

In the Shadow of Death by Gwendolyn Southin

Date Read – 20190630

Rating 3 Stars

This has rapidly become one of my favourite series and I have no idea why I haven't been reading these much sooner as I've had the whole series in my library for some time. This one has a good missing person case, a couple of current murders and a bit of a cold case, lots of great scenery, bad roads, scary plane rides and wild action and a fantastic twist that I never saw coming although I think I should have. Pretty solid ending although one of the bad guys does kind of ride off into the sunset with a bag full of money but a pretty strong hint that the Mountie, Brossard, who turned out to be a pretty good cop after all, would as usual, "get his man?". Nat and Maggie are a great team and I hope they both can stay in one piece long enough to keep on investigating and Henny is something else again and sure helps that wimpy, whiny Harry to provide quite a few laughs to lighten things up. And, of course, we can't forget Emily! I recommend this book but I think these should definitely be read in order.

Apple Die (Apple Orchard Cozy #1) by Chelsea Thomas

Date Read – 20190628

Rating 2 Stars

2 stars because I finished it but I didn't find it a satisfactory read. I didn't really like any of the characters as I thought Miss May was ludicrous, silly and over the top and Chelsea is just a whiny, crying wimp and the whole plot is just so forgettable that now, 2 days after reading it, I can't even remember the story or how it ended. And on top of all that I never found any of the advertised humour. I suspect a lot of readers will like this one but not me and I will not be wasting my precious reading time on any more by these authors.

PARADE OF DEAD LAWYERS: (A Lighthearted Murder Mystery) by Donald W. Desaulniers

Date Read – 20190627

Rating 4 Stars

I enjoyed this book immensely and I have rated it 4 stars which is something I seldom do for the first book in a series by a new, to me, author and I may have only done that because I am a bit personally prejudiced here. You see I was born and raised in Belleville and although I moved away in 1963 I was back many times as my dad and mom lived there until they both passed away. My dad had barber shops on Front St. and later on Victoria Ave across the street from CJBQ radio station. We lived on the West Hill and many, many times I walked across the footbridge and up that alley between Eaton's and Geen's Drugstore! So I really got a huge kick out of recognizing all the places Larry and his friends and Amanda lived and visited and Mr Desaulniers sure got it pretty well bang on. Besides all that this was a pretty good mystery with lot's of bodies and eventually a decent investigation and although I had guessed the perp and even the motive long before the early reveal there was still lot's of action and plans to keep my interest until the wrap up. I'm not a huge fan of the perp in a mystery story being killed off in some way before being locked up but this guy was sure an extremely unlucky creep and his ending was appropriate for his bad luck. Of course at the same time Larry is surely the most lucky hero I've found in a long time even if it's a bit far out and over the top that he survived so many beatings and accidents and stilled walked away. And I mustn't forget the good amount of humour that produced enough chuckles and laughs to lighten things up a bit. I'll sure read more by Mr Desaulniers especially as his books are all available at such acceptable prices.

The Cannery Row Murders (Klondike Era Mysteries, #5) by Sharon Rowse

Date Read – 20190625

Rating 4 Stars

Another fine entry in one of my favourite series and although I think these stories just keep getting better with each book it would be difficult for me to decide that this one is the best yet. I do know that is almost imperative that this series be read in order so when I stumbled on the fact that Book 6 "the Hidden City Murders" is being scheduled for release on July 11 2019 I jumped my reading cue to read this one. A great plot with the usual fine descriptions of the weather and the settings and the usual logical and believable investigation by John, Sam and Emily with lots of help from Trent, Laura and Clara and quite a

twist that I never saw coming led to a good and satisfactory ending. I did think that the success of the grappling expedition on the Fraser river was a maybe a bit far out and could only have happened by pure luck. I really like how in every one of these books I learn some facts of Canadian History that I wouldn't have even thought about without Ms Rowse's great research and fine writing. There are a few typos like missing words or letters that probably should have been eliminated with a bit more thorough proofreading but they were never so numerous or glaring as to detract from the reading enjoyment. Now I have a question about a bit of an inconsistency that I don't understand that doesn't detract anything from this book and happens throughout the series. This is to do with the naming conventions for Emily and Laura. John and his crew all refer to Emily as "Emily" but they all refer to Laura as "Miss Kent". Now I can understand 1900's conventions having people like, for instance, Wardle the banker calling them "Miss Turner" and "Miss Kent" but I would never expect John to tell Emily, Sam and Trent that "I will stop at the office and pick up "Miss Kent". Perhaps someone can shed some light on this? Oh, and BTW, "Laura/Miss Kent" has really become a good investigator on her own as has "Clara/Miss Miles"! I highly recommend this series and I have book 6 pre-ordered.

Audition for Death by Steve Shrott

Date Read – 20190623

Rating 3 Stars

A laugh a minute but a bit far fetched. Don't worry about the plot because it is completely preposterous, impossible, unbelievable, silly and away over the top but it sure generates lots of laughs. I read this because I was looking for a humorous book after finishing a serious, dark and gritty crime novel and that is exactly what I got and, in the bargain, by a new-to-me Canadian author and I'll sure read more of Mr Shrott's books when I need another one like this. Just relax, enjoy and try not to fall out of your chair laughing!

The Dead Letter (Anne Brown series) by Finley Martin

Date Read – 20190621

Rating 4 Stars

I really liked this story and I want to read more in this series. I think the Charlottetown and vicinity setting is very well described as is the weather and the main plot's investigation is somewhat different when we know one of the perp's identity from the beginning of the book and but I never twigged to the id of the other main murderer until Anne's reveal although there are definitely enough clues pointing in the right direction. Anne/Billy, Ben and Mary Anne are great and strong characters and Jacqui is written as a typical young teen and in some ways she's one of my favourite characters in this series. Dit and all of his crew are special characters too and his family are a bit eccentric to put it mildly. I've rated this 4 stars which I seldom do for an entry in a series as I like to leave room for author and characters to grow but I had to here because I enjoyed this story so much. There are only a couple of minor flaws that didn't really degrade my reading enjoyment and one of them is just kind of a pet peeve of mine. I am not usually happy with a book that ends with all the culprits being killed off either by some convenient accident, suicide or in a monstrous shoot-out but in this case an argument could be made that this is probably the only logical way this story could end. The other little problem I have is with the whole Jacqui/Rada sub-plot. I know that this story contains some very current social commentary and explores some of the customs and cultures of some recent immigrants and I know and accept that it is quite normal for a mystery to have more than one storyline which somehow advances the main plot but all the stories must come together and be resolved in the ending. However in this book this Jacqui/Rada plot has nothing whatsoever to do with the main story, is not resolved in the end and just appears to be filler that detracts the reader from the real mystery. Nice stuff but should have been edited out of this book and perhaps become the theme for the main plot of another book.

A Grave Misunderstanding: A Simon Grave Mystery by Len Boswell

Date Read – 20190618

Rating 3 Stars

Absolutely the most hilarious supposedly mystery I've read in a very long time! Somewhere in here among all the laughs there is buried a couple of murders and a possible missing trophy and possibly the most unorthodox police investigation that I've read in some time. Oh yeah it all ends quite solidly after some just as implausible and equally hilarious twists. Lots of red herrings, er, mackerels and McGuffins all just adding to the fun. And then the names! Captain Morgan, Ms Thursday, Barry Blunt, Bendigo Bottoms and even Simon Grave himself! And, BTW, we never did find out "How is life like a tuna fish

sandwich?”. I'll read more of Mr Boswell's when I need some more good laughs.

Black Rock (Eddie Dougherty Mystery #1) by John McFetridge

Date Read – 20190616

Rating 4 Stars

A way better than I expected after having read a couple of Mr McFetridge's Toronto series novels that I did not like too much and in fact one of which I rated as 0 stars and a "Terrible" read I said I wouldn't read any more of his books. However all the synopsis and blurbs described "Black Rock" as a story that fit in one of my favourite sub genres, an historical mystery, and the only thing really stopping me from trying it was the outrageous high price being asked for an ebook so when I found an epub version at an acceptable price I thought I'd give it a try. Am I ever glad that I did because I thoroughly enjoyed this good story with it's great mix of historical events and people together with a pretty good fictional police investigation. A great cast of fairly well developed characters led by Eddie Dougherty and his family who I really liked. I thought that Eddie's Irish/French Canadian pedigree very cleverly symbolized Quebec's "two solitudes", probably better than even Hugh McLennan had, and that theme which is currently still almost as prevalent as it was in the 70s was present throughout the story. Eddie sure has quite unorthodox methods of investigation as, to a certain extent, does Carpentier but they do manage to get pretty good results. I think Mr McFetridge pegged the Montreal settings to a T as I'm a bit familiar with the city having had a friend who lived in Westmount and having spent many days in the city in business meetings for Northern Electric which also included lot's of visits to Ruby Foo's and the other restaurants on Decarie and not to forget Blue Bonnets race track! I kept feeling some great similarities to Peter Kirby's good "Luc Vanier" series and while Black Rock doesn't have quite the interaction between fictional and historical characters as does John Farrow's "River City" it is still a good read. It is quite possible that Mr McFetridge's being more familiar with Montreal than Toronto and vicinity is at least partially responsible for this much better read but it doesn't matter because I will surely read another Eddie Dougherty mystery.

Murder Is Where the Heart Is(Two Sisters and a Journalist #2)by Maddie Cochere

Date Read – 20190613

Rating 3 Stars

A way better than I expected and much better than book 1 of this series. See my review of "Murder Under Construction". This book is actually quite humorous with lots of giggles and chuckles and even a few good LOLs. Jo and Pepper and Jackie are a great team and Pepper's kids, Kelly and Keith, almost steal the show. Jo's family are hilarious, especially Mama and what her ex, Alan, does to Jo's answering machine message is on it's own worth the price of admission! Oh I guess we better not forget there is a decent mystery too, with a satisfactory ending and now I will read more of this series when I need a light comedown read after a serious and gritty crime novel.

Can't Keep a Brunette Down (Gilda Wright Mysteries #1) by Diane Bator

Date Read – 20190611

Rating 3 Stars

I've had this book and a couple more of this series sitting in my library for some time and I just didn't get around to starting it possibly because I didn't think the blurbs sounded like a story I'd like as I know very little about Karate or any Martial Arts for that matter. However once again I was wrong and I found out I had been missing a pretty good mystery story and all the karate details didn't detract from my enjoyment of the story. I don't know how plausible or realistic any of them are but it all added up to a pretty good read anyway. There sure are a lot of quite wild characters with all sorts of secrets and it's quite difficult to figure out who's a good guy and who's not until they get killed off. Gilda's great, I couldn't figure out Mick until the end, Thayer is a disagreeable twit, Fabio's a good cop, Jade is not too likeable and the murderer became quite predictable well before the big takedown scene but the big trap plan actually practically worked as expected with only a few hiccups. lot's of action, lot's of bodies and a solid ending. Although some of the blurbs and reviews suggest this is a humorous mystery I really didn't find any humour but I did find it to be a satisfying and enjoyable read if possibly a bit far out and I won't wait so long to read the next in the series.

Blackwater Bluff by S. M. Hurley

Date Read – 20190609

Rating 3 Stars

I think this is a very good debut novel by a new Canadian author who I am very happy to have found. This story itself and the technical quality of the writing, editing and proofreading are all worth a much higher rating than the 3 stars I

have awarded and I'll try to explain that later. However first the story. I really enjoyed the setting in Prince Edward County although I may be a bit biased here as I was born and raised in Belleville, have a bunch of relatives that live, or at least did live, in the County and I spent a lot of time in my youth in various activities on "Quinte's Isle". There have been very few mystery novels set there such as some of Janet Kellogh's "Thaddeus Lewis" series and at least one of Vicki Delay's. Most of the characters are adequately developed with Augie being a strong, intelligent and likeable character, Augie's family and especially her mother are great and Marc is special, Detective Geoff is a whole lot better cop than he at first appeared, Remy is a great friend and Joseph's plight is perhaps dragged out a bit too long but it is easy to understand and sympathize with his position. Weather and settings are well written and there is enough action, false leads and suspects to keep one guessing until the twist, which I never saw coming although enough clues were there, that lead to the rather gory final scene. I did think there may have been a bit too much legal jargon and stuff with all the contracts and agreements etc. but I just assumed that all these lawyers knew what they were talking about and I didn't think it detracted much from the story. Also even with the Author's Note I didn't think it was quite so necessary to disguise place, street and topographical names quite as much. Now to the reasons for downrating this book and some of these are just personal nit picks that I don't like to see in a mystery novel. I am not much of a lover of open endings and I kind of like all plots and subplots to be tied up appropriately at the end of a novel unless it has been made very clear at the beginning that some of these stories continue on in further books and here the Ben/Remy story just gets dropped and there is no closure on the Augie/Dave Collins feud except for a subtle hint to buy the possible sequel. However my biggest problem with this book is that there is no Table of Contents, just "start" which takes you to the cover. This makes it extremely difficult for someone like me that tends to read a story on multiple devices whichever I happen to be using at the time like a Kobo eReader, an eReader app on my iPad or iMac or on calibre's eBook viewer and all of which give different values for % read and cause a lot of scrolling around. This happens fairly often on Indie or Self Published eBooks but it isn't necessary as I also have eBooks like that with perfect TOCs. Anyway I liked this read and I recommend it and I'm looking forward to at least a sequel.

The Reluctant Detective (Anne Brown series) by Finley Martin

Date Read – 20190605

Rating 4 Stars

Ok I've found another new Canadian author to read and I really enjoyed this

book and I already have acquired the 2nd book in the series and it's well positioned on my TBR list. I love the setting in Charlottetown and having visited there a few times I found it pretty easy to follow Anne and her friends in this story. This book is populated with a rather large caste of fairly well developed characters both Anne's friends who are all appropriately likeable and the many bad guys who are just as unlikeable. Anne is a strong character who recognizes her shortcomings and learns from her mistakes but I think Dit Malone is my favourite character with Jacqui a close 2nd. I thought the dialogue was very well written and came very close to the way people actually talk to each other. Good to see appropriate endings for Patty and Michael. The only thing I thought might have been improved on with the setting is that perhaps something should have been done to make use of the Casino and the Charlottetown Driving Park as they are major industries in Charlottetown and also how can anybody be in PEI and not visit one of those famous Lobster Suppers? Just a personal thought and takes nothing from this good book and maybe an idea for a future book in the series? Looking forward to the next book.

Death in a Family Way (Margaret Spencer #1) by Gwendolyn Southin

Date Read – 20190603

Rating 4 Stars

I've had this book and 3 more of the series in my library for quite a while and I have no idea why I have waited so long to read what turned out to be a very enjoyable read by a new to me Canadian author but I sure won't wait that long to read some more of this series. This book has just about everything you'd want in a good mystery, a good main plot based on a quite plausible and believable social issue, well described settings and weather that's left me cold, wet and sore and some pretty wild action leading to a solid ending with all the bad guys accounted for and a caste with the main players both the good and the bad very well developed and appropriately likeable or not and the minor characters described adequately for their roles in the story. Oh yeah one mustn't forget that wild and wet prologue either! There's also a fair amount of humour with even some LOL moments to help lighten things up a bit especially in the first half of the book. Maggie and Nat are great characters, Harry is an utter ass and Farthing isn't far behind him even though he may be an adequate detective. Larry, Cubby and Violet are repulsive characters and Emily plays a big part. Collins turned out to be OK but he should do something about his wife, Steph. Anyway I highly recommend this read for anyone who likes a good action adventure mystery and I'm looking forward to the next in the series.

Missing Amanda (Lou Fleener Private Eye #1) by Duane Lindsay

Date Read – 20190601

Rating 3 Stars

I've awarded this book the not available 2 1/2 stars rounded up to 3 because I didn't have to force myself to finish it and it is pretty well edited and proofread with very few typos like this one from Chapter 5 "there was too much was at" but I didn't really find it a great read. This is billed as a humorous mystery and maybe it's just my sense of humour but I did not find it very funny. Oh I had a few smiles and chuckles and kept waiting for the laughs to come but I never really had a LOL moment at any time. I'm currently about 50% through Gwendolyn Southin's "Death in a Family Way" which is not billed as humorous and I've already had more laughs and even LOLs than I had from completely reading Missing Amanda. I thought this story was just too silly, preposterous, over-the-top and too far out to be even a satirical take-off of any legitimate mystery story. At least Lou had one advantage over Clerk Kent- he didn't need a phone booth to switch into Superman mode! To be effective this type of book needs at least a little bit of realistic possibility and plausibility and I'm afraid I just couldn't find any in this story. Check out Melodie Campbell's "Gina Gallo" series to really see what hilarious things a Mob Family can get into while staying almost possible! Too many good books that need reading and too little time for me to waste on books like this and I won't be reading any more by this author.

The Burying Ground: A Thaddeus Lewis Mystery by Janet Kellough

Date Read – 20190529

Rating 4 Stars

OK I've read and really enjoyed the other books in this series and I've had this one in my library for quite some time and I don't know why I haven't gotten around to reading until now. It's possibly because it didn't fit into any of my reading projects or I remembered that these books can move at a fairly slow pace and I was looking for something with a bit faster pace and more action. Well I was a bit wrong here because, while this story doesn't move along too swiftly, it sure has lot's of action, a lot of social commentary some of which is still relevant today, ton's of very fascinating history and quite a few glimpses hinting at today's sanitation, water treatment, medical treatments for various diseases and injuries and all expertly woven into a good mystery with pretty good motives for the crimes and a solid ending with which I suspect most readers will be quite happy. It's nice to see both good and bad characters like Morgan Spicer from previous books involved along with some very interesting new ones. Dr Christie with his quirky hobby is a fabulous character and Mrs Dunphy, Lavinia, Cherub

and Perry all contribute to a fine story and Perry introducing Luke to certain Taverns in back alleys in downtown Toronto sure doesn't help Luke's problem too much. It's fascinating to align the names of the settlements and crossroads along Yonge St with the present day geography. Oh yeah and how about the Cummers' willow tree and willow leaf tee? Anyway I sure won't wait so long to get and read book 7 of this good series.

The Grave Truth (The Leafy Hollow Mysteries #6) by Rickie Blair

Date Read – 20190528

Rating 4 Stars

This is one of my favourite series for a lighter more fun read after finishing a dark, gritty and violent serious book and I think this is one of the best in the series. As usual there's a really good mystery to put Verity's super sleuthing skills to the utmost test and she needs all the help she can get from Emy and Jeff and the rest of her quirky friends plus a lot of luck to come out alive and lock up all the bad guys. Nice to see a happy ending for her father, Frank, and Adeline actually becomes a lot more likeable after she gets over her initial prejudiced blusters. Rose Cottage sure has a lot of things to hide. There is not as much humour in this book as in the earlier ones in the series and I think that may change when and if Caleb and Rueben ever get home from their winter in Key West! Hope book 7 comes along a lot quicker than this one did!

Death Before Coffee: The Mike O'Shea Crime Fiction Series by Desmond P. Ryan

Date Read – 20190526

Rating 3 Stars

OK I quite enjoyed this book and I think it should be worth more than the 3 stars I have awarded except for a few things that I'll talk about a bit later. First this is a pretty good police procedural just as one would expect given the author's experience and has a caste of very well developed characters but while Mike gets billed as the leading man I think Amanda Black is the best character in the book and I hope we see a lot more of her. While Ron Roberts can be a bit annoying he actually turns out to be a pretty good cop too. And the bad guys here are sure an unlikeable bunch and meet appropriate justice with the solid

ending to Amanda's sub plot. On top of all that there is an adequate amount of authentic sounding cop humour to provide some lightening up in a basically pretty dark and gritty story. And this is where some of my misgivings begin. This book is a sequel to "10-33 Assist" and is billed as a Mike O'shea Crime Fiction but although Mike keeps saying he is still searching for Chelsea that story line takes practically no part in this book which is dominated by Amanda's investigation of the murder of the one-legged man. I would have no problem with this if it was made very apparent before the first and, for that matter, every book that this series has an ongoing plot that isn't concluded 'till the final book in the series and must be read in order. However I only found out, by accident when reading a review of one of these books, that this is a 6 volume series and the Mike/Chelsea story continues until book 6. Now my next problem is a technical one which probably won't bother too many readers but it does make reading this book a bit more difficult for me. There is NO Table Of Contents. I tend to read on multiple devices such as my Kobo eReader, my eReader App on my iPad, and on my iMac on calibre's eBook Viewer or the Kindle For Mac App and without a TOC it is extremely difficult on any device to find out what chapter I have finished and what chapter I should start reading on another device and you have to scroll or page forward or back through the whole book to find the chapter you want. . This lack of a TOC also leads into an editing error which might have been more easily spotted in a TOC. Here are three chapter headings that really threw me for a loop

Chapter Fifteen

5:17 a.m., Friday, August 24, 2018

Chapter Sixteen

6:03 a.m., Friday, August 23, 2018

Chapter Seventeen

6:43 a.m., Friday, August 24, 201

The correct date is August 24 so chapter 16 is wrong and I did a lot of back and forth re-reading to get the timeline right.

I also have a few questions about things that didn't really effect my rating but just tweaked my curiosity a bit like – Where did Carmen come from and how because she doesn't appear in book 1 and we need more back story to understand Mike's angst? Why didn't Julia have a role in this story when she was a major player in book 1? And if this takes place 13 years after book 1 why the sunflower seeds in the squad car? Surely those couldn't be the same cars and even if that was possible why wouldn't they have been cleaned out? Just a

bit nit picky but I still enjoyed this read and am impatiently awaiting the next one.

Cold Revenge (Megan Scott/Michael Elliott Mystery Book 6) by Sandra Nikolai

Date Read – 20190523

Rating 3 Stars

Much different from previous books in the series but still a pretty good read. This story really hits close to home and both Megan and Mike are even stronger characters than in the previous books and are both definitely very likeable people. By the very nature of this story it is extremely difficult to say much about it and avoid spoilers except to say that I very much enjoyed it and I highly recommend it and I'm looking forward to the next adventure with Mike and Megan.

Deception Bay

by Chris Patchell

Date Read – 20190521

Rating 4 Stars

I liked this book a lot and I think I have found another new, to me, Canadian author to read. I was a bit dubious because of the wildly varying reviews of another of her books, which I have already acquired, which range all the way from 1 star "Terrible" to 5 stars "The greatest thing since sliced bread". However the synopsis and reviews of this one were good enough to convince me to gamble the great amount of \$1.33 CAD and by gum I won! This is a well written and well edited action and suspense story with good descriptions of the setting and the weather and a caste of quite well developed characters especially, of course, Ellie Sharpe and Austin Martell who with all his warts sure develops into an extremely likeable person and really as the epilogue says a real hero. Then we mustn't forget 2 more special characters – Daisy and Cato who provide some of the actually quite abundant humour which I was glad to find throughout the story. The prologue actually made the main perp rather evident but there were so many entangled past stories among so many of the characters that it was very difficult to predict the motives or the means of the murders and the last big shoot em out scene in the tower made a fine ending to the story. And then who couldn't predict the outcome in the epilogue and for that matter not like it. I really hope there are more stories to follow with Austin and Ellie and I'll surely

read them.

Dragon (The Dunbarton Mysteries Series) by Valerie Tate

Date Read – 20190519

Rating 3 Stars

I've been enjoying this series and, of course, some of the books more than others and I quite enjoyed this fun read although I couldn't rate it as one of the best in the series. Chris, Alicia, Alice and James and the rest of the regulars are all in fine form and DI Marcus Samuel seems to have just given up and decided to utilize Alicia's talents in his investigations. This story is more of an action adventure than a mystery and while it does have a solid ending and most of the bad guys meet appropriate justice I still have a slight feeling that while the identity of the Chameleon seems pretty definite there is still a bit of a murky area that might lead to another story. And, oh yeah, once again Melanie gets her usual big letdown in the romance department. Chris and Alicia's plans would make Spenser and McGyver proud and it sure would have been great to see the looks on the faces of the bad guys if they had actually got to open the packages in the crates. Now as seems to happen with most series like this the amount of humour has really diminished from that of the first books and although Charlie plays a big part in this story neither he nor Marmalade get into the wild hijinks that they did previously. Also I found the speed with which the Fire Marshal and the Insurance Adjuster did their things just a whole lot unbelievable. However A good read that I liked and I'll read any more in this series.

A Deceptive Devotion (Lane Winslow #6) by Iona Whishaw

Date Read – 20190517

Rating 5 Stars

I really like this series and I think that in many ways this is the best book yet in the series. Although I am not usually a huge fan of spy thrillers and I'm very stingy with 5 star ratings I just liked so much about this story that I've awarded it one of those not allowed 4.5 stars because of one little nit pick that I'll talk about later and rounded it up to 5. I still really haven't figured out for sure just who all those double agents were working for but Lane and Darling and now Sergeant Ames had it all under control. Again we have all the usual great descriptive writing of the setting, weather and food and once again I learned a bit of history because I was skeptical of when the word Motel came into use which caused

me to do a bit of Googling and read the history of Motels in the US and Canada and sure enough the word was used in the late 1920's so it was legitimate for the Easy Two Motel to be in Kings Cove in 1947! This book sure ties up a lot of loose ends from the previous books and I hope this includes the end of Dunn's obsession with Lane. I am also very happy to see Aptekar finally get his retirement because, as unlikely as that seems, I have come to like him quite a bit. I only hope that all this doesn't signal the end of this great series because I can see many more adventures with Lane and Darling and the rest of the great people of Kings Cove. Oh and BTW I think Ames is still my favourite character in the series. Now to my little nit picking - Here's a quote from Chapter 24 where Ames has the flat tire -

“And he never would have left dirty boots and an unsavoury looking bucket in the trunk. He took these out as they covered the wheel well, and then pulled away a blanket that covered the spare tyre. To his utter chagrin, instead of a spare tyre, there was a small brown suitcase.”

I can not accept that a car in British Columbia in 1947 would be equipped with “tyres” and not “tires”. Note that the Britishism of a “boot” has been replaced by the Canadianism of a “trunk” and if for nothing else but consistency “tyre” should have been replaced by “tire” throughout this book. A great read and I sure hope there are more to follow.

Nightmare Sally: A Reed Ferguson Mystery (Reed Ferguson Mystery #15) by Renee Pawlish

Date Read – 20190515

Rating 3 Stars

A good fun read in this good series! This has been one of my favourite series to read to lighten up after finishing a serious and grittier novel and it still serves that purpose although the amount of humour has been decreasing in all the later books. A large part of the humour in these stories is provided by the antics of Ace and Deuce, the Goofball Brothers, and because they have such a limited role in this one is the main reason for the limited amount of humour. Oh and BTW we mustn't forget that there's always a good mystery that Reed always solves, usually with the help of Cal and a lot of luck, and often even gets paid for his efforts. I still like Reed and Willie and Reed's mother as well as Cal and the rest of the regulars and all the Bogie references and I'll still include this series when I need another lighter mystery.

Turning Secrets (Stonechild and Rouleau Mystery #6) by Brenda Chapman

Date Read – 20190513

Rating 4 Stars

This is the latest volume in another one of my favourite series and is every bit of an enjoyable and entertaining read as the previous books in the series. I really like Ms Chapman's writing and the settings of these stories in and around Kingston, the Ottawa Valley and the St Lawrence are bang on and the great old city of Kingston and all its marvellous limestone and waterways has become a character of itself. It is nice to see Dawn having her turn as a major character even if it was not in much of an easy and happy roll and it's nice to see the kind of a person she is maturing into. Gundersund finally seems to be getting his personal life sorted out and Kala looks like she's made a pretty definite decision for her future. Now I did correctly guess the identity of the big boss well before the reveal but not exactly his motive nor the identity of the boy with the black car and the twist that that involved although I think one should have been able to see it. It's nice to see, for a change, an investigative journalist like Marci who, while doing everything she can to get her story, still maintain her integrity and ethics and be a very nice person. And even Woodhouse comes out of this one showing a bit of a better image and a better attitude toward Kayla. Once again I think this book backs up my contention that this, like most mystery series, must be read in order to understand all the recurring characters and even some of the ongoing sub plots. This book is well edited and proof read but there is still one huge error that I can not understand how a human reader could have missed.

In chapter 7 Rouleau is talking to his father, Henri and says -

"I've sent two officers to break the news. They should be arriving any time now."

"Kala Stonechild?"

"Paul Gunderson and Tanya Morrison."

In chapter 8 Rouleau is talking to Ellington and says -

"Woodhouse and Morrison went to see her parents in Manotick last night to notify them and find out her -"

Then later in the same conversation he says -

“I’m hopeful that Gundersund will have that information when he debriefs later.”

“Gunderson” should be “Gundersund” (This happens at least one other time, too) and “Woodhouse” should be “Gundersund”

For a very strange coincidence this same kind of name mix up happened in “Tumbled Graves”, book 3 of this series, with “Gundersund” and “Rouleau’s” names. (See my review of “Tumbled Graves”)and for what I can tell from the Copyright pages and Acknowledgements of these books it was quite possibly with two different proofreaders.

Anyway I really liked this book and now comes the long and anguished wait for the next great read in this series.

Noir by Christopher Moore

Date Read – 20190510

Rating 3 Stars

I originally rated this book as 4 stars but after some time to digest it I have decided to downgrade it to 3. I really did enjoy this book and it sure is something different and I found the satirical pokes at all the cliches of the noir genre quite entertaining and quite humorous. However while I had many smiles, chuckles and snickers I didn’t really find much of the LOL humour promised in the blurbs and many reviews. I think the whole mystery could have been just as funny, if not more so, if it hadn’t have been completely usurped by the absolutely impossible and a way too far over the top “moonman”. And even the antics of that moonman wouldn’t have put me off quite as much except I think they were dragged out a way too long and became more and more preposterous and just plain silly. This is the first Christopher Moore I’ve read and I’ll probably try another when I need some laughs after reading a serious, dark and gritty novel and also because I have already found that many of his books are available as ebook loaners but they won’t have a high priority on my TBR list.

None So Deadly: A Cullen and Cobb Mystery by David A. Poulsen

Date Read – 20190508

Rating 4 Stars

This is the latest entry in one of my favourite series and once again I thoroughly enjoyed this read. I think this story is definite proof that most, if not all, mystery series must be read in order because I can not fathom how anybody that hadn't read the first books in this series could possibly understand all that is going on in this book. Lots of great characters that I really like with the top two, INMHO, being Jill and Kayla with Kayla having a slight edge. Of course Mike and Adam rank pretty high, too, and I think my opinion of Adam recovered pretty completely from the let down in the previous book. This story has lots of action and some spectacular scenes and sure pretty well ties up all the loose ends from the previous books. Now I do think that Mike's "Spenser-ish" plan A to get the biker's off Adam's case may have been a bit far out and over the top but it sure as heck worked with only the slight help of Mike's contingency plan B. Sure helps that Mike has all those contacts, especially the ones that owe him! And to top it all off we know there's another "Cullen and Cobb" investigation coming and, as usual, I'm having a hard time waiting for it.

Murder at the Cabaret (Pet Portraits Mystery #4) by Sandi Scott

Date Read – 20190505

Rating 2 Stars

OK but not as good as the earlier ones in the series. I'm doubtful about reading any more of this series. This was not a bad book by any means but I didn't find it as humorous as the earlier books and the murderer was pretty obvious and it might have been a 3 star read except for the finish which, once again, I abhor and will always cause me to downgrade a book. When I started reading at about 8.00pm on May 5/19 Marvin (my eReader on my iPad) told me I was 47% finished so I thought I had enough to read till pretty well bed time around midnight but OH NO! I came unexpectedly to "The End" at about 9.00pm and Marvin tells me I still have about 20% to read. What's in the rest of the book? YEAH the first couple of chapters from at least 2 more books in the series, a whole lot of quite long recipes for some probably quite inedible things, and a whole lot more of unwelcome promotional junk. I think this ruse neighbours on fraud by the author and publisher. You know a little promo saying the next books

titled “Such & Such” and “So & So” are available on “Whatever” and knocking 20% off the price would be a much more effective, acceptable and honest method of getting me to buy the next books instead of making me decide not to read any more by this author.

Every Breath You Take: A Tee Pepper Mystery by Jay Zendrowski

Date Read – 20190504

Rating 4 Stars

WOW! OK I broke one of my rules and started this series out of order with book 2 “Shake Off The Ghosts” and I’m not going to explain why here but I suggest everybody should check my review of that book as most of my comments about it apply to this book as well. I will say though that, as I expected, I most probably would have liked “Shake Off The Ghosts” even more if I had read this book first. Tee, Rupe and Chin are all great characters and top notch detectives even though they all made the mistake of becoming so fixated on the guilt of one suspect that it put Tee and Shauna in a very dangerous situation from which they were only saved by Rupe finally solving the puzzle leading to a huge twist that I never saw coming and a great action packed takedown scene with the perp actually locked up alive rather than meeting up with some cheesy and convenient accident as seems to happen in too many mystery novels these days. As I suspected reading this book first would have explained Shauna’s problems in the second book. The use of the musical clues from ‘80s music is slightly different and I even got some of them! Caruso is still a good boss and the interaction between Tee, Rupe and Chin provides enough humour to offset the grit and violence. These are the type of mysteries that I really like and I sure hope there are more to follow and very quickly too. And BTW Mr Zendrowski provided me with a very much appreciated free copy and I wish to thank him profusely for that.

A Body on Fitzgerald’s Bluff (Seaview Cottages #1) by Anna Celeste Burke

Date Read – 20190430

Rating 3 Stars

OK I read **Cowabunga Christmas** by Ms Burke as part of my 2018 Christmas readings and I didn't like either the story, any of the characters or especially the non-ending (see my review) and I said I wouldn't read any more in that series but I acquired this book as a freebie and when I needed a bit of a come down read after finishing a serious novel I thought I'd give Ms Burke a second chance and I am not too disappointed that I did because this was definitely a better read. This story has a good plot, some really good and likeable characters a pretty good investigation and a satisfactory ending and none of the things that I didn't like in the first of Burke's work that I tried. And this book also provided lot's of humour although, as is often the thing in cozies, most of the humour is in the early part of the book but in this book after the mid parts become a quite serious murder investigation the humour returns pretty good leading to the ending. C'mon "Miriam Webster" and "Boo Who" ! What's not to like? I'll likely read more of this series if I can get freebies, loaners or real cheapies but I won't actively look for them or put 'em high on my TBR list.

HOUND (Rebecca Bradley thrillers #2) by Ken Ogilvie

Date Read – 20190428

Rating 3 Stars

OK while I most definitely enjoyed this read and thought it was a great action/adventure story I didn't think it was quite as good a story as book 1 "Her Dark Path" BTW after reading these two books I am more convinced than ever that in 99 and 44 % of series it is almost mandatory that the books be read in order. This book has all the great descriptions of the locale, the weather and the characters as in the first book and it sure has lot's of action and pretty grisly murders but perhaps that's part of my problem with it. I think the whole Jackie Caldwell sub plot is just a bit too far over the top and requires too much of a suspension of disbelief to be acceptable. However with Kingsley McBride's involvement with the mob it sure led to some spectacular shoot em out scenes with Hound, who was his usual fabulous character, and newcomer Matthew Simon who is just as great a character. Nice to see a solid and satisfactory wrap up to the Kingsley story. I thought the second plot with Rebecca's investigation into her Mother's murder and her relationship with her father and all his

problems was much more believable except for all the very convenient changes of heart that suddenly occurred in many of the characters. Now I thought the actual windup of both plots was deliberately left somewhat vague and quite likely is the conclusion that many readers would have liked to have seen and I actually can't knock the book for this ending. Overall this book read very well and was quite well proofread with the only error that I remember jumping out at me being this puzzling paragraph from chapter 62 - "or one thing, Mrs. Caldwell claims she shot Marco Perez at Kingsley McBride's behest. That ties him to a murder. And at the same time, Perez shot Charlie Taylor, the former mayor of Conroy, somewhere north of the town. Mrs. Caldwell" Now the Mrs. Caldwell here obviously means Jackie Caldwell but it's impossible for her to be Mrs. Caldwell when her mother is Lily Caldwell. I still didn't like Cartwright but I liked Sykes even more than in book 1 and I'm glad to see the what he has planned for the future and I'm looking forward to another adventure with Hound, Rebecca, Sykes and hopefully Matthew in another entry in this series.

Every Last Mark (Avery Hart Trilogy #3) by Emerald O'Brien

Date Read – 20190423

Rating 4 Stars

These 3 books really are a trilogy as there is one story line that continues through all three books before coming to a conclusion in this the third book. There's really no mystery here as we know who the perp is and with the exception of a small twist introducing another bad guy the whole story involves the cat and mouse games that the psycho plays with cops and the only suspense is when he will inevitably be caught. However this series is populated by some extremely well drawn and likeable characters with very human qualities and warts with Noah, Avery, January and Ethan being outstanding and even Palfry being quite a good cop and the bad guys are particularly nasty, vicious and definitely unlikeable. Now in reality this story is another contemporary retelling of Agatha Christie's "And Then There Were None" with a whole lot more blood and guts than Ms Christie could ever write. This brings me to my thought that I don't think I have ever read a book by a lady author that was quite as dark, gritty, violent and gory as this series and I really enjoyed this read and I intend to read more of Ms O'Brien's work. Now for a bonus this series is self published and with the exception of this quote from chapter 26 in book 2 "Bare Your Bones" - "sunset, he could barley take his eyes off of her." it was

fabulously well edited with no other errors jumping out at me from any of the books. This one may also be a Freudian slip! A pleasure to read and I look forward to more by Ms O'Brien.

Bare Your Bones (Avery Hart Trilogy #2)

Date Read – 20190422

Rating 3 Stars

Lies Come True (Avery Hart Trilogy #1)

Date Read – 20190112

Rating 4 Stars

I'm not going to do a review until I finish book 3 of this trilogy except to say I can't understand all the reviews complaining about the non-ending cliff hanger when it is clearly stated that this is book 1 of a trilogy. It even says it's a book in a trilogy right on the cover of each book!

The Affair of the Hideous Vase: A Short Silly Cozy Mystery by B.T. Alive

Date Read – 20190409

Rating –4 Stars

Ok I've stopped laughing enough to be able to write some thoughts on this short and as Bill said "silly" little cozy. I've read and laughed at all of Bill Alive's Empath Detective series and when he offered a freebie of this short cozy I jumped at it 'cause I thought it would be a suitable ease down read after finishing Peter Kingsmill's wild and woolly action mystery "Sunset at 20:47" and it sure was! It had me a bit worried up to about 25% of the way through 'cause I really hadn't had many laughs yet but then the fun began and I'm still giggling. What a weird, wacky and wonderful bunch of characters and I never at any time saw that twist at the end coming although it sure was appropriate and really fit the story. My only real beef with this one is why Bill changed his name to B. T. And messed up all my search engines! When do we get "Murder Feels ?D?"

If You See Kay Lie (The Badge Bunny Booze Mystery Collection, #4) by Fiona Quinn

Date Read — 20190401

Rating -2 Stars

Yeah! After reading the first book in this series I said I wasn't going to read any more by these authors but I tried this one because I got it as a freebie and I needed something light after finishing a good gritty police procedural. Well I should have stuck to my original thoughts and not wasted my time on this one. I think my problem is that I don't like any of the characters except perhaps for Twinkles. Now some of the one liners are very close to being Puns and a Pun (two Thirds P U) is one of my favourite kinds of humour so I did have a few giggles but I found most of the supposed humour to be pretty juvenile and at the risk of offending any 15 year old boys I had the distinct feeling that this thing was really written by a 15 year old high school boy. Definitely not all a bad book as the 2nd star shows but just not my cuppa and I think now it's pretty certain that I won't be reading any more by these authors although I have already received another freebie.

Naan of Your Business by Jack Roach

Date Read – 20190426

Rating 3 Stars

I enjoyed this book very much as a lighten up read after finishing a serious crime novel and, for a change, I found a book that is billed as being humorous to actually be hilarious. I really don't quite know what this story is supposed to be as it has a pretty good mystery and some amateur sleuthing along with laughs galore but I guess it's sort of a send up of contemporary mystery novels. Doesn't matter because Frank is a really likeable guy and he's surrounded by great characters like Lucky (whatever her name is) Kate and Eddie and there's a good satisfactory happy ending at least for the good guys and I'm glad to see that the set up is in place for more wacky adventures with the Comeback Kid and his associates. I don't know who the publisher is but this book is quite free of the usual editing and proofreading errors that are usually included in eBooks and the only major one that jumped out at me was in chapter 7 where this line occurs - "When Frank slid into his booth for lunch, he When Frank slid into his booth for lunch," Anyway a good read with lot's of laughs that I enjoyed and I'll be looking for more hilarious Comebacks!

Mardi Gras Murder (Cajun Country Mystery #4) by Ellen Byron

Date Read – 20190419

Rating 4 Stars

This is a great addition to a series that is rapidly becoming one of my favourites when I need a bit of a lighter read after reading a serious, dark or gritty crime novel. Not that these stories don't have some pretty serious murders and some great investigations both by the sheriffs guys like Bo and Rufus and really by Maggie and her friends and families but the stories are lightened up by lot's of humour, lot's of Cajun customs and, of course, by lots of Cajun food. The murders in this one are practically overshadowed by all the Mardi Gras Party shenanigans, the great Gumbo cook-off, the Treasure Hunt and it's result and the big step forward, but not without some doubts and suspense, in Maggie's love life. Oh, and BTW, I don't often pay much attention to the recipes included but I have a sneaky feeling that I may be trying some of Ninette's classic Oyster Soup in the not too distant future! I really enjoyed this read and I recommend it but I think these books are best read in order.

Arsenic in the Azaleas (Lovely Lethal Gardens #1) by Dale Mayer

Date Read – 20190421

Rating 3 Stars

OK I actually liked this light read quite a bit although it does take quite a suspension of disbelief to accept that Doreen could be so thoroughly clueless about almost everything to do with the everyday world but Nan and the menagerie sure compensated a whole lot for that and I think Thaddeus is the best character in the story at least for providing laughs. A few too many bodies maybe but lots of fun. Does anybody think Mack will have the patience to drag Doreen into the present day world? Will she ever learn how to put the J on a PB & J? Will she ever figure out that gas stove? We'll have to tune in to the next bit of silliness to find out while getting our next dose of entertainment and giggles.

Murder at Matins (Bevyn Jones Book 2) by Davyd Gosselin

Date Read – 20190412

Rating 3 Stars

Once again because of my 2019 Arthur Ellis awards reading project I broke my rules and bought a novel out of order in a series by a new to me Canadian author but once again I was really lucky and found a book I quite liked and I'll probably read more by Mr Gosselin. This book has many good things going for it such as some very good descriptive writing of the settings, weather, daily life, work and worship in the commune, the food and the large cast of likeable and unlikeable characters with all their secrets and warts. Perhaps there are a few too many mystery plot lines that don't all seem to be connected but just muddy up the investigations with again perhaps too many investigators, some undercover, but all seemingly with their own unrelated agendas but it all adds up to a good read and the big Hercule Poirot/Nero Wolfe type reveal meeting led to a satisfactory ending. This story should have been a 4 star read except for the apparent lack of any proof reading and editing. I don't usually downrate a book for these problems but this one is so bad I am forced to. I'm listing a few random quotes to illustrate what I'm saying but really you can find something like this on almost every page. Here's a few ---

- allow me get you something to eat

- If we haven't heard in the hour, I'm contact Andrews," Jennifer replied.

- mix of distain and

- He was quiet man.

- "Unmoved, Romero spoke matter-of-factly. "He was a good priest, and helped many, but he had other interests. As you know, we are not one-dimensional."

And now for one of my favourites -

- She met Susan on the way to the refectory, who wore a long face.

Wow! That must really have been something to see the refectory with that long face!

I know this book was self published but I have read many self published books that don't have these problems so I can only suggest that Mr Gosselin hire a professional proof reader and if this book was read by one Mr Gosselin should fire her/him and find a new one. Anyway I'll most likely read more in this series.

Murder Audit (Cynthia Webber Book 1) by Michelle Cornish

Date Read – 20190414

Rating 3 Stars

I enjoyed reading this novel which is entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best first novel. I thought that although this story is billed as a mystery I found it to be a pretty good study of greed and corruption in the corporate sector with a solid emphasis on the current situation in the oil industry. I thought the characters were all fairly well developed and I really liked Cynthia, Ben, Sam, Detective Randy and reporter Linda and especially Luke. The id of the culprit is pretty apparent and although he does end up dead before a trial at least in this book he has been arrested and put behind bars. I don't remember many, if any, editing errors and only one slight error as in this quote - "continued reading Eve her full Miranda rights while Linda and her crew recorded everything" This story takes place in Calgary which, as far as I know, is still in Canada at this time and in Canada there is no such thing as "Miranda Rights". Later on in the book when Randy arrested the culprit he "read him his rights" as guaranteed under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms the execution of which varies among the many jurisdictions and Police Services. Anyway a good read that I enjoyed and I will read more by this author.

Why Was Rachel Murdered? by Bill Prentice

Date Read – 20190416

Rating 4 Stars

I bought and read this book because it is a nominee for the 2019 Arthur Ellis award for Best First novel and I'm glad I did 'cause I found it a very enjoyable read and well deserving of the entry for the award. This is a well written book with a very smooth an easy reading style with many well developed and strong characters both the likeable good guys, especially Neil Walker and Carole Lisgar, and the not so likeable but quite surprising bad guys and a very unique female hitman (hitwoman? hitperson? This PC stuff is atrocious!). Then Isobelle is a real enigma! The couple of twists after Neil and Carole's thorough investigations leading to the solid and satisfactory ending came as a real surprise to me but I should really have seen them coming. Once again, though, we have the bad guys meeting unfortunate ends before being brought into the justice system and this is becoming a common writing device which I do not particularly like. Now one has to suspend quite a lot of disbelief to accept the quite farfetched and over the top plot line but it is very much based on current affairs, the Panama Papers and a lot of suspected political and corporate

corruption and it sure made for a very enjoyable and entertaining read and the accompanying escapism for which we read these books. I think this book was very well edited and proofread with the following quote from chapter 58 being the only error that I can remember jumping out at me - " There will be come kind of vetting". Good read and I wouldn't mind more of Neil and Carole.

Sunset at 20:47 by Peter Kingsmill

Date Read – 20190402

Rating 4 Stars

Once again because of my 2019 Arthur Ellis awards reading project I broke my rules and bought a debut novel by a new to me Canadian author but once again I was really lucky and found a book I really liked and I'll sure read more by Mr Kingsmill. There's not very much I can find wrong with this book and I've rated it 4 stars which I very seldom do for a debut novel. The writing style is very readable with great descriptions of the area, the weather and small town Northern Ontario life in Spirit River and Maple Falls and a well developed but somewhat large cast of likeable good guys and just as unlikeable bad guys. Lots of suspects and red herrings with reasonable motives for the various mysteries but it all comes down to the common drug thing and another solid ending where the perp doesn't make it to the crowbar motel. Now I do have to say that it takes a huge suspension of disbelief to accept the main characters here and much of the action but, of course, we read these stories for escape and entertainment and we sure get lots of that here even if characters like the Webster sisters are a bit over the top and Frank Anderson seems like Jack Reacher combined with Spenser and Travis McGee and Willy is a wonderful character. There's sure lot's of shoot em up action and some technical stuff that I guess is accurate but I wouldn't really know and The Beaver is sure some kind of a ship. I thought the romances were very well handled and there were quite a few little humorous exchanges with Frank and Arnold and Marjorie to lighten things up a bit. There are a couple of things that I found either a strange coincidence or a bit too far fetched to be believable but they didn't detract from my enjoyment. I was surprised by what may be a coincidence that Mr Kingsmill has used the fictitious Ontario Police Service (OPS) as his police force in 2018 when the OPS was introduced by Inger Ash Wolfe in "The Calling" in 2008! Also the way the OPS allowed Frank and his civilian crew to plan and run the big operations may possibly be a bit too far over the top to even be acceptable but it sure made for good reading. I'll definitely read more by Mr Kingsmill.

Last Call (Janet Black Mystery #1) by Libby Kirsch

Date Read – 20190405

Rating –3 Stars

This is quite a good and fairly serious murder mystery with a large cast of pretty well developed characters with several of them being somewhat unlikeable but what it isn't, contrary to many of the reviews and what is inferred in this quote from the description on the Goodreads book page, "For fans of Janet Evanovich! Last Call is what you'd get if Stephanie Plum **owned a bar and loved to swear.**" is in any way humorous. I can't vouch for any humour in the Stephanie Plum books as I haven't read any because all the blurbs make me think they are not the type of mysteries I like to read but they also tell me they are funny and I can accept that. However I am a bit put out by whoever wrote the above quote, be it by the author or the publisher, which borders very closely on a fraudulent effort to sell more books because it convinced me to read this as a funny cool down read after finishing a gritty, serious novel and, of course, it didn't turn out to be so. . However I enjoyed this read very much, I really like Janet, I couldn't decide whether or not I liked Jason but that changed to a like at the end when we found out what he was really doing, there's the sort of corrupt cop plus O'dell the cop with the tunnel vision and all the motives buried in all the past and a quite solid and satisfactory ending with a bit of a twist that I didn't really see coming. I'll sure read more in this series but as serious mysteries and not as change of pace come down reads.

Fat Cats (Dyed In The Green Book 4)

by George Mercer

Date Read – 20190402

Rating –3 Stars

Because this book is entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best novel and I'm trying to read as many of the entries that I can that are of the types I like

before the Shortlists announcement on April 17/19 I broke my cardinal rules and bought this book by a new to me Canadian author and read it out of the series order. I don't think I was quite as lucky with this one as I was with "Shake Off The Ghosts" by Jay Zendrowski but this is by no means a bad book and at no time was I ever tempted to stop reading and relegate it to my aborted shelf but I really didn't find it to be an outstanding read and quite possibly my reasons may included a bit of personal nit picking and quite possibly I misread something and jumped too quickly to a conclusion. I made that conclusion while knowing this is the 4th book in a series I read all the synopsis and cover blurbs and many reviews of the earlier books and quite possibly erroneously decided that these books were really stand alone stories based on the same National Parks theme but as I read along in this book I found that I might have understood and enjoyed it a lot more if I had read the series in order. Next I don't know if I agree that this story is eligible for the Arthur Ellis award as it takes quite a stretch to find any mystery here as we know all along what is happening and who is doing what and other than the first cat the only death is from natural causes and we know all along who is comprehended for any fringe crimes actually committed. I thought there were many pages of long narratives that came close to being info dumps and I thought most of the dialogues were not very realistic and were a bit stilted. I didn't really like any of the characters too much except perhaps for Augie but I thought they were all very well developed and described as was the setting and weather. I did not like Anne in any way and I thought the relationship with Anne and John was completely unrealistic and impossible. I do think that the whole premise of this story has been done before and a whole lot better in Dave Butler's Jenny Willson series and in particular in his debut book "Full Curl" which very deservedly won the Arthur Ellis for best first novel. I thought I might read this whole series because I am very interested in the nature conservancy involved but I'm afraid this book, while as I indicated is not a bad book and has enough good points that I have awarded it 3 stars, just didn't click for me.

Shake Off The Ghosts (A Tee Pepper Mystery Book 2) by Jay Zendrowski

Date Read – 20190330

Rating –4 Stars

Because this book is entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best novel and I'm trying to read as many of the entries that I can that are of the types I like before the Shortlists announcement on April 17/19 I broke my cardinal rules and bought this book by a new to me Canadian author and read it out of the series order. And for a big change I really hit the jackpot with a superb read. Of course

it's not perfect as my 4 star rating shows because a book must be truly unique and outstanding for me to ever rate it 5 stars but I am also usually quite reluctant to rate my first read by an author 4 stars either so that shows good I found this one. This book is well written, edited and proofread and I found the writing style to be easy and enjoyable reading. I am quite familiar with London Ont. and I thought the descriptions of the settings and the weather and the coffee quite well done. This story is populated by a large cast of pretty well developed characters both the good guys and the bad guys and it is very difficult to pick out any favourites. I don't think I can remember any other book where I can't even list any of the law enforcement characters as unlikeable with possibly the slight exception of Gallup. Of course Tee and Rupe are great as the leading characters with Chin not far behind but I might possibly rate Ben Lambert as the best character. Up until reading this story I have always considered Bradley in Laurence Gough's Willow's and Parker mysteries as the boss every cop would want to work for but now I think he has been replaced by Caruso for that honour. If there's any weakness in this story it is that some of the mystery was solved by somewhat coincidental things but, then, that's kind of like real life too, and I really didn't like ending of the Gallup twist. I will admit that I would probably have enjoyed this read even more if I had have stuck to my rule that series should be read in order especially in completely understanding Shauna's problem but now I definitely will go back and read the first book in this series. Overall this is one of the best police procedurals that I have read this year and I highly recommend it.

The Goddaughter Does Vegas (Gina Gallo #6) by Melodie Campbell

Date Read – 20190327

Rating –4 Stars

Melodie Campbell's "Gina Gallo" Rapid Reads series is one of my favourite series of what I call "Laundromat books" that I can read in the hour and a half or so while I sit in the Coin Laundry and watch the washers and dryers eat up my coins and my clothes. And this one turned out to be one of the best in this series even though it was a bit longer than expected and I had to finish it at home. Quite often when I read what has been touted as a humorous cozy mystery novel or novella I never find any humour but that's sure not the case with this book 'cause I was giggling and smiling and outright guffawing on every page. Gina and her "Family" are all fantastic characters and Nico has to be number 1. Pete has to have the patience of Job to fit into this wacky bunch. And, WOW, we've just discovered another branch of the family in Vegas and Frank

"Mushroom" and Rita and Salvo most definitely belong in this crazy family and I'm looking forward for some more raucous adventures with Gina. BTW I think cousin Mario better watch his back. Bring on the next one a lot quicker please 'cause I'm going to need some more laughs pretty soon.

Keep Her Safe by K.A. Tucker

Date Read – 20190325

Rating –4 Stars

I think this book is a fine entry for the 2019 Arthur Ellis best novel award and I am glad to find another new, at least to me, Canadian mystery author and I intend to read more of her work in the mystery genre. I know Ms Tucker is a well published and best selling Romance author who is trying to branch out into the Romantic Suspense sub genre and I think she has done so quite well with this book. I've rated it 4 stars which I very seldom do for the first book I have read by an author but I enjoyed this one so much that I pretty well had to. I think this book is well written and even with the quite gritty and serious story I even had a few smiles along the way to lighten things up a bit. This book is very well edited and proof read with few, if any, of the usual typo errors found in most current books. Many very well developed characters with Grace (Gracie) being an exceptionally strong, smart and likeable character even with her tempestuousity and I can quite understand and sympathize with Noah, even if he seems a bit naive, considering the situation he is in and his upbringing. One thing that is a bit unique is that that the FBI agents Klein and Tareen are portrayed as quite likeable and intelligent human beings rather than the way FBI agents appear in many mysteries. I'm not a huge fan of a lot of romance in a mystery novel but I think it is well handled here and I actually liked seeing how Noah and Gracie changed and grew together very realistically. Another thing that annoys me in many books is the use of flashbacks but Ms Tucker pulled that off very smoothly by providing dates and names in the chapter titles and they became an effective way of providing all the background and motives for the plot and the character's actions. I had guessed the identity of the perp down to one of two and picked the wrong one and I never saw the second twist coming but I sure should have. I really liked the ending except that it possibly could have been a bit more definitive about what happened to Canning. It would also be kind of nice if Ms Tucker could set a Mystery in Canada as I know she has done with at least one of her Romances. Good read and I'm looking forward to her next mystery novel.

Flights and Falls: (B.C. Blues Crime #4) by R.M. Greenaway

Date Read – 20190321

Rating –3 Stars

A break from my 2019 Arthur Ellis awards reading project to read the latest release in R.M. Greenaway's B.C. Blues Crime series and I've basically enjoyed all four books in this series almost equally as I think it's a bit of a coincidence that I have rated all four as 3 star reads. However in this book as in all of the first three there is some small problem which causes me to slightly downrate what should be a 4 star read to a 3. In this case the only slight problem I have is the little cliff hanger at the ending with Kenny Poole's action that obviously is intended to sell the next book in the series and, as usual, I'm a bit turned off by this ploy. I still don't like Mike Bosko too much although in this episode he pulled a goof up that actually made him to appear more human. I have never been a huge fan of David Leith but I sure liked him a lot more in this story than in any of the previous ones. J D Temple is far and away the best cop in the series and it was nice to see her have her turn to be the MC. Dion is sure skating on thinner and thinner ice in every book and we learn a bit more again about his trouble but he really is a brilliant detective and it's quite clever how Ms Greenaway has managed to allow him to contribute so much to the investigations while maintaining his supposed memory problem. I never guessed the identity of the perp until the reveal but all the clues were there in spite of Dion's theories which had everybody running off in all sorts of directions. I think the title of this book is very appropriate for this story and I think it is one of the best titles I've seen for a very long time. Please hurry up with book 5 so I can find out what Kenny Poole is up to!

Plots: A Robin Macfarland Mystery by Sky Curtis

Date Read – 20190318

Rating –3 Stars

Another pretty good entry for the 2019 Arthur Ellis best novel awards but I didn't find it quite as funny as "Flush" the first novel in this series. Sure there were lots of smiles and chuckles but no really LOL guffaws but a pretty good mystery with most definitely a very unique murder weapon. I really like Robin even with her weight and wine problems but brother Andrew is an absolute twit and I don't really like Cindy too much and I'm having some difficulty in deciding if I like Ralph all that much. He has lot's of good stuff going for him but I just get a bit of an off feeling about him. This book is well written, edited and proof read making

it a real pleasure to read. I thought the ending was pretty solid but I thought the perp was pretty obvious quite early in the story even before Robin's rather different method of investigating by just eliminating each of her suspected suspects until only the perp was left. I did think the garbage can episode was dragged out a bit too long especially when the reader knows it's significance. Anyway an enjoyable read and I'll sure read any more that follow in this series.

Something Read, Something Dead (Lighthouse Library Mystery #5) by Eva Gates

Date Read – 20190315

Rating –3 Stars

A little break from my ArthurEllis awards entries reading project to read this book which is the latest release by one of my favourite authors, Vicki Delany, writing as Eva Gates. I've read all the entries in this series and for the most part have enjoyed them all but, of course, some more than others but although I found this a good fun read I can't rate it as one of the best in the series. Lucy and the whole gang from Body Island lighthouse and Josie and Jake and the rest of the Outer Banks characters are in their usual fine form and the descriptions of the weather and particularly the food are just as good as usual and it's nice to see Lucy and Conner's romance moving forward. However I didn't find as much humour in this book as in most of the earlier books. While Charles was pretty active I didn't think his escapades were nearly as hilarious as in previous books, Louise Jane wasn't as annoying as usual and actually became almost likeable and Gloria and her Southern Mafia which should have provided the laughs actually provided the good murder mystery and allowed Lucy to do a pretty good investigation to determine the perp. Anyway a solid ending to the main plot and the sub plot ended as expected and the way every reader wanted it to end and even Gloria got off her high horse and went along with Josie and Jake's wedding plan. I'll sure keep reading this series but I still like Vicki Delany's "Year Round Christmas" the best of her series with the "Klondike Gold" a close second.

Give Out Creek by J.G. Toews

Date Read – 20190311

Rating –4 Stars

Another pretty good debut novel entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best first novel by a new Canadian author and I found it a good enough read that I look forward to reading subsequent books by this author. Now once again I broke one of my rules and bought this book without having read any other work by this author and this time I won the gamble. Of course I may have been influenced by the coincidence that this book and J. E. Barnard's "When the Flood Falls" which is also entered for the 2019 best first novel and which I have already read (see my review) were both shortlisted for the 2016 Unhanged Arthur award of which "When the Flood Falls" was the winner. It's also a bit of a coincidence that both these books involve water but then again that's not too unlikely with them being set in Canada! And that brings me to some thoughts on what I liked about this book. I found the writing style to be very easy reading with a very well described setting, great descriptions of the weather and quite well developed characters, good, bad, likeable or not and here I really liked Stella and Ben and I thought Matt and Nicky were very realistic for boys of their ages but I am having a bit of a problem deciding if I liked Joe or not. Lots of good about him but just a bit of an off feeling. I didn't really see the twist coming in the scenes leading to the arrest and I didn't guess the perp until the reveal but I really should have 'cause there sure were enough clues provided. Again I'm going with 4 stars which I don't usually do for a debut novel but I can't really find enough faults with this book to downrate it further. Oh I really can't see the significance of the title to the story other than it being part of the setting but this story could have taken place on any watercourse. Yeah, BTW, I did a bit of a Google and "Give Out Creek" is a real creek near Nelson BC. Good read, I'm looking forward to a sequel and the suspense is building toward the April 17 2019 Shortlist announcements!

A Berry Deadly Welcome (Kylie Berry #1) by A.R. Winters

Date Read – 20190309

Rating –3 Stars

A quite enjoyable story that I read as a break from my 2019 Arthur Ellis award entries reading that actually has an adequate amount of the humour indicated in the blurbs, a good cast of mainly likeable and pretty well developed characters, a good if a bit predictable mystery and a quite solid ending. This book is pretty well edited but it does have one glaring proof reading problem that I can not

stand and always causes me to downrate an otherwise good book quite a bit. Up until chapter 15 Rachel's sister's name is Veronica however when her husband goes to Jack's bank for a loan here's a quote -"If Jack didn't give Victoria's husband a loan, that must". Twice more she is called Victoria in the next paragraphs then here's the next quote -"I stepped away out of Jack's line of sight and made a note on a napkin. Veronica --> financial gain." There is no excuse for this kind of bad proof reading especially all in the same conversation in the same chapter. Anyway I'll very probably read more of this series when I need a little lighter read but no burn't brownies or uncooked cakes, please!

Find You In The Dark by Nathan Ripley

Date Read – 20190307

Rating –4 Stars

This is another entry in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for best first novel and I've rated it a 4 star read although I usually try not to do so for a debut novel as I like to leave room to see how the characters and the writing grow in subsequent books by the author but I had to as I enjoyed this read so much. I found it quite fascinating how Mr Ripley managed to build and sustain such a high level of suspense in a story where the bad guys are all known from the beginning and much of the story is told from their POV. However in some cases it is a bit difficult to determine if some of these characters are actually good guys or bad guys. I guess what I'm trying to say is that in some ways this is as much of a character study as it is a suspense story and it is very interesting to see the affect all the lies, secrets and misdirections have on the various characters and their lives. I'm trying not to get too specific and into some spoilers but I found Martin Reese to be an arrogant, egotistical and quite despicable kind of a person and definitely not too likeable but I also found myself pulling for him in the search but the twist at the big ending scene really showed his real character. I thought Ellen was a bit weak and should have walked out long ago. Kylie is definitely the most likeable character in that family and the rather vague ending concerning the affects of the ordeal on her tends to indicate a sequel in the works. As to the cops I thought Chris Gabriel to be a very good and effective detective while Sandra Whittal, while touted as the greatest detective in the unit, really jumped to a conclusion and with tunnel vision spent all her energy trying to find facts to support her theory and even if she may have actually been partially correct I couldn't rate her as the top detective. Anyway I thoroughly enjoyed this read and will definitely read another by Nathan Ripley.

Cape Diamond (Frank Yakabuski #2) by Ron Corbett

Date Read – 20190303

Rating –3 Stars

After reading the first book in this series, “Ragged Lake”, which was a 2018 Arthur Ellis entry for best First novel I didn’t really think I would read any more in this series (See my review of “Ragged Lake” . Many of my thoughts there also apply to “Cape Diamond”) However since this book is entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards for Best novel and because I got it at no charge as a loner I gave it a try. Now while this is not a bad book and I didn’t have to force myself to finish it there are some things about it that I, personally, find hard to like in a mystery novel and cause me to downrate it. I will admit that I liked Frank Yakabuski much more in this book than I did in the first book and I really liked how he treated Donna Griffin, enlisted her help in the investigation and credited her for her efforts. The best things about these books are the well written descriptions of the settings and the weather. I know a reader is supposed to suspend most sense of disbelief to enjoy these type of stories but the plot line of this book is so far fetched and over the top that it is very hard to accept that any of the wild action, of which there sure is plenty, could possibly take place anywhere in Canada where this book is supposedly set. That brings to me the problems I have with with this book. The major problem is with place names. It is quite acceptable for a writer to invent fictitious places but it is not acceptable to use the names of real places for them. Buckham’s Bay is a neighbourhood in the City of Ottawa and Cape Diamond is the high ridge of land in Quebec City bordering the St Lawrence river upon which sits the Quebec Citadel. Valerie Tate made the same mistake in her Dunbarton series with the names of Dunbarton and Lancaster. Also a fictitious city must be situated in a geographic location where the topography, weather, distances, industries and people etc. are realistic, possible and probable for that locality and I can not understand how a city the size of Springfield with all it’s amenities could possibly be situated on the Northern Divide. If this book just stopped at the end of Chapter 55 it would have been a fine ending but, oh no, we have to have an epilogue to introduce another of my pet peeves and indicate that Cambino Cortez is returning to Springfield in order to entice the reader to buy the next book which, of course, I will not be doing. I might read it if I can get a freebie.

Cobra Clutch (Hammerhead Jed Mystery) by A.J. Devlin

Date Read – 20190227

Rating –4 Stars

This is another nominee for the 2019 Arthur Ellis award for best first novel and I found it to be well worthy of that nomination as I think it is one of the best debut novels I have read this year. This book has everything you could ask for in a mystery novel involving a somewhat different and unique kidnapping, a collection of well developed characters with many of them being quite quirky and headed up by a great father and son team of Frank and Jed and more raucous humour than I've read in many novels that are billed as supposedly funny. There's lots of spectacular action highlighted by a very Spenser like plan which, for a change, even with a few bumps actually works and produces one of the most spectacular crash bang shoot-em-ups that I've read for quite some time all leading to a pretty solid ending and a bit of a twist that I didn't really see coming. Now I'm not a huge fan of Professional wrestling but that didn't interfere with my enjoyment of this story and as a quite young boy at a father and son banquet with my dad I did meet and get to shake hands with the legendary wrestler, "Whipper Billy Watson". I'm looking forward to the next wild and woolly adventure with "Hammerhead Jed"

Gale Force by Owen Laukkanen

Date Read – 20190225

Rating –4 Stars

For some unknown reason this is the first book by Owen Laukkanen that I have read although I try to read crime fiction by Canadian authors and I have had "The Forgotten Girls", which was entered for a 2018 Arthur Ellis award, sitting in my calibre library for about a year. I think I avoided it because I didn't think the synopsis sounded like a story I might like and I don't like jumping into a series at book number 6 anyway. However after reading "Gale Force" I think I may be in for trying some more of Mr Laukkanen's works and may start the "Stevens & Windermere" series from the first book but of course it will be after I finish my 2019 ArthurEllis reading. Anyway I thoroughly enjoyed this story and while it's sure not great literature it most definitely delivered the escapism and entertainment that we are looking for when we read these types of books. This is definitely some kind of crime fiction with lot's of stolen bonds, stowaways, murders, organized crime and shootouts but it is also most definitely not a detective investigation although most of the bad guys meet appropriate ends

and the good guys win and live happily ever after. For the most part this is a rip roaring swash bucking high seas action adventure with some pretty solid descriptions of the settings that have still left me cold, wet and a bit sea sick and a pretty well developed cast of characters both the good guys and the bad guys. McKenna, Court, Nelson are really strong characters all with enough baggage and warts to make them quite believable and while it's difficult to really like Court because of his attitude he's really quite loyal and he sure has the ability to recover miraculously and rapidly from almost being killed. If there's anything really wrong with this book it is that there is possibly a bit too many technical details about the salvage operation which kind of slows the story down a bit and since I don't know any thing about high seas salvaging I have to assume from Mr Laukkanen's bio that he does. This book is pretty well proofread but here is a quote that doesn't really make sense to me because it possibly contains a wrong word - "I THINK THE SIMPLEST way is the best way," Harrington told McKenna. "The portside ballast tanks are full, and the starboard tanks are empty. If we can ballast the tanks, the ship should regain equilibrium" I don't think the second "ballast" is the correct word. Anyway a good read that I enjoyed and I think this would make a great movie.

A Different Kind of Reunion (A Gilda Greco Mystery #3) by Joanne Guidoccio

Date Read – 20190224

Rating –3 Stars

While still a 2019 Arthur Ellis nominee this book made a nice change of pace after reading Rick Mofina's latest "Missing Daughter". I like this series very much and I enjoyed this one although it doesn't have quite as much of the humour found on the earlier books in the series. That's probably because Gilda's mother and wacky aunts are all away and not involved but Gilda's godmother Maria Rossi and Rosa Geraldini, Maria's sister, manage to get in the picture to help lighten things up a bit. Perhaps the seances were dragged out a bit too long but Gilda sure had lot's of suspects for the murderer and I never correctly guessed the identity until the reveal but it sure wasn't hidden and rung in out of nowhere. It was nice to see Carlo get in a bit, in person, on the action and it kind of looks like Gilda's love life is getting sorted out a bit. I'll sure read more in this series to find out. This is a pretty well edited and proofread eBook but there is one bloop in Chapter 11 which is one of my pet peeves that usually cause me to downrate a book somewhat. Here's the quote - "Leo had a Café Mocha. I followed him to

a table at the far end, away from the amorous couple and the front counter. “We can talk here,” Jake said as he sipped his coffee.” where obviously “Jake” should have read “Leo”. I just can not accept names being mixed up and interchanged like that or understand how it could happen if a human actually read this before it was published. A good read though and I recommend it but it’s best if you read the series in order.

Missing Daughter by Rick Mofina

Date Read – 20190223

Rating –4 Stars

Upon reading the synopsis and seeing the premise for this story my first thought was that this has all been done before in books such as Linwood Barclay’s “Never Look Away” or even Rick Mofina’s own “Whirlwind” but boy was I ever wrong. The only real commonality among these stories is the missing child as this story is a very suspenseful family drama where everybody is hiding secrets from each other and trying to cover up either real or perceived actions while supposedly trying to protect another family member but mostly trying to cover their own asses. All this is written with Rick Mofina’s fine style which always has me almost shivering while I’m expecting something horrendous to happen probably on the next page. There are some things in this book that prevent me from rating it a 5 star read such as the need for the phone call from Jack Gannon who all Mofina fans will recognize as the lead character from one of the earlier series and I kept waiting for him to get involved but it never happened. Now I did have the perps identified quite early in the story but I really had no clue as to how or why they did their things and I had no idea of the fate of Maddie until that marvelous beagle, Buster, got into action doing what beagles would actually do and I know ‘cause I’ve owned and raised many beagles. The clues were there though like all the little dots on the cell phone’s path for instance. I don’t know if it was just the upstate New York setting but at quite a few times I had to remind myself that I was reading a Rick Mofina novel and not a Linwood Barclay who, BTW, happens to be another one of my favourite authors. However if you look at my profile on Goodreads and check my favourite authors list it is not a coincidence that Rick Mofina holds place number 1. A great read and as usual I’m waiting, impatiently, for Rick’s next release.

A Scandal in Scarlet (A Sherlock Holmes Bookshop Mystery #4) by Vicki Delany

Date Read – 20190219

Rating –3 Stars

Although I read this as part of my 2018 Arthur Ellis award nominees reading project I would have read it anyway as Vicki Delany is one of my favourite authors and I have been reading this series in order. This is not my favourite series by Vicki as I think that honour goes to the Year Round Christmas series or maybe even a dead heat with the Lighthouse Library series (Eva Gates) but I am still enjoying this series very much and this entry just as much as the three previous ones. These books have all the necessary elements of good cozy mysteries but are also a bit grittier than most cozies. Gemma and Jane get themselves in the usual jams and get out, usually with the help of Ryan, and Louise's attitude toward Gemma softens up a slight bit and she even gave Gemma a little "Well done". We finally find out that Great Uncle Arthur actually does exist as he makes a short appearance and the ending is quite satisfactory with perps for 3 murders all apprehended. Gemma's love life finally seems to be getting sorted out but the same can't be said for Jayne. However the two leading characters in this book once again are Violet and Moriarty who not only provide most of the humour but Moriarty is the key to solving two of the murders. I enjoyed this book and will definitely read any more in this series.

Darkest Before the Dawn (Sgt. Windflower Mystery Series Book 7) by Mike Martin

Date Read – 20190217

Rating –3 Stars

The only reason I tried another book in this series after being so disappointed with the first two books (see my reviews of books 1 & 2 because many of my thoughts there apply to this book as well) is because it is entered for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best novel award and I bought it for a very low price. I did find this a bit better read than the other two that I have read but there is much too much repetitive detail with Windflower's love and care for his new daughter, Amelia Louise, and again too much driving around on treacherous roads in rural Newfoundland in the fog. Some of this fits in this story which is really more of a character driven family drama, with some very well developed and likeable characters, than a mystery as the mystery investigation takes a back seat to all the picnics, dog walks, dinner parties, cat and dog relations and Uncle Harry and some good tight editing would make this a much better read. I did think that Windflower's First Nation's customs played a bit more of a role than in the earlier books and once again Eddie Tizzard is by far the best character in the

book. I actually enjoyed this read more than the first two books but not enough to make me search for any more of this series to add to my TBR list.

Property Values by Charles Demers

Date Read – 20190215

Rating –2 Stars

I read this thing because it's nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis award for Best Novel and I've reluctantly and probably over generously awarded it 2 stars because I finished it but I didn't really like it too much. I dunno maybe it's just me or my lacking, or at least different, sense of humour than other people but I just didn't get one laugh anywhere in this story and not even any giggles although I think I may have smiled once or twice. I thought the whole thing was preposterous, impossible and away over the top but then BC isn't known as the Left Coast for nothing. It is hard to like a book when you don't like any of the characters although I did get to like the three stooges a bit better at the end. Now this is a well written book with some quite good passages and I wasn't at any time tempted to abort it which I have done in the past with some Arthur Ellis nominees so I guess that might justify the 2 stars but this book just was not for me. I'm glad I got it as a loaner because I would have been really browned off if I had paid for it and probably would have aborted it. No more by this author for me.

A double header to catch up!

Persistent Guilt: A March and Walker Crime Novel by Michael J. McCann

Date Read – 201902014

Rating –4 Stars

I once again broke my rule and jumped into a new series out of order because this book is nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best Novel award and I didn't have too much of a problem with that because this is not much of a character driven story but it is a solid police procedural with some very likeable characters and some pretty well described settings and weather. Perhaps reading the first 2 books in the series before reading this one would have provided more character development and I intend to read them after I finish my Arthur Ellis reading. I really liked Kevin Walker and Dennis Leung particularly and found it a bit

different from many other books of this type that even the requisite bad cop wasn't really corrupt but just in a horrendous conflict of interest situation that should have been avoided. Now I really didn't like Ellie March all too much as, while she is professionally a superb police detective, personally she is very self-centered and only seems interested in furthering her own career. I just couldn't understand her relationship to her daughters and perhaps reading books 1 and 2 may have helped. At least this story has a solid ending with appropriate justice served to all the bad guys and I never saw the spectacular twist in the courtroom scene coming although it wasn't right out of left field either. The only fault I can find is there is quite a lot of unnecessary detail - like we don't need to be told what every detective wears right down to the colour of their shoe laces and the lace on their panties every time they go out. Some much tighter editing would have eliminated quite a bit of skimming. Anyway a good solid 3.5 stars rounded up to 4 and I'll read more by this author.

Chameleon (The Dunbarton Mysteries Series #5) by Valerie Tate

Date Read – 20190211

Rating –3 Stars

I took a break from reading Arthur Ellis nominees because I needed a slightly lighter and fluffier read and that's what you usually get from this fine series that I am liking more and more as it progresses. However this book, while it was a good read and I enjoyed it, was a bit grittier than some of the earlier books in the series and, while I had a few laughs, it wasn't quite as humorous as I expected. Chris and Alicia are just as solid characters as usual and again as usual Charlie supplied what humour there is with a couple of his usual escape episodes. I think perhaps Melanie's bad luck with her boy friend choices is getting dragged out a bit too far and is starting to be somewhat annoying. It was nice having Chris's sisters as top stars in the story but Alicia's parents were not really involved at all and I think that is perhaps a small part of what little problem I can find with this story. James and Alice and Marmalade are the whole basis of this series with Marmalade providing most of the humour and for some reason in these later books the author has just seemed to forget about him and almost written him right out of the stories. Now one thing I did find quite good was the proofreading was much better than in the previous books with very few typos or other errors except for one major flaw which cost this book at least 1 star. Here is a quote from Chapter 1 - "And Chris and I are going to take you and Angie and Chris to see 'Blythe Spirit', the play that's on right now, one day before you go home." where "Angie and Chris" should obviously read "Angie and Richard". There really can be no excuse for

the appearance of wrong names like this. Now there are a couple of other instances of what I consider to be incorrect names for things but as this is somewhat of a personal preference I didn't downgrade the book for these. However I think a book by a Canadian author and set in Canada should use Canadian terminology and not UK or US terms. For instance in these quotes - in Chapter 3 "actual dog from the telly. Too valuable" If this story was set in northern Britain "telly" would be fine but I think in Canada and the US the term would be "TV" and in Chapter 6 "She gladly accepted a ham sandwich, apple, and a can of diet soda" If this were set in the north-eastern US this would be OK but in Canada and the mid western US the term would be "diet pop". Now there is one other problem I have, and I did knock a star off for this, I can not accept a mystery novel ending with the perp, who I happened to identify quite early in the story, riding off unscathed into the sunset with some or all of the loot. Just must never happen. Anyway I already have acquired the next book in the series and will read it when I need a change from my Arthur Ellis reading project.

Against Nature (Duck Darley #2) by Casey Barrett

Date Read – 20190209

Rating –3 Stars

I once again broke my rule and jumped into a new series out of order because this book is nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best Novel award and I didn't have too much trouble with character's backstories etc. but, although I liked it, I suspect I may have liked it even more if I had read book 1 first. It's also a bit strange that I liked and enjoyed a story when I really didn't find most of the main characters all that likeable. For instance I didn't like Cass at all (As a professional dominatrix I liked Trixie Snelling, with all her warts, in Linwood Barclay's "Stone Rain" a whole lot more) and I'm not sure how much I like Duck although he does have some redeeming qualities and when he can crawl out of the bottle and stay out of fights he might even stay alive for a while. At least all the bad guys are really bad and they all meet appropriate ends and the only character in the book that I liked, Stevie, turned out to be the big hero. Now his mother, Juliette, is something else again! This book is worth reading and it's sure worth 3 stars and I already have and will read book 1 "Under Water" after I finish my Arthur Ellis reading

MARRY, BANG, KILL

by Andrew Battershill

Date Read – 20190206

Rating –1 Star

This was sure not my cup-a-tea! I'm reasonably sure that some people will like this book but I am definitely sure that I did not. I find it strange that I have just read two books so close together that are entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis awards, this one and "Left". that I just did not like. I find it very difficult to like a book when I don't like any of the characters in that book and that is sure the case here. There are no Good Guys in this story and not one of all the bad guys is in any way likeable and I really didn't care what happened to any of them. I did reluctantly finish it but I really don't know why I didn't abort it and it wouldn't be the first Arthur Ellis nominee that I have aborted either!

Shadow Puppet (Dan Sharp Mystery #6) by Jeffrey Round

Date Read – 20190203

Rating –4 Star

Jeffrey Round has become one of my all time favourite Canadian authors and I have a hard time waiting for each of his new releases. I am practically never disappointed in his books whether in the Dan Sharp series or a standalone like "Endgame" and this new Dan Sharp did not disappoint me in any way and probably ranks as, if not the best of this series, well up as one of the best. As usual I think it's best if you read a series in order but in this case I think it is absolutely necessary to read the author's note before reading this story and remember the chronological time frame of this story as fourth fitting between The Jade Butterfly and After the Horses. If you haven't read the author's note and paid attention to the dates it sure would be easy to assume that the premise for this book was lifted right out of the current news in Toronto. This is a good mystery story on its own with Dan's usual great investigative skills helped, of course, by all his contacts and with some very serious social commentary that Jeffrey manages very well to weave into the plot without becoming in any way preachy. The usual cast of Dan's friends – Donny, Domingo, Lester and Prabin are all just as strong and involved in helping Dan solve the mystery with Prabin probably a bit too involved and even the eventual perp was a strong and interesting character and I will admit that I had no idea who the culprit was

among all the suspects until the big twist and the reveal. However once again I think Ked is my favourite character in this book. Another spectacular and solid ending with appropriate justice served. Just a fine entry in a great series that I really enjoyed and I highly recommend.

When the Flood Falls (The Falls Mysteries #1) by J.E. Barnard

Date Read – 20190201

Rating –4 Star

Once again I've been able to read an Arthur Ellis nominated for Best Novel as the first in a new series and by an author who is new to me without having to read it out of order. Also against my usual practice I've rated this book 4 stars which I rarely do for the 1st book in a series and probably never for the 1st book by a new, to me author but I just couldn't find enough faults in the book to justify downrating any lower. And I broke another rule and paid for a book written by an author whose work I had never read but this time it turned out to be a good purchase. Possibly the only fault with this story may be that it started out a bit slowly with the many character introductions and description of the setting and atmosphere which were well written and probably necessary anyway and the murder didn't occur till late in the story although it was pretty well expected and hinted at. There sure were enough suspects with motives and opportunities and I had one picked out and felt strongly that I was right but boy was I ever wrong! At least when the identity of the perp was revealed it wasn't just wrung in out of the blue but there had been enough clues that one should have been able to figure out who dun it. Lot's of good and well written characters but not all likeable and all with enough warts to make them quite realistic. Although Lacey McCrae is supposed to be the star I didn't really like her too much at first as I found her a bit whiny and too absorbed with her own problems but she did grow into a much stronger and more likeable person at the end of the story. I think Jan Brenner is the real star of this book and I think she and her husband, Terry, are the two strongest characters in the story. A good solid and spectacular wind up scene and a satisfactory ending and I think a worthy Arthur Ellis entrant probably aided somewhat by having won the 2016 Unhanged Arthur award.

Left (Kindle Edition) by Theanna Bischoff

Date Read – 20190129

Rating –1 Star

Weird, Strange and Terrible. No ending and a complete waste of time that I almost aborted many times but I thought I might actually find out what happened but I didn't! Silvie was really the only sane character and I'm sure glad I got this one as a loaner or I'd have been really browned off. And somehow this mess was nominated for an Arthur Ellis 2019 Best Novel award which is why I read it.

Be Careful What You Wish For (A Paladin Project Chronicle) by Solomon Knight

Date Read – 20190125

Rating –3 Stars

This book is one of the most hilarious supposedly mystery books I've read in a long time. There is enough of a mystery buried in here to allow this book to be nominated for an Arthur Ellis award but I doubt it will even make the shortlist unless there were a category for Comedic Mystery which perhaps there should be. This is really a very well written satirical take on historical mysteries and superhero books with a dash of romance, a different look at some historical events, some great atmospheric descriptions and a smattering of social commentary thrown in. I thought that this was a hootin' great action adventure story that I quite enjoyed and it sure was a break from the various mystery, suspense, thrillers and even cozy mysteries that I normally read. And OMG the names! I'm still laughing – c'mon – Gowan Inn! Now I'll have to try some more Paladin Projects just to see if they are all as hilarious as this one.

The Cat of the Baskervilles (A Sherlock Holmes Bookshop Mystery #3) by Vicki Delany

Date Read – 20190123

Rating –3 Stars

I quite enjoyed this story and even though I am not a huge Sherlock Holmes fan I have a fairly large liking for this series probably because Vicki Delany is one of my favourite authors. However this series is not my favourite of Vicki's series as I still think the Year-Round Christmas series is my favourite but I'll still keep reading all the books in this series, too. Also it helps that this one and the next in the series are both on my list of reads that are entered in the 2019 Arthur Ellis Awards and I'm trying to read as many of those that I want to read that I can before the Shortlists are announced on April 18 2019. I liked that Jayne's mother had the major role in this story and, as usual, Moriarty is a riot even with his somewhat reduced role in this book. The twist at the end was a bit unexpected after what appeared to be a soft ending but it's possible that it was almost wrung in from left field with only Gemma, and not the readers, being provided with enough clues to come to that solution. I also think it would be nice if there would be some solution to Gemma's romantic dilemma but I suspect that we can't expect that to happen if this series is to continue. And it would be kind of nice if Uncle Arthur actually appeared in one of books for a change.

Dragonfly: A Sean O'Brien Novel (Sean O'Brien #9) by Tom Lowe

Date Read – 20190119

Rating – 4 Stars

I am so glad after a much too long of a wait to have Sean and all his friends at the Ponce Marina back for another wild adventure. The task that Sean is handed in this story is considerably different than anything he has done in the previous books but, again as usual, it leads to some tense and suspenseful search and rescue missions and more than one magnificent, noisy and spectacular shoot-out and the usual Tom Lowe solid and satisfactory ending. Tom really knows how to end a story which is something a lot of current mystery writers haven't yet learned. Lately I've been running into some really monstrous bad guys in my reading adventures and Aswad and Thurston rank well up with the worst of them. I am especially happy to have Wynona Osceola aboard in a major role as she is a rock solid character who, as I noted in my review of a previous book in which she starred, I hope will become a recurring character in this fine series. Nick Kronus is a hoot but the leading star of this book has to be Max! I think these stories tend to be a bit better when Sean spends more of his time at his cabin on the St John River and Joe Billie is involved but of course that couldn't happen here with the nature of this plot. I was quite sorry to see deaths of some of the good guys but they had to happen to fit with the theme of channeling Agatha Christie's "Ten Little Indians" I am not a huge Agatha Christie fan so I find it a rather strange coincidence that the themes of two of my recent reads, this book and Jeffrey Round's "Endgame" were loosely based on a reworking of "Ten Little Indians". There are a few proofreading errors such as in Chapter 1 where Sean is watching Katie paint the name on "Dragonfly" after

returning from paying his “rent slip”. I don’t pay my “rent apartment” but rather I pay my “apartment rent”! And then the ebook formatting problems with the large blank spaces at the end of every chapter which force the next chapter number to appear in various places on a page following a large blank space. Chapter 36 is a huge example where the words “Chapter 36” appear on the bottom line of a blank page. These types of faults were common in the earlier eBooks but seemed to have been corrected until reappearing in this book. And then we have the epilogue where “Travis O’Brien” or is that “Sean McGee” sails off into the Caribbean with the rescued maiden and Tom Lowe is back to channeling John D MacDonald instead of Agatha Christie! I just liked this book a whole lot!

Another double header. Two Rapid Read novellas read as fillers after an early finish of a novel. However these are both nominated for a 2019 Arthur Ellis Best Novella award and I read them as part of my project to read as many of the AE entrants, that I want to read, that I can before the Shortlist announcements on April 18 2019.

Blue Water Hues (Ashley Grant #2) by Vicki Delany

Date Read – 20190117

Rating – 3 Stars

A quick and quite enjoyable book that I read out of order because of the 2019 Arthur Ellis entrant for Best Novella. Although Vicki Delany is one of my all time favourite authors and I have read most of her books and series or have them on my TBR list I don’t think I can rate this as one of her best efforts. It’s a very good story that I liked but I found it a bit predictable and I had the perp identified very early in the story. I also didn’t find as much humour in this book as in some of Ms Delany’s other books. Some good characters especially Ashley, Sergeant Alan Westbrook and Simon and a fairly well described setting all of which I probably would have found better if I’d read book 1 first. Anyway I now fully intend to read that book perhaps even interrupting my AE project when I need a short filler or laundromat book.

The B-Team: The Case of the Angry First Wife by Melodie Campbell

Date Read – 20190117

Rating – 4 Stars

I really liked this book and it's nice to be able to read an Arthur Ellis 2019 nominee for Best Novella which is actually the first book in a new series by Melodie Campbell as I've read and really liked all of her Goddaughter series and I didn't have to start this series out of order. I'm not sure I found this story quite as funny as the Gina Gallo series but it had lots of chuckles and it sure has a fabulous cast of characters in the B-Team and it's hard to single any of them out as the best but I think Kitty comes in as number 1 with Del a close 2nd. Now one of the things I really liked is all the interactions between the characters in this book and the characters from the Goddaughter series which, of course, is very logical because the stories take place in the same location but even more than that these people are actually all of the same family and "family" here takes on all meanings you want it to! I did find a very close resemblance between part of the plot premise of this book and that of the Gina Gallo's "The Artful Goddaughter" and it's kind of strange that all of Del's great plans go sideways, just as Gina's do, and with the usual funny but eventually successful results. I'm now looking forward to the next entry in this series and I hope it has even closer ties to the Goddaughter series and even more laughs.

Polar Bear Dawn: A Detective Bernadette Callahan Mystery by Lyle Nicholson

Date Read – 20190116

Rating – 3 Stars

Once again I've had a hard time rating a book because, while I did like reading it for the most part, there are some things that caused me to have to rate this a 2 1/2 star story rounded up to 3. The descriptions of the settings are excellent and I'm still cold and I have actually myself encountered temperatures in the -40° range, where C and F are the same BTW, and there's lots of action and violence and I really do like Bernadette Callahan a lot this is where I start to have problems with the story. While this book is supposed to be a mystery it really slips into a Sci Fi fantasy and while I am not totally against Sci Fi I'd rather not read Sci Fi when I'm trying to read a mystery. Even if we ignore the fantastic stuff the mystery is just so far fetched and over the top that there is no way to accept it no matter how much of a suppression of disbelief one makes. C'mon this is set in Canada not Mexico or some third world place! Oh and BTW after Bernadette the Polar Bear is the best character in the book and he gets lots of my sympathy! Now in my opinion a major flaw in any mystery is to have any of the bad guys ride off into the sunset with out meeting appropriate justice and, while it's a bit difficult to decide if Professor Allistair MacAllen is completely a bad guy and while Margaret Ashley most definitely is, there is no way this book should have ended the way it did. I'm glad this book was a freebie on Amazon because I'd be really disappointed if I had paid for it and while I'd like to read more Bernadette Callahan mysteries, but without the SciFi fantasy stuff, I won't be reading anymore by this author unless they are freebies.

Too Many Women in the Room (A Gilda Greco Mystery #2) by Joanne Guidoccio

Date Read – 20190113

Rating – 3 Stars

I enjoyed this book just about as much as I did the first book in the series but I didn't find it as funny as the first book mainly because all of Gilda's wacky Italian family were off to Italy and had a very minor role in the story. This is a very good murder mystery story with a couple of victims that were very much unliked thus creating a large number of suspects all with strong motives, most with good opportunities and most with weak alibis and causing Gilda, her PI and the police a very tough investigation and ending with a big twist that although quite logical I will admit that I never saw coming. I quite like this well written series with strong and well developed characters with, of course, Gilda being the leading lady. I will definitely read more of this series and recommend these books to any one who likes a good character driven mystery.

Scapegoat (The Dunbarton Mysteries Series #4) by Valerie Tate

Date Read – 20190110

Rating – 3 Stars

I thought this was an enjoyable read but I don't think it is the best yet in this good series. All my good friends from Dunbarton are back and in fine form with Alicia staying out of the investigations as usual – NOT! However this time when she came up with her usual way out plan to catch the culprit Chris had enough sense to arrange backup. John and Alice are still pretty good characters and I was sorry to see Lucia leave because I have really grown to like her character a lot but I hope, as it is hinted, that she'll be back. Now I don't think there is as much humour in this story as in the earlier ones and I think that is because Marmalade played a much smaller role in this story and while Charlie played a huge role his part was much more serious and no where near as hilarious as his role in the previous book. Anyway my greatest reason for only awarding 3 stars is the many proofreading errors in this book. This seems to be a common problem with the books in this series and I have been unable to find, with a Google search, any record of a professional publisher named "Red Cottage Books" so I have to assume, and maybe I'm wrong, that it is an Indie publisher and possibly privately owned by the author who should arrange some better proofreading by a human being and not rely on computer spell checking before publishing. There is absolutely nothing wrong with this publishing arrangement as it is done by many other authors such as R. E. Donald for instance. Anyway I like this series and I have already bought the next two books and I hope there are more.

Cave of Bones (Leaphorn & Chee #22) by Anne Hillerman

Date Read – 20190108

Rating – 3 Stars

I found this book to be a very enjoyable read and a fine addition to this series. Now Anne Hillerman is by no means Tony Hillerman but she is getting very close and if one had never read any of Tony's originals and had started with "Spider Woman's Daughter" as book 1 of a new series I believe one would have rapidly judged this a topnotch series on it's own. Anyway I am glad to see the way Anne has taken Tony's characters and slightly remolded them as her own and so far has made Bernie Manuelito her main character while introducing her own characters but has managed to keep all the wonderful settings and First Nations' customs and beliefs. When I first finished reading this story I had rated it 4 stars but on second thought I reduced my rating to 3 because of a part of the ending that I do not personally like or can accept in a mystery story. I did think that what is probably the main plot was a bit predictable and I did have one of

the perps identified almost as soon as they appeared in the story but I was quite impressed with how Ms Hillerman tied all the other subplots together even though I rather expected them to all be part of the same story. Annie Rainsong is a superb character and I hope she will find her way into subsequent books as I am quite sure FBI agent Sage Johnson will and it was quite nice to see the subtle change take place in her attitude. Now to my personal beef with the ending that caused me to deduct 1 star. While the main perp ended up in custody and a couple of the other bad guys met some kind of death one of the culprits was allowed to, in this case, drive off into the sunset, unscathed and the way that it is written sounds very much like a ploy by the author to encourage the reader to buy the next book to find out what happens. Anyway I'll keep reading this quite good series.

Switch by Grant McKenzie

Date Read – 20190103

Rating – 2 Stars

This is another book that I am having a hard time rating and reviewing but I think it is a 2 1/2 star reluctantly rounded up to 3. I read this because in my preference for Canadian authors I have read all of Mr McKenzie's Dixie Flynn series which started out very good and with lots of humour but went down rapidly to the 3rd book which almost convinced me to read no more by this author. However I gave "No Cry For Help" a shot and found it fairly enjoyable if a bit violent and far fetched (see my review) and the blurbs and synopsis for "Switch" sounded interesting so I gave it a try. This is not really a bad book but it is even more far fetched and over-the-top than "NCFH" and requires a huge suspension of disbelief to even slightly enjoy the escapism. I think the underlying motif for all the murders, tortures and violence was actually very weak and the whole thing with the living arrangements of the perp was just too far out to have any believability at all. I will say that there was one twist coming before the big ending that I never even guessed at or saw coming. I also think that Detective Preston is one of the best cops I've ever met in a mystery novel. Now I'm going to ramble on about a couple of things that are personally a pet peeve of mine in any book. I know Grant McKenzie is an ex-pat Brit but as he is living and working in Victoria BC he is considered as a Canadian author and Portland is in the state of Oregon which as far as I know has not yet seceded from the United States and joined Canada. Therefore as Mr McKenzie has set his books in the US, as many other Canadian authors do and which I find annoying but understandable, I would assume and expect that the book would be written in American English not British English as in this quote from Chapter

15 “blare of car horn and the sharp screech of **tyre**, but no fleshy crunch” and the Canadianism in the following quote from Chapter 85 “flakes of dandruff twinkling in the light. ‘He didn’t show up till **Grade Twelve**” where Americans would say “12th Grade” not the Canadian’s “Grade 12”. I may read some more of Mr McKenzie’s books if I’m looking for this type of a far fetched and violent adventure and as long as I can get them as loaners or freebies but I doubt if I’ll be buying anymore.