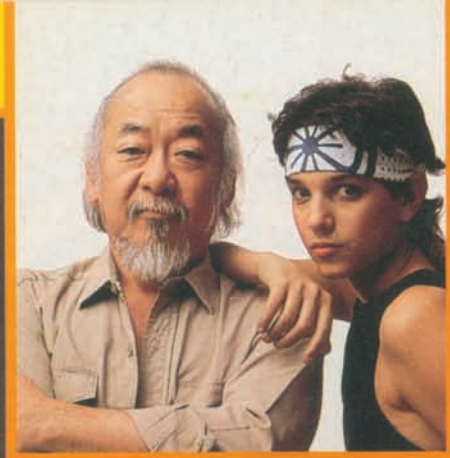


Ralph Macchio's *Karate* master



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UNCLE SAM'S DIRTY BOOK

A U.S. commission,
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(Kim Basinger in *9½ Weeks*)





Gosling grew bored writing "ordinary" novels. Only when she "discovered what fun it is to kill people could I sustain my interest."

TO THE **Top**

WRITER PAULA GOSLING HITS A BULL'S-EYE, THANKS TO SLY STALLONE'S LATEST BLOCKBLUSTER, *COBRA*

Paula Gosling takes a brief break from her writing and smiles sweetly as she pours a cup of tea in the parlor of her quaint Victorian house in Bath, 100 miles west of London. Half a world away, the man they call Cobra, Sylvester Stallone's latest stubble-faced, muscle-flexing screen hero, is checking his laser-aimed submachine gun and stalking L.A. in search of crime-thirsty street thugs.

The woman from Bath and the Hollywood screen hero appear bondless, but in fact, each has changed the other's life. Not long ago, Gosling, one of Britain's most popular crime writers, made a startling discovery: Her first novel, 1978's *A Running Duck*, which she had optioned to Warner Bros. for a "mid-five-figure" sum and seemingly



forgotten about, is the basis for Stallone's *Cobra*. Whatever the movie rakes in at the box office, Gosling will get "a small percentage" of the take, and given Stallone's track record, that's certain to be a tidy bundle. "I haven't really taken it in yet," says Gosling, 44, a transplanted American. "It's all very exciting."

Very, indeed. The first Gosling heard about her good fortune was when the son of a friend saw a *Cobra* preview and spotted her name in the credits. Unbeknownst to her, the movie company had gone ahead with a treatment of *A Running Duck*, from which

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"It's strange that Stallone should play the lead, because I wrote the character based on Michael Douglas," says Gosling.

Stallone penned a script that barely resembles her story. "I guess they figure they give you the money and that's that," she says. Gosling has never met Stallone, has never been to Hollywood and has not even been invited to a screening of the movie. But any hard feelings about the snub should be soothed by her financial gain. In addition to the box office bounty, she'll receive another round of royalties when the book (it was sold in the U.S. as *Fair Game*) is reissued in Britain under its original name along with the cover blurb, "Now filmed as *Cobra*." Warner Books wanted to rerelease the book in the U.S. as *Cobra*, but Stallone refused to allow his name and likeness to be used because it was Gosling's story, not his version.

The sparkling, savvy woman in the middle of all this seems plucked from one of those cherished British clichés—she waters the flowers, makes the tea and takes care of the kids and then cranks out bloodcurdling thrillers. "I feel guilty sometimes about all the violence in my books," says the twice-married author. "It's not the violence

that fascinates me, but people's reactions. I love to study duress. That's where your true nature comes out."

Even as Paula Osius, the daughter of a Detroit inventor, she astounded her teachers with her writing. She took up poetry at Wayne State University, but thoughts of criminal mischief were beginning to percolate in her fertile mind. While working in the college English department, Gosling recalls, "A window slammed down on its own one day, and I thought how good it would be to have somebody shot inside a room by somebody on a roof, but no one would understand how it could have happened with the window shut. I still haven't used the idea yet."

It was after graduation that Gosling stopped thinking less about felonies and more about how to earn a living. She tried her hand with a Detroit advertising agency but found the work unsatisfying. In 1964, in search of romance, intrigue and adventure, Gosling quit her job and took off for England with a girlfriend. "I felt at home the minute I stepped off the plane," she says. Romance followed. Working in a London ad agency, she met copywriter Christopher Gosling.

They married in 1968, had two children, Abigail, now 16, and Emelie, now 13, and divorced nine years later. "The things we shouted at each other began to become things we really meant," she says.

That marriage proved the catalyst for Gosling's career. "I got so lonely when Chris was away working that first I read everything in the house," she remembers. "Then I decided the only way to find anything new was to write it myself."

Write it she did. Her sixth thriller, *The Wychford Murders*, will be published in August in Britain. Married since 1981 to John Hare, 36, an accountant turned bike shop owner, Gosling continues to write every day at a word processor in her book-lined study. There, too, are her 1978 and 1985 awards from Britain's Crime Writers Association for best crime novels. Someday, she says, she might like to go to Hollywood, although she hasn't been stateside for 18 years. She might even like to meet Stallone, whom she considers some hunk. For the moment, however, it is teatime and her mind is on other matters. A murder most gruesome, no doubt.

ROBERT TEMPLE