

L.A. STARKS



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L. A. Starks Newsletter, Fall 2009

Welcome to my semi-annual newsletter.

Writing: *Sleuth Sayer*, the newsletter for the Southwest Chapter of Mystery Writers of America, recently published my [article](#) about Black Swans in the writing business.

I am continuing work on the next novel. I've been fortunate to get first-reader critique from a fellow author. Settings range from Vancouver to Tulsa, London to Florence.

Energy. There's so much energy news I'll summarize on only two subjects. The biggest issue is the cap-and-trade bill—whether it passes and if so, in what form. In general, Waxman-Markey favors wind, solar, and clean coal. Because wind and solar are diffuse sources, some environmentalists are concerned about land use issues.

In natural gas world, volatility is the story. Prices last year as high as \$13.50/mcf (thousand cubic feet) fell to less than \$3.00/mcf a few weeks ago before climbing back to \$3.50/mcf. The mover is “new” natural gas supply from shale formations across the country, especially in Texas (Barnett), Louisiana (Haynesville), and Pennsylvania (Marcellus). It's not unusual for shale-gas wells

to initially produce several million cubic feet a day, and then quickly decline. The characteristic of rapid decline causes one company, Tudor Pickering and Holt, to predict higher natural gas prices next year. Surprisingly, the loss of demand from the weaker economy, full winter storage, and the prevalence of very cheap, mobile liquefied natural gas (LNG) may not be factors as significant as the size of shale gas discoveries, counterweighted by their decline rates.

Other: ID theft is one of the country's most frequent crimes. I have hard-won advice, unfortunately from experience. Two days into the suspect group's escapade with my data, I was lucky to get two telephone calls, including one that began, "we almost caught them." After three weeks of telephoning and visiting everywhere from the Department of Public Safety to the jail (for fingerprinting), I'm now contending with the paperwork.

Lesson 1: Consider LifeLock or a similar identity protection service. If you skip Lesson 1 and become a target, see lessons 2-5. Lesson 2: Work fast, because they do. I placed fraud alerts on my credit bureau reports (Experian, Transunion, and Equifax) Friday night. It didn't change what they'd done Thursday and Friday but stopped them afterward. The total with my ID was sixteen attempts, eight successful. Lesson 3: Call your bank and major credit accounts. Even if the thieves haven't hit those places, they'll try. Lesson 4: Make a police report and get the report number. Lesson 5: Immediately call each business at which the thieves used or tried to use your ID. You can find these in your online credit reports.

Did I mention the paperwork?

Reading: On a luckier note, October is mystery month. I've been reading thrillers by Stella Rimington, the former head of MI-5, the United Kingdom's counter-intelligence and internal security agency.

Happy reading, LAS



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