

A Sorrowful Sanctuary: A Lane Winslow Mystery by Iona Whishaw

This is one of my all time favourite series and IMHO this is the best book yet and I sure hope there are many more to follow. This story has the usual fine mystery and great descriptive writing of the beautiful setting and atmosphere and all the grand teas, the good investigation that relies on resources that were available in the late 1940s in BC and a quite solid and satisfactory ending that I think will make all readers very happy but you'll have to read the book to see for yourself. However what makes these books stand out from other mystery series is that they are very character driven and all the characters, including the minor characters, are very well developed and the character's daily lives are as important to the story as the mystery. I really like how Ms Whishaw is able to weave so much history into the story and make it so much of an integral part of the mystery without slowing down the story and how each book touches on a social issue most of which are still very relevant even today. I love Lane's telephone and I grew up with one just like it on the wall in our kitchen in Belleville, Ontario. Again Lane and Fred are fine characters however once again I think Constable Ames is the best character in the story. I think everyone should check out Ms Whishaw's website and read her Blog 'cause it's just about as interesting as the books - <http://www.ionawhishaw.com/blog>

Remember Tokyo: A Foreign Affairs Mystery by Nick Wilkshire

I've read all three books in this series and have really liked them all and again as I have noticed with many series each book seems to have less humour than the previous one although I did get some chuckles and a few good laughs in this one and especially the scene with Charlie and Furuno in the garden. I find Nick Wilkshire's writing style makes for quite easy reading and, while I have no knowledge of Tokyo so I can't vouch for the accuracy, I really enjoyed all the solid descriptions of the crowds, settings, shrines, clothing, atmosphere, customs and food especially the sake and Charlie's non-mastery of the chopsticks! Charlie Hillier is just as strong a character as in the earlier books and Chikako Kobayashi is great character and a perfect partner for Charlie as they both have very little concern for protocol and proper procedures. Charlie's boss, Louis Denault, turns out not quite as stuffy as expected and Rob Lepage is a bit of an enigma. The various bad guys and Kimura, who are all trying to get the info from Rob, are all a pretty bad lot and all meet appropriate ends. And, as usual, poor old Charlie doesn't get the girl! I found this book very well edited and proof read with only a couple of problems with one of them being quite serious. A minor error appears in Chapter 11 where I encountered this -"steppi SACCADE ng". Of course "SACCADE" doesn't belong in the middle of "stepping" and although it is a legitimate word I can't figure out why it ever got into this book. Now the next problem is a lot more serious and caused me to

deduct 1 star from what should have been a 4 star read. In chapter 21 Elizabeth Farnsworth is talking to Charlie and says - "I don't know who this Kimura woman is, but I don't believe her and Charlie really are together." Obviously "Charlie" should read "Rob" and there is no way this should have got past a human proof reader but then again those computer spell checkers are all a writer needs now, eh? Anyway an enjoyable read that I really liked and I'll highly recommend and I'm looking forward to my next adventure with Charlie Hillier wherever he is next posted.

Past & Present by Judy Penz Sheluk

While I see nothing but 4 and 5 star reviews on this book I'm afraid that I may be the party pooper again because I can only, reluctantly, force my self to rate this one as 2.5 stars and because I'm not allowed to do that I've grudgingly rounded it up to 3. I've read and liked both of Ms Sheluk's Gold Dolphin mysteries and this book is just as well written, edited and proofread with the same virtually complete lack of errors common to many eBooks and has an interesting premise but I find it difficult to understand how two series by the same author set in such well described locations in such a close proximity to each other and even including some of the same characters could give me two so diametrically opposed opinions of them. I'm not going to write a long review of my problems with this book because most of the problems outlined in my review of book 1 "Skeletons In The Attic" apply to this book as well. Here is a link to my review of "Skeletons In The Attic" -

https://www.goodreads.com/review/show/1752479688?book_show_action=true&from_review_page=1

I think my biggest problem with this book is that I am still confused over the very large cast of characters and all the name changes via marriage, divorce, death, adoption or whatever and I still haven't figured out all the genealogy. Perhaps it would have helped if a list of the characters and some family trees were included in the book. I also think the title is a bit misleading as I don't think there is much of an investigation into a real "Present" mystery. I think I like a bit more action in my mysteries and I wish Arabella had a bigger presence in this story. In reality the 2.5 star rating is because I half liked this book and half didn't like it but I'll still read more of Ms Sheluk's work and I won't even back away from buying them if I can't find loaners or freebies. However I can not say that I highly recommend this book.

An Old, Cold Grave (Lane Winslow #3) by Iona Wishaw

I've now read all 4 of the books in this fine series and I have book 5 on pre-order for delivery on Tues Sept 25/18. While I really enjoyed this story I don't think I can rate it as one of the best in the series so far but it is a bit different than the earlier books. This one is a bit more serious and takes a great look at a historical social problem that for once isn't entirely the fault of the Canadian

Federal government but puts more of the blame on the British government. As usual Lane Winslow and Fred Darling are very well developed characters, likeable but with very normal human warts. Again, as usual, Ames is probably my favourite character in these stories and it is nice to see the Hughes ladies having their turn in the limelight although Mabel's angst is perhaps a bit overdone and dragged out a bit too long. One can only hold a lot of sympathy for Bob/Charlie who is a wonderful character and I am sure many readers would have liked a kinder and probably more just ending to his story just like I have. Not having Angela and the kids involved took away much of the lighter and slightly comic relief from the serious story and Gladys's fixation on having a greenhouse is possibly a bit overdone, also, but could be seen as appropriate for her age. I kind of like these types of historical mysteries but for some reason at this time I seem to have been reading quite a few of them very close together and although I've started to read a more contemporary mystery I have a strong hunch just from it's title - "Past & Present" - that it, too, involves a mystery set in some past timeframe. Anyway now I'm ready for book 5 of this good series!

Winner's Loss by Mel Bradshaw

I've read and enjoyed the earlier two books in the Paul Shenstone series and I think I really like this one the most so far in the series. I actually like historical mysteries quite a bit and I somehow seem to be have been reading a fair number of them recently and this is one of the better ones. Being familiar with the downtown Toronto setting, at least in the early 1950's, it is really interesting to get a glimpse of what it was like in the 1920's. This well written and edited book is populated with many fine characters with many of them obvious suspects in the murder. Paul is a solid character, a good detective and I think his personal life as well as his detective methods are very well described and fit the timeframe very realistically. The actual murderer came as a bit of a surprise as, although he was involved all along in the story, there was nothing really pointing him out as the culprit and the method of the murder was really quite unique. I for one suspected many of the other characters and, of course, was absolutely wrong! I loved the chameleon Model T Roadster! It is very interesting to contrast the investigative tools available to Paul at that time with those available now. Yeah and plywood really was available at that time too but skeptical me had to Google that. Just an other example of modern day tools that Paul didn't have. A good read and if Mr Bradshaw writes any more Paul Shenstone mysteries I'll surely read them.

Snowed Under: The Leafy Hollow Mysteries, Book 5 by Rickie Blair

I've read all the books in this series, in order, and have enjoyed them all with, of course, some more than others and this one is no exception. I have found though, as seems to happen in many series of this type, the amount of humour in each story seems to reduce in each book until I found very few laughs or even giggles in this story. This story has a quite complex mystery and the usual quite unorthodox investigation by Verity and Emy resulted in some escapades like the

butter incidents that did provide some light comic relief. I kind of liked not having Gideon and Adeline and all the conspiracy stuff and we did find out where Carson and Rubin spent the winter but that took away much of the humour of the earlier books. The descriptions of winter in Leafy Hollow are well done and a few new characters introduced who will probably stay around as regulars and lead to more adventures with Verity and Emy. BTW Jeff is sure a great character. Looking forward to more episodes in the life of Verity, Emy, Jeff and Leafy Hollow.

The Fourth Motive (Farrell and Kearns #2) by Sean Lynch

This was an OK read but not quite as violent as "Wounded Prey" and I don't think I liked it quite as much as that one. I will probably read more by this author when I want something a bit darker and grittier.

Catnip (The Dunbarton Mysteries Series #1) by Valerie Tate

I like to read a light and fluffy cozy type of mystery and preferably one with some humour as a wind down after finishing a serious, dark, gritty and violent crime novel and I give preference to Canadian authors so I was very glad to have found Valerie Tate who is a new, to me at least, Canadian author. I quite enjoyed this story and it should be worth more than the 3 stars I have rated it except for a couple of problems, that I'll talk about later, that I really can not excuse. This story is well written with good character, weather and setting descriptions and some very likeable characters like Alicia, Chris, Shae, Alex and Hugh and for a change Samuel and his police officers are not a complete bunch of blundering idiots. The bad guys are genuinely unlikeable but the one trying to capture Marmalade provided much of the humour in the book. And, of course, Marmalade is the star of this show! Now to a problem that I can not tolerate in a book and which will cause me to downrate that book. I just can't stand it when a character's name changes back and forth in the book. When the housekeeper is introduced her name is Mrs Stuart and that is what she is called until mid chapter 42 when she suddenly becomes Mrs Stewart and stays that way until chapter 48 when she reverts to Mrs Stuart. You can't tell me that any human proofreader ever read chapter 42 to chapter 48 of this book before it was published! Now my second little beef has to do with the naming of fictitious municipalities. If an author is going to invent a fictitious town as a setting for the book they should at least do enough research to ensure that there is no actual municipality with that name in the province where the book is set. Even a Google search will reveal that Dunbarton is a neighbourhood in Pickering on the shore of Lake Ontario and that Lancaster is a town in the Glengarry region of eastern Ontario on the shore of the St Lawrence River. To travel from Ms Tate's Dunbarton to Lancaster would actually take most of a day not the hour or so it does in this book. Many authors invent fictitious settings and give them realistic sounding but completely fictitious names such as Ted Wood's "Murphy's Harbor" or Inger Ash Wolfe's "Port Dundas". Then some authors disguise a real

city with a fictitious name like Howard Engel's "Grantham" for St. Catherines or Giles Blunt's "Algonquin Bay" for North Bay and many authors just set their stories in a real town such as Janice Richardson's "Spencer Funeral Home" series set in Niagara on the Lake or Robert Rotenberg's "Detective Greene" series set in Toronto and many others but in every case the topography, weather, distances, industries and people etc. must be realistic, possible and probable for that locality. Anyway basically I liked this story and I'll read anymore by Ms Tate but I think this book could do with the release of a new edition with these problems cleaned up.

Finders Keepers by Sean Costello

I've had this book sitting in my calibre library for some time and had sort of forgotten about it until I started searching around for a story that was quite a bit more gritty, violent and with more action to read following a couple of pretty mild and cozy type of mysteries when I remembered Sean Costello and this book sure was exactly the kind of read I needed. I've read and enjoyed his thrillers like "Last Call" and "Squall" but as I am not a huge fan of horror stories I've steered clear of his books that fit into that genre. I have "Here After" and I'll remember to read it when I need another strong story of this type. Anyway Mr Costello has a fine talent for introducing some well developed, believable and likeable good guy characters, like Keith and Katie, and at the same time some pretty evil and very unlikeable bad guys and this book has its share of all of those with the bad guys greatly outnumbering the good and making it difficult to try to pick one as the worst. However having met many corrupt cops in my reading I think Detective Sergeant Alister Raybould would probably rate as the worst bad cop I've met and the worst bad guy in this story. This book has all the great setting descriptions that are common in Mr Costello's books and the fine writing and good editing that makes for really enjoyable reading, a fabulous shoot-em-up and a great and happy ending for the good guys and quite satisfactory endings for most of the bad guys. And then there is Charlotte! Now another thing that Mr Costello does very well in these thrillers is to include some humour to counterbalance the grit and violence and among other things Charlotte helps that aspect in a big way. Anyway a very good read that I highly recommend to readers who like gritty, violent, action packed thrillers with quite a good study of human behaviour and a bit of humour on the side.

A Killer Read (An Ashton Corners Book Club Mystery #1) by Erika Chase

I've had the books in this series in my library for some time and have intended to read them as they are by a Canadian author and once again I have broken my rule and started the series out of order as I read the second book "Read and Buried" first as part of my Christmas 2016 reading. Now I did think book 2 was an enjoyable read but it's quite possible that if I had read this book first I may never have continued the series and I'll talk about that later.. This book is an OK read with a fairly but perhaps too large a cast of quirky characters, a possibly too complex of a mystery and a solution that sort of just slid in involving a minor

character that while he was there in the story really didn't have a big role until the reveal. As I said with book 2 I am not a huge fan of a Canadian author setting her book in the southern US but I wouldn't downrate it for that. Now for a few things that may have deterred me from reading on in the series and I don't remember these faults from book 2 but that may just be that after 2 years I can't remember much about that book and that may be one of the problems here and that is that nothing is very memorable about this book. The writing style is considerably more tell than show at the same time as being very repetitious. Every time Lizzie gets dressed we get a highly detailed and wholly unnecessary description of every piece of clothing she puts on right down to the colour of the lace on her panties. Did I mention she drives a Mazda? So we're told about a dozen times! Oh yeah we better do some running or some more running and some further running so we can have some more detailed descriptions of each piece of running gear she dons. Now there seem to be two cats here, somewhere, and they even have cheesy names but they have absolutely nothing to do with the story except once again we have to be told every time Lizzie goes out she has to stop to feed the cats. And then there is the mysterious manuscript and the phone calls which again have nothing to do with the story and we never do learn who the caller is or what any of that's about. Now this is not a bad book and I have acquired the series as freebies and I would have been a bit peeved if I had bought them and I may read book 3 if I need a lighter read sometime but it won't be too high a priority on my TBR.

Heartbreaker (A Willows and Parker Mystery #8) by Laurence Gough

Disappointed but maybe it's not as bad as I first thought. It has one flaw that I really do not, personally, like and I'll have more to say about that later. I really like this series and especially Jack and Claire and Annie and the rest of the regulars and the great Vancouver setting and I'm glad Jack got rid of that non-existent '43 Oldsmobile. One thing that really stands out in this series is the realistic progress of the timeline so that now we have cell phones and computers and Asian built cars etc! It is great to see Jack and Claire's relationship growing and to follow how they handle their personal problems while still working their current cases. Jack really has a problem with Sean. Now there are really two stories here running simultaneously that don't appear to be connected but really end up doing so and this is where my pet peeve comes along and knocks a couple of stars off this book. I was quite enjoying the story and Jack and Claire's investigation and the main bad guys meet satisfactory endings but I will never rate any book very highly where any of the culprits no matter how minor a role they had in the story are allowed to walk off, scot free, into the sunset with two suitcases full of money and the book just suddenly stops. Even some kind of an indication that this story would continue in a subsequent book would have rescued at least 1 star. Anyway I absolutely intend to read the rest of this series in order if I can get them all as ebooks.

Stranger Danger by Steve Richer

I found Steve Richer as a new to me Canadian crime author and I have had a few of his books in my calibre library for some time but I really don't know why I have just not got around to reading any until now. I was looking for something darker, grittier and more violent after reading some light fluffy cozy mystery and the synopsis and blurbs gave me the idea that this book might fit those criteria. Well it most certainly does all of that at the same time as including a pretty good police procedural with some well developed and likeable characters like detectives Gannon and especially Mobley when we learn about her burden. Then there are most of the adult characters like Tori, Lucas, Felicia, Jasper and Dr Curnutt who all do some of the stupidest things that no sensible adult would ever do. I found the writing and the flow of the story to really contribute to the dark and sinister atmosphere and the suspense as to who the next victim may be. We read these books for entertainment and escape and there sure is plenty of both in this one and I did enjoy the read but I'm afraid that it takes a massive suspension of all disbelief to accept and believe that an 8 to 10 year old child would be in any way capable of doing any of the things that Boyd does in this story. The whole thing is just a way too far fetched, over the top and unrealistic to be in any way believable. If this book had just ended with a realistic ending without the slight hint that there's chance of a sequel it would have been OK but we sure don't need a sequel and I most surely will never buy one although I will probably try some other of Mr Richer's works.

Endgame by Jeffrey Round

Although I am not a great fan of Agatha Christie I have probably, in my younger days, read most of her books but I can not remember if I ever read "And Then There Were None". However I am a great fan of Jeffrey Round and have read all his Dan Sharp stories and I would like to read the Bradford Fairfax series if they were available as eBooks . I found "Endgame" to be a very good read that I really enjoyed even though I usually find it difficult to like a book much when I really don't like any of the characters in the story. Of course one of the main points of this story is just how mean, nasty and unlikeable these people are and the justice delivered to them for their horrendous act in the past. I thought Mr Round's descriptions of the island setting, the storm and general atmosphere contributing to the tension and suspense were very well written and I really hadn't caught on to the perpetrator until the quite surprising, to me, reveal. I did find it took a bit of a suspension of disbelief to accept the way the still alive people treated all the deaths and not just the first one as some other reviewers have indicated. Again although I liked this book I really like the Dan Sharp stories more and I hope Mr Round has more of them on way.

Plantation Shudders(Cajun Country Mystery #1) by Ellen Byron

I won this book in a contest on the author's website much to my surprise as I so seldom if ever win any contests and in fact I can only vaguely remember winning a book in a GoodReids giveaway many years ago. However I'm quite glad I won

this as I found it to be a very enjoyable read and although it's the first of Ms Byron's that I've read it won't be the last. This book has most of the required elements of a cozy mystery but it is possibly a bit too gritty and the plot and motives for the murders are a bit too complex for a regular cozy. Most of the possibly too large a cast of characters are well drawn and solid with Maggie, Gran and Bo being tops and really likeable. Maybe we didn't get to know Rufus as much as we could have but he sure is a real jerk anyway. All the guests at the B & B comprise all the victims and suspects and most had some hidden agendas that provide Maggie and Bo lot's of red herrings to chase. I liked the descriptions of the settings, weather and the mansion itself and then there is all the food! I've never been to New Orleans but many years ago I found a small restaurant in Dallas TX that served Cajun food and had an Oompah Band that serenaded you on the outdoor patio and I fell in love with Crawfish Etouffee and fried Alligator Tails and other goodies. Anyway Maggie solved the mystery and which led to quite a good action scene and one of those alligators! The ending is pretty satisfactory with the bad guys brought to appropriate justice. I didn't really find a great deal of LOL humour in this story but quite a few smiles and chuckles and I find that to be fairly common with many supposedly humorous cozies. Maybe there's a bit too much unnecessary happy ending stuff in the epilogue which wasn't really needed but we'll see in book 2 which I have and intend to read when I need another lighter wind down read after a serious crime novel.

Town Haunts (An Anna Nolan Mystery #2) by Cathy Spencer

Although the books in this series contain most of the elements of cozy mysteries they are quite a bit grittier and have somewhat more complex mystery plots and a bit more violence than regular cozy mysteries. However that doesn't completely stop them from being a fun wind down read following a serious crime novel. This story has everything you'd ever want in a good mystery such as well drawn and likeable characters like Anna, Erna, Steve and Sherman and not so likeable ones like Tiernay for who you can still feel a lot of sympathy and a perp identified in a quite surprising twist. I know I read this out of season but that doesn't really matter because I think you'd have to know there would be some real world explanations for all the paranormal ghostly happenings. Now although I thoroughly enjoyed this book there are a few things that caused me to downrate it somewhat. First I am not really happy with the ending of a mystery when the perp walks off into the sunset with no justice applied and next there are a couple of very severe editing errors which should never have passed by a proofreader. In book 1 "Framed For Murder" the town in Alberta was named "Chinook" and suddenly in this book it has had its name changed to "Crane". I don't like it when characters names change back and forth in a book and that goes for towns, too. And now for a real major goof – Here's a quote from the beginning of Chapter 29 -

"Erna had called during the afternoon to report that no one at the store had any inkling as to Henry's whereabouts once he was back in town, or even a guess as to where he had been hiding. She had also come up with the theory that Henry must 'XXX ' have committed suicide due to the absence of a stool or ladder at the crime scene, and they had congratulated"

The omission of the word 'not' where I have inserted 'XXX' in that quote changes the meaning of Erna's theory to the complete opposite of what it was supposed to mean. Unforgivable and unacceptable and worth almost 2 stars!
The third book in the series "Tidings of Murder and Woe" is on my to-buy-for-Xmas list and is definitely going to wait for my 2018 Xmas reading.

It Begins In Betrayal (Lane Winslow #4) by Iona Wishaw

I don't know why I read this one out of order and skipped book 3 which I already had in my calibre library but I don't think it detracted much from my enjoyment of this story. There's much I liked about this book but, perhaps unfortunately, there are a few things that have made me rate this one as not as good as the first two in the series. I did like how Ames got to run the police detachment and how he solved his murder mystery and became so attached to using the long distance telephone to Britain and how realistic to 1947 telephony that was portrayed. I also, liked finally learning about Darling's backstory baggage and some of Lane's, particularly regarding her father and her inheritance, although there are still many unknowns in that scene. Now to some things that I didn't really like. I am not a huge fan of all the flashbacks used to present Darling's backstory but in this case they were labelled with dates and locations and pretty well stayed in Darling's POV. I thought this book was weaker and less enjoyable because the author moved the main action and the protagonists from King's Cove to Britain, post WWII Europe and some Eastern Bloc country. After the build up of Aptekar in book 2 and everything he did to coerce Lane into going back to work for him I thought he capitulated much too easily and gave in to everything Lane asked much too quickly although it probably was the most logical thing he could do. Now are we finally finished with Angus and can Lane and Fred finally settle down in BC with only local crimes to bother them? Guess I'll have to read the next instalment to find out, eh?

Diamond Run (Phil Mahood #1) by Michael Croucher

I am pretty positive that I have found another Canadian author to add to my authors to read list. Although Mr Croucher is another displaced Brit his many years in various investigative roles working for the Metro Toronto Police most definitely qualifies him as a Canadian author. And what a fine novel this is and as it's noted as "Phil Mahood #1" I think and hope it's the start of a good series. I don't think this can be considered a totally character driven story but it sure is populated with a large cast of fairly well developed characters and many of them can be seen to grow as the story unfolds. Phil, and Jack and the rest of the honest Toronto, Hamilton and RCMP officers are all strong and likeable characters and Ernie is as Phil said "What a trooper, what a partner". Sue is a great girlfriend for Phil and it's nice to see her confidence returning considering all the baggage she's carrying from the Nathan affair. I think Mr Croucher has done a remarkable job of introducing the backstory info for each of the main characters as needed right in the flow of the story. Gloria and Charles turn out to

have quite an important role in the resolution of the Sue sub plot which actually ends up, albeit loosely, involved in the wind up to the main story. And again I thought Mr Croucher's writing handled the slight paranormal events extremely well. I really liked the setting in Hamilton, Stoney Creek and the Niagara region. Now to the villain - Marco - ! I am usually not a huge fan of POV alternating between the good guys and the bad guys but in this case it is done so well and is really so necessary in the telling of this story that I have to say I didn't mind it one bit. Somehow lately in my reading I have been meeting some of the most despicable, nasty, violent and just plain bad villains and I almost think the Red Ribbon has to go to Marco Ranez as the worst I have ever ran across! For once a rather elaborate take down plan works pretty well with only minor mess ups and leads to a solid and satisfactory, if only slightly spectacular, ending scene. The only thing not tied up as far as I can remember, and I may have just missed this, is what happened to Nathan's diamonds. I'll recommend this book but I must warn that it's not for the squeamish as it includes lots of quite graphic violence, bodies, shootings, bombings, some rough language and sexual content and it is most definitely not a YA book.

The Hound of the Sanibel Sunset Detective (Sanibel Sunset Detective #5) by Ron Base

I've been enjoying this fun series and of course I've liked some of the books more than others and I thought this book was quite good while it is a bit different than the previous books in the series. I read these types of stories as a wind down after finishing a serious, gritty and violent crime novel and while this book provided some of elements I look for it actually was a bit more serious than the earlier books and the ending and author's note touched on an issue that is very relevant to all pet lovers. While I was reading the book I didn't think it was quite as humorous as the prior books but it still has a great cast of wacky characters and possibly the most inept lot of mobsters, thugs and assassins that I have met in a book in a very long time. Freddie played a much larger part in Tree's investigation in this book than before and she sure turns out to be a rock solid character. The big chase scene and the spectacular action on the bridge provided an appropriate and sold end for one of the bad guys. I'm pretty sure that the final ending of this story was not what most readers wanted it to be but it sure was the most realistic it could be and was necessary to emphasize the point that Mr Base was trying to make for all pet lovers. I intend to read the rest of the books in this fun series.

Bitter Roots (Bitter Root Mysteries #1) by C.J. Carmichael

I started book 1 of Ms Carmichael's new trilogy because I have read and enjoyed her "Twisted Cedars" trilogy and if the next two books in this series are as good as this one I am sure I am going to enjoy "Bitter Roots" just as much. There sure is a lot going on in such a small town and there is also a fairly large

cast of characters involved and I thought most of the characters were fairly well developed although we really don't get to meet the perps too much and actually we never meet one of them. Zak Waller is a very solid, complex and likeable character as is Tiff Masterson, Nadine Black grew much more likeable as the story rolled out, and even Sheriff Ford and Deputy Butterfield show some better qualities than first appear. The descriptions of location, weather and settings are all excellent and the writing flows smoothly with quite realistic dialogues. I'm not a great fan of a strong romantic element in a mystery novel but I thought the author really handled that part very well. The actual mysteries and murder really take a back seat to the family problems of most of the people but the family problem really proves to be the motive for the murder and that plot line has a very solid ending thanks to Zak's work but there are a few stories that are not tied up at the end and of course that leads one to believe they may be continued in the next books. In the case of this book that is perfectly satisfactory as Ms Carmichael made it very clear from the start that this is book 1 of a trilogy. I just wish we didn't have to wait so long for the next book.

Murder Under Construction (Two Sisters and a Journalist #1) by Maddie Cochere

I like to read a light, fluffy and hopefully funny mystery as an unwind after reading a serious, violent and gritty novel such as Sean Slater's "The Unforgiven" which I had just finished and the synopsis and cover blurbs indicated that this book fit that scene. When I saw that Maddie Cochere was a new, at least to me, Canadian author I thought I had found another author to go to when I needed this type of read and maybe I have but the jury is still deliberating that verdict. There is really nothing wrong with this story but, also, there is nothing unique, spectacular or memorable about it and maybe it's just my sense of humour but I didn't find it very funny. I had a few smiles but never a LOL. It has a reasonable and pretty straight forward mystery, quite competent and easy reading style of writing and is very well edited and proofread and has an okay ending. None of the characters are overly exciting and none including the bad guys are really unlikeable but I think that fits my overall opinion of this book. It's not bad but it's just OK. Oh yeah - Why all the references to the aversion to swearing? They are just annoying, unrealistic and detract from the story. I might read another by this author as I already have the first in another of her series but it won't have a high priority on my TBR list and I won't pay big dollars for any others.

The Unforgiven (Jacob Striker #4) by Sean Slater

I've rated this book 4 stars because I really enjoyed reading it even though I don't think this story is the best in this series as I think, so far, that honour goes to book 1 "The Survivor". However I really like how Jake and Feleesh have grown as partners in every way and how realistic they are with all their faults, weaknesses and vulnerabilities and how they really need to just go and get a

night's sleep like any real person would do. Though you could never consider this to be a character driven story Mr Slater has delivered, besides Jake and Feleesh, a cast of well developed, if not all entirely realistic and believable, characters and even "Monster", one of the worst characters, had some tender qualities. Perhaps there may have been too many bombings, fires and victims and Jake sure got off on a wrong tangent with his investigation into Satanism but the writing is so good that this very long book didn't really bog down, drag and cause me to do any skimming at any time. Lots of action, bodies, violence and only one small twist that I didn't see coming. It isn't until the solid ending that the motives become apparent and everything gets tied up in a fairly satisfactory way. It takes a great suspension of disbelief to accept this story which is really quite over-the-top and far out but we read these books for the entertainment and escapism and this one has lots of those. One of the motives touches on a known social issue and is not very flattering toward the Roman Catholic Church and it is interesting to see Jake's reaction especially as Feleesh is a devout Catholic. Now I have a bit of a pet peeve that almost made me downrate this book another star but I'm feeling a bit generous today so I haven't. As far as I know Vancouver is in British Columbia and BC is still a province in Canada and hasn't seceded and joined the UK so there is no excuse in a book by a Canadian author and set in Canada to use British spellings for any words and I thought cars and trucks in Canada had tires but throughout this book tire is spelled tyre. You can be sure that if I had caught any more than tyre or if truck had become lorry I sure would be knocking off another star. Anyway a good read that I enjoyed and I'll sure read anymore by Sean Slater.

A Noise Downstairs by Linwood Barclay

Linwood Barclay is one of my favourite authors and I have read pretty well every book of his that I can get as an eBook and, of course, enjoyed some more than others but I don't think I can ever remember a real bad one. However I had been noticing that his latest books seemed to be somewhat weaker than the earlier ones and sets like the Promise Falls trilogy had lots of loose ends and grew into a fourth volume which was supposed to tie up those loose ends but didn't really so I was quite curious about the direction this latest book would take. Boy am I ever happy to report that this is vintage Barclay at his very best! I have to rate this book among the very best Barclay's I have read. I have found in many of the earlier books the male MCs all seemed to be practically interchangeable – just give them a different name, occupation and location but they all sounded quite similar. Well that sure is not the case here and it is actually difficult to find a male MC good guy and, except for Anna, all the female MCs are bad guys and all the characters are very well developed and all quite unique. There is some very good writing here and Mr Barclay just keeps turning up the suspense, thrills

and fears from the opening sentence right to all the wild endings. The suspected paranormal events are handled very well and they appear to be logical events and there is really only one that doesn't have a logical explanation. I was really impressed with how Mr. Barclay wrote Frank's senility or dementia or whatever you want to call it and how Anna handled it. Now as to the various mysteries, and there are more than one, I had one of the who's identified quite early but not the accomplice, and therefore not the motive, or the how, but I never saw all the twists upon twists coming although again they were all very logical. This book is most definitely a standalone with no loose ends and because of that I think it would be very difficult to produce any kind of a sequel. I am so glad that Mr. Barclay has rebranded himself and I look forward to reading more of his great thrillers

The Jefferson Prophecy (Paul Marcus #2) by Tom Lowe

Tom Lowe is one of my all time favourite authors and I have read every book of his that I have been able to obtain and I bought this one as soon as it was released and it sure didn't disappoint me in any way. I really like how Mr Lowe has, as he has done in most of his series, taken an event in American history and built upon it as the basis for the plot of the present day story. I admit that as my knowledge of the particular history around Thomas Jefferson is not very extensive I can't judge the accuracy of the Jefferson past events but I can accept the extent of Mr Lowe's research as I have checked into some of the historical references in the Sean O'Brien books and found them to be quite accurate. While this book is definitely not a character driven story Paul and Alicia and Bill Gray are all strong, likeable and fully developed characters while the bad guys are, perhaps, a bit stereotypical. An interesting little thing is all the direct interaction with the POTUS without a name ever mentioned. This story has lots of action, bombs, bodies, physical damage and collateral victims and, as is quite usual in a Tom Lowe novel, a spectacular, solid and satisfactory ending. On top of that it almost could have been lifted right out of today's current news! One thing that is a bit puzzling to me is how free this book is of typos and proofreading errors, as was *Destiny* the first book in this trilogy, when they have both been published on the same platform as was *Wrath* and that book was loaded with those type of errors. While I really enjoyed this read and it is definitely a 4 star book and I'm looking forward to book 3 I still like the Sean O'Brien series more than this one. Waiting impatiently for the next of them later this year.

The Missing Heir Murders (Klondike Era Mystery #3) by Sharon Rowse

I have been really enjoying Ms Rowse's Yukon Era historical mysteries and this story is just as good a read as the first two in the series but it is badly handicapped by some serious errors caused by the apparent lack of proofreading and competent editing. I'll have some examples later but first the good stuff and there's lots of that. The whole Granville/Turner/Scott detective agency, along with apprentice Trent Davis, is back in great form with Emily, as

usual, practically stealing the leading role and her friend Cara again proving a lot smarter and deeper than she first appears. Emily can sure manipulate her way into all sort of difficult situations and convince almost anyone to go along with her schemes. Weston is quite the believable character and actually really quite likeable. The bad guys, especially Reade, are really bad and all meet with fairly satisfactory justice and the good guys have a pretty happy ending when Granville and Scott's Spenser-like plan works, for the most part, as planned. The town settings, the back country settings and the weather are so well described that I'm still cold, wet and sore and can taste the camp coffee. The plot and motives are not too unbelievable and there's a lot of action and bodies and good detective work. Now the bad stuff. This book is loaded with many proofreading errors and here are a few examples -

thieves to stupid or too violent to operate from a better locale

Yes. And I'm he'd be

to pick to pick up goods the second afternoon

Which didn't meant they would

In surprised and pleased Emily to hear her

I don't normally downrate a book severely for these type of errors if the good stuff is strong and the errors don't affect the flow of the story but the next problem is one that I can not tolerate in a book and since it's so obvious and so easy to spot I did downrate this book.

We first meet one of the very important characters in this story in Chapter 17 as "Judge Eli Harrison" and then his wife "Mrs. Harrison". However in Chapter 22 she becomes "Mrs. Hamilton" and throughout the book it is variously "Judge Harrison" or "Judge Hamilton" and "Mrs Harrison" or "Mrs Hamilton" and in at least one case the name is changed right in consecutive sentences in the same paragraph.

Anyway I liked this story and I will read the next and anymore in this series but I tried the 1st of Ms Rowse's Betty O'Grady series and I didn't really like it.

Grave Mistake (A Spencer Funeral Home Niagara Cozy Mystery #3) by Janice J. Richardson

This is a good series that I am enjoying with well developed characters including the likeable ones but also the unlikeable ones like the Larsons and great, realistic descriptions of the NOTL setting, the Falls and the weather. I find it a bit of an ironic coincidence that I have been reading this series so close to reading Ricki Blair's funny "Leafy Hollow" series in which Niagara Falls is also a major player with a slightly different kind of a role. Perhaps this book is a bit too busy with too many rather far out and wacky incidents even though they all get tied together rather neatly and perhaps Jennifer is a bit too empathetic and needs to lighten up a bit and stop carrying everybody else's problems while trying to fix

them but it is still a pretty good read and should be worth more than the 3 stars I have awarded except for a couple of problems. First the main murder doesn't get wrapped up solidly at the end of the book and the culprit who, BTW, I had identified much earlier in the story kind of walks free and possibly may never be brought to justice. Now I admit that the author had already mentioned this to me and I really didn't use this as the big reason to downrate the book because I, at least somewhat, thought that this ending was pretty realistic and even logical. Now I don't normally downrate a book too severely for a few proofreading, or really evidence of a lack of proofreading, errors but I found so many that were so obvious that I had to knock off 1 star. Here is a list of some of the major errors I found -

She had Marcia devised a plan to trap the killer into

"I have haven't"

"Would you like a drink Jennifer?" Jim asked on his way to the fridge.

"A beer please. Gordon and Jim are off on a coroner's call,

handed me handed me the death

Received an settlement

And here is another quote that I can really see no reason to accept -

"Nite Jennifer"

Now I can not accept that in a book by a Canadian author and set in a Canadian locale there can be any excuse for using any US spellings. The last I heard NOTL is still in Ontario and still part of Canada and we spell it "Night"

Anyway I still liked this story and I'll sure read any more in this fine series.

Killers ([A Willows and Parker Mystery #7](#)) By Laurence Gough

This is a great series with very well developed characters including even the bad guys and most of the minor players but Willows and Parker are fabulous, Bradley is still the boss every cop would love to work for and his whole squad keep reminding me of Ed McBain's 87th Precinct. Although this book has a couple of murders, some great detective work, many suspects with solid motives and a major twist that I never saw coming but should have I think all of that takes a backseat to the personal developments in Willows and Parker's lives and it's nice to follow the progress of their romance and it's also nice to follow the personal developments of the other cops in the squad. Perhaps Vancouver and it's weather and water plays a bit bigger role in this story than in earlier books in the series and I don't think there were quite as many UK'isms as in

some of the previous books. Now the bad guys and that includes the main murder victim and the murderer are sure a mean, nasty and sadistic lot but i feel the animal cruelty may possibly have been taken a bit too far and may be a bit too graphic. There are a few plot holes like the missing dolly which had all sorts of attention paid to trying to find it but then just sort of was forgotten about but overall I quite enjoyed this story. Willows has a real problem on his hands with his son Sean which may get some resolution in the next book "Heartbreakers" but unfortunately I'll have to wait to read it as I have now found an ebook edition of the previous book "Fall Down Easy" which I had skipped to read "Killers" but now I'll have to go back and read it before starting the next one. Great series but should be read in order.

The Running Girl by Bruce Barber, Virgil Burnett

I must say that this book is quite different and although there are a couple of deaths, one of which could have been a murder or an accident and the other was just plain stupidity, you couldn't classify this story as a murder mystery investigation. While it has a bit of a plot it is definitely not plot driven but is more of a character driven examination of human reactions when placed in a not too hospitable situation. This book is nowhere near as violent and bloody as the first book in this series "The Bloody Man", which really was a murder investigation, but it is just as well written with solidly developed characters and great descriptions of settings and weather. Louise is a great and likeable character, Jean-Claude is very much as capable as in book 1 and Corinna sure is tenacious if nothing else. Then Oswald's Latin and pot banging provided a kind of a unique little touch. Of course because Seamus O'Reilly had such a small role in this story there was much less humour than in book 1 but then this story is lighter and some humour is provided by some of the other stranded people. I thought this was a quite enjoyable and quick fill in read and I'll read the next one especially to see any differences since Virgil Burnett passed away before Bruce Barber wrote it.

Muddy Waters (The Leafy Hollow Mysteries #4) By Rickie Blair

As usual I try to digest a book for a few days after reading it before I write a review. In many ways I actually liked this story more than the previous books in this series. This book is quite a bit more of a mystery novel than a cozy although it does maintain the weird and wacky characters, situations, amateur sleuth, hunky cop romantic interest and some humour that are required in a cozy. However this one has more action, violence. murder, investigations, suspects, twists and twists upon the twists than are usually found in a typical cozy. The whole premise of this series is really pretty far fetched and not realistic and although we finally meet Aunt Adeline and Gideon returns and Verity and Jeff's love interest blossoms as does Lorne and Emy's and Nellie and Wilf's there are many ,many plot holes and loose ends which I suspect are mostly to allow for more books in this series even with Adeline being found. We never learn whatever happens to Bryan or where Carson and Reuben are going to live for the winter or what happens to Verity's wall of pickles and beer cases in the basement of Rose Cottage. Actually even after Adeline's explanation I still haven't completely figured out Control and I don't really think there is ever any explanation of what and who is Syndicate or what they are supposed to do. And then there are all those letters from the PMO! Anyway this was a very enjoyable escape read and I sure wouldn't mind another adventure with my friends in Leafy Hollow.

Dust & Bones (Jacob Striker #3)by Sean Slater

As usual I try to think about a book for a few days after reading it before I write a review. I liked this instalment of this good series although I don't think it is quite as good as either of the first two books.

Jake and Feleesh are strong and extremely likeable detectives although Jake tries to be a bit too protective of Feleesh who in many ways is even stronger than Jake. I am not a great fan of the alternating POVs between the detectives and the bad guys although it works OK here because the identity of the bomber is not revealed until it has been determined by Jake. This story, as do the first two books, has lots of action, shootouts, fires, bodies, clues, red herrings and, of course in this one, bombings but it doesn't have the loose ends that were common to the first books as all the bad guys, and there are quite a few of them, met solid and satisfactory ends. I think it takes a bit of suspension of disbelief to accept the number of corrupt cops and the mistaken beliefs leading to the bombers motive but I'm willing to accept that as it allows me to read these books for the entertainment and escapism they provide. Although this is a long read it doesn't drag anywhere and I didn't feel, as I did with the earlier books, that it needed tighter editing. However one thing that irks me is that once again this book can't make up it's mind as to what is it's title. Is it "Dust and Bones" or is it

"The Guilty" ? Anybody know? Doesn't really matter because I'll still read more in this series although I have a hunch that there may already be a couple of titles floating around for book 4!

Murder on the Great Lake (Pet Portraits Mystery #2) by Sandi Scott

OK - While I enjoyed this book I didn't find it quite as humourous as the first book in this series but I still got many smiles and chuckles along with the murder mystery and, of course, all the pastries and candy bars with Kale???? UGH! Georgie and Aleta and their cars are quite some characters and Stan is great and all the rest of cast are a bunch of wacky weirdos. The greatest mystery is if Georgie ever manages to get paid for a pet portrait. This story is really quite a send up of the Fitness Industry. My biggest beef with this book is that it was much too short and I finished it much too early for bed and had to rummage around in my ereader for some short stories to fill in till bedtime. Oh yeah and then there was all that Kale!!!! I will read more in this series when I need a come down after a serious crime novel but I hope subsequent books are a bit longer and don't include so much Kale!

Accidental Deaths (A Willows and Parker Mystery #5) by Laurence Gough

An enjoyable read that I liked. This is a very good series that I think is getting better with every book and this book is the best in the series so far. As usual all the characters are well fleshed out and much of the humour, which is actually quite subtle, comes in the interaction dialogues among various characters like Jack and Claire and Bradley and also among the various bad or suspected bad guys like Frank and Lulu and Newt and Rikki. Bradley is still the best boss any cop would want and the Major Crimes team still work together just as smoothly as do Ed McBain's 87th Precinct squad. This book supports my position that crime series should be read in order because even with the amount of backstory included it would be difficult to understand the whole significance of Newt and Rikki if one hadn't read the earlier book where they made their first appearances. Unfortunately it looks like I'll have to break my rule because I am unable to find book 5 "Fall Down Easy" as an ebook unless it's another book that's had a change of title as did book 2. I don't think this book had as many lapses into UK'isms as did the earlier books in the series. The only reason I had for downrating it slightly is my personal dislike for all the bad guys to die by some convenient accident before being brought into the justice system but, at least in this case, there are sure no loose ends or cliff hangers except possibly for Frank and Lulu who really were quite likeable and you couldn't positively label them as bad guys in this story anyway. This series has become one of my go to's when I'm looking for a good procedural with likeable characters, some action, good writing, some humour, a bit of social commentary and a somewhat unique plot. I will definitely read more of this series.