lead them to a killer holding the final nails to their coffins.



Trap Door (2006)

Graves's humorous, well-constructed 10th home improvement finds Jacobia "Jake" Tiptree, former money manager to the mob, still hard at work on her 1823 Federal-style house in Eastport, Maine. But she's got more to fix than a roof caving in: her dead ex-husband, Victor, is haunting the house and her friend Jemmy is on the run from hit men, including the ruthless Walter Henderson, who's also made his home in Eastport. A local young man who had been dating Walter's daughter has gone missing, and when Jake and her friend Ellie show up at the assassin's home, they make a grisly discovery in his barn.



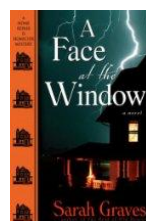
The Book of Old Houses (2007)

When a mysterious book is unearthed from the foundation of Jake's 1823 fixer-upper, she immediately sends it off to local book historian Horace Robotham. After all, there must be a logical explanation for why the long-buried volume has *her* name in it – written in what looks suspiciously like blood. But all logic goes out the window when the book disappears – and Horace turns up dead.

The suspects include Horace's spoiled daughter, who has enough credit card debt to give killing her rich daddy a certain appeal. And just about everyone's pointing fingers at a local crackpot with a penchant for black magic and an unholy lust for its artifacts – including antique texts inked in blood. To complicate matters further, there's a mysterious stranger in town with vengeance in his heart and a gun in his pocket.

Never mind that Jake's just taken a sledgehammer to her ancient bathroom. Or that she forgot she's set to host a party for Eastport's most treasured teacher. She's also about to lose her beloved housekeeper on account of her father's hasty marriage proposal...and her son, Sam, has just taken his first tentative steps toward sobriety.

But all that will have to wait, because when two more victims turn up in a town better known for its scenic views and historic homes than its body count, she and her comrade-in-sleuthing, Ellie White, need to go on the prowl to find someone who may believe that the pages of an ancient book are the blueprint for a perfect murder.



A Face at the Window (2008)

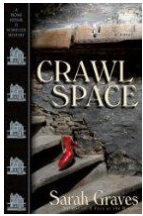
As a home repair enthusiast, Jake knows that nothing lasts forever - not windows or doors, not plaster or plumbing. And not good fortune.

After more than three decades eluding justice, the man

who murdered her mother is finally about to stand trial – until he vanishes into thin air. Jake has a terrible foreboding of where Ozzie Campbell will turn up next. And while the local police chief is sure she's overreacting, the truth is far worse than even Jake's worst fears.

With her normally full house empty for at least another week, Jake has been looking forward to the unaccustomed peace and quiet. Now her cozy, well-loved home feels more like a big empty death trap ready to snap shut. First a pair of out-of-towners clearly not in Eastport for vacation turn up asking questions about her. And if she has any doubt they're connected to Campbell, those doubts are erased when he calls her with a grim warning.

But exactly what Campbell wants from her isn't clear, only that he'll stop at nothing to hurt those closest to Jake. And his first victims are the most defenseless of all. Suddenly Jake can't help but feel that her house – and her life – has far too many windows. And in any one of them she might see the face of her killer.



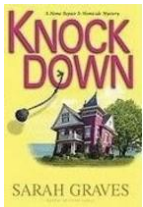
Crawlspace (2009)

The infamous Dodd murders are hardly among Eastport's proudest legacies. So when bestselling true-crime author Carolyn Rathbone arrives to research the case for a new book, the locals in the seaside town let

her know that she's about as welcome as a spoiled clam. But surely no one would harm a crime writer out of a sense of civic pride-or would they?

Jake has her own problems, from the mysteries of old-house insulation to an anonymous caller plaguing her with death threats. But with Carolyn's arrival, the slayings of the wealthy Dodd women suddenly go from cold case to hot topic-much to someone's dismay. For Carolyn Rathbone's untimely investigation hasn't only reopened old wounds and stirred up new suspicions; it's unearthed a string of deadly secrets – ones that a cunning killer is grimly determined to rebury right along with Carolyn herself.

Suddenly Jake finds herself inescapably targeted by one of the most deranged criminal minds she's ever encountered. For as much as she fights to insulate herself from his grisly compulsions, someone with a taste for terror has already crept closer than she dares to imagine. She'd rather die than lose the home and family she's built – and that suits her nemesis fine, because her death is just exactly what he has planned.



Knockdown (2011)

Jake is deep in her latest home improvement project - repainting a porch - when she notices the man repeatedly biking past her house. His face is unsettlingly familiar, but his chilling message seems inexplicable:

Blood shows up again. Murder will out.

If it's a prank, it's an ugly one, and so is the anonymous email warning her to beware the Fourth of July – just two days away. Back in her days as a hotshot financial manager she did business with plenty of shady characters, but she's still baffled as to the identity of her nemesis - until she receives a photo of a murdered man.

Now Jake knows what – and whom – she's up against. But knowing her enemy is no guarantee that she can escape the grim payoff he has in store for her. From home invasion to kidnapping, this twisted killer is slowly but surely plotting a knockdown with not just Jake but the entire town of Eastport at its explosive center. And no one can predict when or where the shockingly deadly finale will occur.



This booklist prepared as a handout for the
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SDC / June 2011