

**Gluten-Free Murder** (Auntie Clem's Bakery #1) by P.D. Workman

Date Read: 20191230

My rating: 3 stars

While I give preference to Canadian mystery writers and I have had quite a few of Ms Workman's books in my library for some time I don't really know why I have been so reluctant to read any but now that I've read "She Wore Mourning" and this book and I've enjoyed both of them I think I'll have to catch up on more of her books. Although this book has many of the pre-requisite elements of a Cozy mystery it most definitely is not a Cozy, This is a quite gritty standard mystery with some great small town characters, a murder with many, many suspects with varying levels of motive and opportunities and finally a very high tense and suspenseful rescue scene leading to a solid and satisfactory ending. K9 is a good character and it was nice that he played such a big role in Erin's rescue. I am still a bit confused with the way the direction of the Vic, Vicky, Victor, Victoria transition plot was written but that didn't detract from my enjoyment of the story and I really like Vicky as a character. A bit of a loose end with the Willie Andrews plot which obviously leads to a subsequent story. Overall a good read and I won't be so shy of reading more of Ms Workman's books.

**The Night Fire** (Harry Bosch #22) by Michael Connelly

Date Read: 20191229

My rating: 3 star

Before I say anything else about this book I thought it was an OK read and I quite enjoyed it but I can not say it is one of my favourites by Michael Connelly nor do I think it is one of his best books. I always watch for the release of every new Michael Connelly book and as usually happens I think it is an absolute money grab for a publisher to ask \$18.99 CAD for an eBook and also as usual I refuse to pay that for it. However, as has always happened before, it suddenly pops up on Amazon for \$4.99 CAD and I immediately jump on board. As in most of Bosch series there are always more than one case being pursued by the detectives, which of course is very realistic, but they usually come together somehow and that happens here, too, but I thought there were just a few too convenient coincidences to make that happen here. And I really don't like open ends and, unless I just missed something, I can't remember any wind up for the case of the mystery murder book given to Bosch that started the whole

investigation. Again as in most of the recent books in the Bosch Universe Mr Connelly has allowed Harry's age and physical problems to progress naturally and there are lots of hints that Harry may finally be retiring and that Renee Ballard is being groomed for the lead in the Bosch universe. While I have no huge problems with Renee as a detective I have a large problem with her relationship with Lola and actually an even larger problem with Lola even being included in these books. I can not understand what Mr Connelly is trying to do by having Lola in the story because the inclusion of an animal sidekick with the sleuth is a staple of all formulaic cozy mysteries where the animal plays a huge role in solving the mystery but these books are surely by no means formulaic cozies and Lola plays no part in any of the investigations and really doesn't even get well treated as a pet by Renee but only gets a few pets, fed and shuffled off to the pet sitter. Anyway the part I liked the best of this book was the Mickey Haller sub plot because Mickey Haller is by far my favourite of all the wonderful characters that Mr Connelly has invented in all his good series and I am very happy to have read a rumour that he is writing a new Mickey Haller novel in 2020.

### **Claus For Alarm** (A Christmas Magic Cozy Book 1) by Gretchen Allen

Date Read 20191226

My Rating 3 Star

OK I think this is a very good short book with which to bring my 2019 Xmas reading Project to a happy ending! This book has just about everything a good cozy Christmas mystery should have except it's a bit short on the humour. Lot's of rather excentric characters, a decent murder mystery with a bit of a surprise but logical ending and a very solid Christmassy theme with all of the sour puss and anti-Christmas characters having a Scrooge like transformation mainly because of Charlotte's bright Christmas spirit not to forget her solving the mystery as well. A HEA ending for all the good citizens of Partridge Point and a Merry Christmas for all!

### **Mistletoe Mysteries** by Charlotte MacLeod

Date Read 20191225

My Rating 3 Star

I like to have an anthology of short stories like this to read as fill ins if I finish a book too soon for bed and since I have read many of Charlotte MacLeod and her alter ego, Alissa Craig's books and this one included stories by the late Eric Wright and Howard Engel who are two authors who are among my favourites and surprisingly a story by the master, Isaac Asimov I thought there was no way I could go wrong with this one. However I really found it a bit of a disappointment as I thought the quality of the stories was very inconsistent with a few of the stories being OK but not great and most of them just didn't do anything for me. Unfortunately my biggest disappointments were in the Charlotte MacLeod, Eric Wright and Isaac Asimov stories themselves and I thought Howard Engel's Benny Cooperman story was OK until it just stopped with no solid ending. I'm afraid this wasn't one of my favourite 2019 Xmas reads.

### **The Christmas Cantata** (The Liturgical Mystery #10) by Mark Schweizer

Date Read 20191223

My Rating 4 Star

I found this book to be a really good Christmas read and while it is not quite as humorous as "The Alto Wore Tweed" it still has lots of smiles and chuckles and even a few good LOLs and if anything it has a better mystery and some good sleuthing by Hayden and a very appropriate Christmassy feel good ending. I did have part of the Bessie mystery figured out before the reveal and thought it was pretty obvious but that didn't take anything away from this enjoyable read. The woodpeckers were hilarious and come on Pauli Girl, Budweiser, MooseHead, Pete Moss and Goldie Fawm Birtwhistle! What's not to like???

### **The Christmas Dog** Melody Carlson

Date Read 20191221

My Rating 3 Stars

I read this in my 2019 Xmas reading project because I had previously read another of Ms Carlson's Christmas Novellas "The Christmas Bus" and found it an OK Christmas read. I think this book is also an OK Christmas read but I don't think it is quite as good as "The Christmas Bus". With the possible exception of Avery I don't think there is one character at the beginning of this book that I could like as I found everybody bitter, prejudiced, depressed and just generally not nice people but, of course, through the magic of Christmas and Ralph every single character transforms into a kind, tolerant and loveable person. This is not really the type of book I prefer as there is just a bit too much of the religious stuff

for my taste and if it wasn't for the Christmas theme I would never have chosen this book to read and I doubt that I'll read any more, even with Christmas themes, by this author.

### **No Gifts to Bring** by Kathleen McKee

Date Read 20191220

My Rating 4 Stars

I read this book as part of my 2019 Xmas reading project because even though it is by an author I've never read I got it as a Kindle freebie and amazingly I hit the jackpot with this one. Great Christmas story with lots of heartwarming good Christmas cheer and an extremely intricate mystery plot leading to some brutal murders, thankfully mainly of the bad guys, and a solid ending to the mystery and a truly happy Christmas ending for the good families involved. Great descriptive writing of the weather, settings and the well developed characters. Sue is a fine person but I think Jayla is the best character in the story with Alan a close 2<sup>nd</sup>. There is so much great Christmas magic in this story that it is nearly impossible to pick any scene as a favourite be it the sleigh ride, the ice skating or all the family reunions. This one is edging awfully close to being my favourite Christmas read so far this year.

### **Trepalli's Christmas: A Mendenhall Short Mystery** by Marcelle Dube

Date Read 20191219

My Rating 3 Stars

This is my 2019 Xmas read in one of my all time favourite series by one of my favourite authors, Marcelle Dube, and as always with her books I thoroughly enjoyed the read. Also this short story was just the right length to read at the laundromat this afternoon as I did my laundry! It's impossible to pick a best character in Ms Dube's Mendenhall stories as they are all pretty good and they pretty well each get their turn as the lead in a Christmas story but as much as I like Kate and Amanda I think Marco Trepalli may be my favourite character in the series and he sure is in this story. A really suspenseful search with a happy ending for everyone except a certain 10 year old boy who may just get a lump of coal in his Christmas stocking. It sure is nice, and fitting to the Christmas spirit, to see the nice things happen to the people that have done all the good things. I just wish Ms Dube would write some more episodes in the Mendenhall series because as much as I like her other mysteries I like the Mendenhall series the best of her works.

**A Diamond & Doran Christmas** (The Diamond & Doran Mysteries Book 5) by Tracy Tonkinson

Date Read 20191218

My Rating 3 Stars

I read and thoroughly enjoyed the first book in this series as I do like historical mysteries quite a lot and I was very excited to receive this book as a free Christmas gift from the author so I was a bit disappointed that I didn't like it quite a lot more. Then I realized that it is the 5<sup>th</sup> book in the series and I am very sure that I would have liked it a lot more if I had read books 2, 3 and 4 before this one. Because of the title I jumped into this as part of my 2019 Xmas reading project but I didn't think this was a very strongly Christmas themed story but surely is a strong Winter themed one. The writing style is a bit different than I've seen with the POV seeming to jump to a different character with every sentence with very little indication of who was talking now but after a bit I of getting used to I found my way through it OK. Not much of a mystery and the only real case Billy seemed to have on his plate in Chicago, and that he'd got Drew and the Pinkerton's working on, seemed to get lost somewhere along the way. Lots of good stuff about travelling in the Great Lakes region in the winter of the late 1860s and a great story of strangers coming together to help getting them out of a bad situation which I guess is part of the Christmas spirit. Oh yeah that hour and a half from Toronto to Newcastle in 1868 hasn't changed much in 2019 if you try to do it by car using Highway 401! Now after this Christmas thing is over I'll have to get busy and catch up on the books I've missed in this series.

**Never Mess with Mistletoe** (Leigh Koslow Mystery #10) by Edie Claire

Date Read 20191218

My Rating 4 Stars

This is my first read of a Ms Claire book and I'll say right now that I enjoyed this one enough that I'm sure I'll read some more in this series. This book is definitely Christmassy enough to qualify in my 2019 Xmas reading project and it's solid 4 star rating places it in the top few of my Xmas reads this year. Lots of weird and wacky characters plus some really likeable ones like Leigh, Mason, Warren and Lydie and then there's Allison who's 12 going on 22 years and is almost the star of this show. Lots of smiles and chuckles along with some good looks at a very current social concern, a pretty good murder investigation and a good satisfactory happy ending for the good guys and an appropriate ending for the bad guy who I didn't really suspect until Leigh, Allison and Lenna put all the clues together. Again a good read that I really liked.

## **Christmas Trifle** (Snow Lake Romantic Suspense Novels Book 1) by Heather Haven

Date Read 20191215

My Rating 2 Stars

I read this book in my 2019 Xmas reading project because the title indicates it's a Christmas themed story and I have read all of Ms Haven's "Persephone Cole Vintage Mystery Series" which I enjoyed quite a bit. However while this book is by no means a bad book I can't rate it as a book I really liked. In spite of the title I didn't find this story very Christmassy and except for the trifle it could have taken place in any season. I'm not a fan of a lot of romance in a mystery novel and I thought the romantic stuff in this one took 1<sup>st</sup> place over the murder mystery. I thought the way the murder mystery wound up was quite sudden and contrived and just happened coincidentally after no real investigation without many clues pointing at the perp. Again as I find happens often in these type of books I didn't really find too much humour. As I said this is not really a bad book but it just isn't my type of story.

## **Sugarplum Dead** (Death On Demand #12) by Carolyn Hart

Date Read 20191213

My Rating 4 Stars

First my rating of this story is the not acceptable 3.5 star (rounded up to 4) because I enjoyed this read and I think it is worth more than a 3 star rating. I read this in my 2019 Xmas reading project and although it is the 12<sup>th</sup> in the series and I have never read any of Ms Hart's books I had no problem with this as a standalone story. Of course if I had read previous books in the series I might possibly know more about Annie and Max's background stories but I found them to be good and likeable characters anyway. Laurel and Rachel are possibly the best characters in the book and the Marguerite Dumaney Ladson entourage carry lots of warts, are very self centred and not too likeable except Pudge who does turn out OK. I thought the big murder scheme was a bit too Spenserish and it is hard to accept that it did work even as well as it did. A pet peeve of mine in a mystery is to see any of the crooks ride off into the sunset scot free but at least this time the Swansons didn't leave with all the money. I thought the story ended with the fate of the murderer, of whose identity I had a slight suspicion well before Annie's reveal, very vague and a bit open ended. Overall a good mystery read and a bit but not really too Christmassy and I still have no idea of the significance of the title. This is a well edited book but one error jumped out at me in Chapter 3 where we read " It didn't take much

imagination to hear the clip-clop of black hearses pulling a funeral hearse“ where ”hearses” should obviously read “horses” and there is a sentence in Chapter 15 that while possibly OK just kind of reads awkwardly “ a rustic four-poster bed made of bleached wood bone white as a cattle skull” I think it would read smoother if it read ”a rustic four-poster bed made of wood bleached bone white as a cattle skull” Anyway this one makes it into the top 3 of this year’s Xmas readings.

**Wreath Between the Lines** (Cookbook Nook Mystery #7) by Daryl Wood Gerber

Date Read 20191210

My Rating 3 Stars

I enjoyed this book quite a lot as part of my 2019 Xmas reading and I wasn’t too lost by jumping in at book 7 in the series without having read any of the previous ones. Enough Christmassy stuff to qualify as a Xmas read and a great bunch of characters and I especially liked Jenna and Rhett and of course Jake, but I think in many ways Lacy is the star of this show. There are possibly too many separate stories going on that all intersect at sometime with each other and although they all get wound up satisfactorily don’t really merge into one story. I thought the villain was pretty obvious from the first time he appeared in the story but i never guessed at the motive and there sure were many other suspects with apparently stronger motives. A bit of humour and it was nice to see the changes in attitude by some of the characters like Whitney and Emmett and Olivia. Must have been the Christmas spirit at work! Anyway a nice HEA ending for all the good guys and I liked the book enough that I may try some more by this author.

**A Merry Christmas Wedding Mystery** (Georgie Shaw #4) by Anna Celeste Burke

Date Read 20191208

My Rating 3 Stars

I have read a couple of Ms Burke’s books in others of her series with mixed results as I didn’t like the Christmas themed “Cowabunga Christmas” too much (see my review) but I quite enjoyed “Body on Fitzgerald’s Bluff (see my review) so I gave this one a try in my 2019 Xmas reading project. I actually found this to be a pretty good mystery with lot’s of interesting characters, many clues, suspects and twists in the investigation by Georgie and Jack and an ending that wasn’t a huge surprise but I that I didn’t really see coming. I find it a bit of a coincidence that many of the books I have been reading lately all end with the perp being basically insane. Mad Max tuns out to be a whole lot softer hearted

character than I really expected. I don't think this story is overwhelmingly Christmassy nor overwhelmingly Weddingly, either and once again while I had a few smiles and chuckles I didn't find it quite as humorous as the blurbs and several reviews indicated. I liked this book enough that I will probably try some more of Ms Burke's books as long as I can get freebies or loaners but I won't pay high prices for them

### **The Season for Slaying** by Hillary Avis

Date Read 20191206

My Rating 2 Stars

I have rated this book 2 stars for only 2 reasons. One - it was the right length for a fill in after I finished a good read too early for bed and two – I got it as a Kindle freebie and if I had paid anything for it I would have rated it 0 stars and asked Amazon for a refund. Contrary to what the title suggests this is not much of a Christmassy story or really not much of any kind of a story and it just did nothing for me.

### **Coming Unclued** (Val Valentyn Humorous Mysterys #1) by Judith Jackson

Date Read 20191206

My Rating 3 Stars

I read this as part of my 2019 Xmas reading project and I am very glad that i did as I think I have found another Canadian author to read. It is even better that the book is set in Toronto and Muskoka and is definitely Canadian! This one is perhaps a bit grittier than many cozies but it sure has all the elements required to qualify as a cozy and that again is a plus because there aren't very many Canadian authors writing cozy mysteries set in Canada. Now as to my opinion on the actual story I kind of thought the plot was just a bit too farfetched and over the top and I found it hard to really like Val too much but perhaps that was partially because I thought her wine problem was just a bit exaggerated and dragged out a bit too long and some of the situations she got into seemed to be manufactured to try and get a laugh. As to the humour aspect I did find a fair bit and had many smiles and chuckles and even a few good laughs but I didn't think the book was quite as humorous as a lot of the reviews seem to say. Rose is a fabulous character ranking well up with any of the sidekicks in Canadian crime writing like R. J. McMillen's "Walker", Howard Shrier's "Dante" and R. E. Donald's "Sonny" for instance. I admit I didn't have the perp identified until the twist and reveal but I really should have seen that coming. I will definitely read



the next one in this series

**Thread the Halls** (Mainely Needlepoint #6) by Lea Wait

Date Read 20191204

My Rating 4 Stars

I really enjoyed this book as part of my 2019 Xmas reading project. This story is plenty Christmassy so as to qualify as a Xmas read at the same time as having a pretty good murder mystery and investigation. Lots of suspects, motives and opportunities and a twist I didn't see coming along with one perp who I had suspected all along but I couldn't quite figure out the motive. Lots of good characters especially Angie and Patrick and Skye is really something else. This is only the 2<sup>nd</sup> book so far in my Xmas reads that I've rated a 4 star read and so far I think it is the 2<sup>nd</sup> best I've read this year. One thing I don't quite get is the significance of the title. The "Thread" is fine but I don't remember "Halls" having anything to do with the story. I liked this enough that I'll possibly read more by this author especially as I see she has another Christmas story in a different series.

**Christmas is Murder** (McKinley Mysteries #7) by Carolyn Arnold

Date Read 20191201

My Rating 2 Stars

This is the 3rd book I've tried by this author and I'm afraid it's the last one I'll read. I read the 1st in this series and thought it was terrible but I gave the author a 2nd chance on one in another series and found it an OK read so I bought this one as part of my 2019 Xmas reading project but once again it just didn't do anything for me. It's not a bad book by any means and it is a bit Christmassy and it sure was the right length to fill in after I finished another read too early for bed but I just don't think it is my cuppa tea. Most ball players would be happy to be batting .333 but I'm not. I'm sure lot's of readers will like this book but I'm not one of them.

**December Dread** (Murder-by-Month Mystery #8) by Jess Lourey

Date Read 20191201

My Rating 3 Stars

I thought this is a pretty good mystery and I quite enjoyed reading it as part of my 2019 Xmas reading project. It isn't quite as heavy on the Christmassy stuff as it could have been but there is enough to make it a Xmas read. I had no trouble reading this without having read any of the previous books in the series but it has made me want to read them. Very well written and edited with good descriptions of the settings, weather and the great cast of well developed characters. Mrs Berns is an absolute hoot! Lots of suspects and I never guessed who the right culprit was until Angie figured it out and even then I was still guessing somewhat wrong although, in hindsight which is always easier than foresight, there were sure enough clues throughout the story pointing in the correct direction. I'll likely read more of this series.

### **The Lying House** by Rick Mofina

Date Read: 20191128

My rating: 3 star

Although I've started my 2019 Xmas reading project I will interrupt it to read new releases, either standalones or in series, by authors that I read and this is the latest by Rick Mofina who is #1 on my list of favourite authors and I never miss every new release of his. However while I found this a good and quite enjoyable read I can not rate it as one of Mr Mofina's best. As is usual in a Mofina book the writing and editing are great with few if any typos and all the characters are well developed whether they are likeable or not. One of the best things in a Mofina story is his unique ability to convey a sense of forbidding in the end of almost every scene that something horrendous is about to happen very soon. Now for about the first 25% of this book I had that feeling and I was thinking this is classic Mofina but then something, and I have no idea what, happened and I lost that feeling and the whole story kind of fell a bit flat and certain things became quite predictable. For instance I knew exactly what had happened in Jeff's childhood guilt trip and the only thing I didn't have figured out about Lisa's childhood thing was the mechanics of how it happened. I had the culprit identified long before the reveal although the motive was a bit hazy. The story did end with another of Mr Mofina's spectacular slam bang shoot out scenes with the bad guys and some of the good guys all dead but I really wasn't too satisfied with the HEA ending for Jeff. One thing that is really good is the title

'cause there sure was a lot of lying going on there! Overall not a bad read but, as I said, not one of Mr Mofina's best.

**Wicked of the Christmas Past** (Paranormal in Manhattan #4) by Lotta Smith

Date Read 20191125

My Rating 2 Stars

It was with a bit of trepidation that I read this book in my 2019 Xmas reading project as I am not a huge fan of ghosts in my mysteries but I got this as a Kindle freebie and I needed something about this length for a one night read with a new pre-ordered book due in the morning. And actually how could anyone not like Jackie? The reasons why I have downrated this story so much are because I didn't really think it is very Christmassy, I personally am not a big fan of murder, or whatever, by committee and I sort of got a bit lost in the way this ended. I did like Mandy and Rick quite a bit and it sure fit my need for a one night read. I doubt if I'll read any more by this author.

**Wreck The Halls:** A Moose River Christmas Cozy Novella by Jeff Shelby

Date Read 20191124

My Rating 2 Stars

I bought this book for my 2019 Xmas reading project as I needed a short fill in and as the blurbs said it was LOL funny I thought it would do as an unwind after a more serious read. However I didn't find it the least bit humorous and I thought the culprit's id was kind of tossed in quite suddenly without a lot of clues or a real strong motive. I really didn't like any of the characters too much and there are all sorts of plot holes and things never explained such as how the wreaths got inside Nora's store. And I just don't get the title. What "Walls"? The Scrooge of a police chief, Priscilla, didn't even get reformed so it isn't even another Dickens retelling. I will admit it was a bit Christmassy but it sure wasn't worth the \$1.32 I paid for it.

**Trimmed With Murder** (Seaside Knitters Society Mystery #10) by Sally Goldenbaum

Date Read 20191123

My Rating 3 Stars

I read this book as part of my 2019 Xmas reading project because I read and quite enjoyed "A Holiday Yarn", which is part of the same series by Ms

Goldenbaum, in my 2018 Xmas reading. While I enjoyed this book I don't think it was quite as good as the one last year. This one is fairly Christmassy with well described weather and characters, both likeable or not but there are a couple of things that either I didn't like happening in this story or that I personally don't like happening in any mystery. I wasn't very happy to have the one character that I really liked and was rooting for all the way getting killed but I guess that had to happen to lead into the big investigation. Now the outcome of that investigation is what I don't like to see in any mystery and that is the perps of any criminal activities riding off into the sunset with a bag of money which is essentially what happened in this story and that's why I downrated this book somewhat. And I did really like Charlie Chambers and was very glad to see his evolution and somewhat happier ending. I might try another by this author if the price is right but it won't be high on my TBR list.

### **The Gift** (Bandit Creek #8) by C.J. Carmichael

Date Read 20191120

My Rating 3 Stars

I included this short story in my 2019 Xmas reading list although it does not really quite fit my preferred reading genre as I read and liked Ms Carmichael's "Bramble House Christmas" in my 2018 Xmas reading and I have read her "Twisted Cedars" trilogy and the first 3 books in her "Bitter Roots" trilogy and I already have acquired book 4 of that series which has become a Douglas Adams type trilogy and I'm glad it has and I hope there's more still to follow. Now "The Gift" sure packs a lot of wallop in 36 short pages and the solid and satisfying finish actually brought it just about into my favourite genre. This is actually a bit dark and serious for a Christmas read and, at times almost a tear-jerker, but the very bright and HEA ending, for the good guys, sure made it a good Christmas story. How can anybody not like Amy, Gray and Dora who are great characters and the character development that Ms Carmichael was able to do in such a short work is really quite amazing. However as other reviewers have noted I also agree this premise is solid enough that it could have been expanded to at least a long novella or even a full length novel. Anyway a nice Xmas read and a super fill in after finishing a novel a short time too early for bed.

## **The Alto Wore Tweed** (The Liturgical Mystery #1) by Mark Schweizer

Date Read 2019117

My Rating 4 Stars

Before I say anything else about this book I have to say that it is one of the all time funniest mystery novels that I have ever read. I can't remember how or where I stumbled upon this book as a Christmas read and quite a long way into it, and although I was thoroughly enjoying the read and laughing my head off, I kept thinking that this is not a Christmas read but that sure changed and this became the highlight of my 2019 Xmas reading project so far. In Hayden Kronig Mr Schweizer has invented an absolutely unique police chief or detective or whatever and given him an equally unique police force in very interesting small town setting with a whole lot of the wackiest and weirdest supporting characters most of whom have their own little secrets or quirks. The murder is also a bit different with a very unique method and a final ending which, although it is one of the endings I don't like and which cause me to downrate a serious story, I have to admit I can accept as part of Hayden's rather unique version of justice served and also, BTW, all the rest of the not so likeable characters met appropriate ends as well. The scenario of the "St Germaine Creches" was an absolute hoot as, of course, was "Archimedes"! Having been raised in an Anglican church environment I have some familiarity with the liturgical references and although I'm not a huge classical music fan I didn't find those reference to detract from the story. I'll definitely read more books by an author who would have a character's kids named Budweiser, Pauli Girl and Moosehead and invent words such as "explodornithophobia" to fit a situation!

## **Gingerbread to Die For** (The Dunbarton Christmas Mysteries Book 2) by **Valerie Tate**

Date Read 20191111

My Rating 3 Stars

I've read all Ms Tate's entries in both of these series set in Dunbarton and, of course, liked some of them more than others. I'm very pleased that Ms Tate has continued the Christmas Mysteries series with this book which I found to be a pretty good Christmas mystery with all the regular Dunbartonites having their usual roles in solving the murder and, as is usually the case in many of these cozy mysteries, the victim and the perp are come-from-aways. Lot's of suspects with good motives and opportunities for the murder although I thought the perp was somewhat obvious but the final ending was quite exciting, satisfactory and solid. There is some humour in this story although not as much as in some of

the other Dunbarton mysteries mainly because Charlie, although having a big part in the story, doesn't get into some such outrageous situation as he usually does. One thing that has made me down rate these later books in the series a bit is that Ms Tate seems to have forgotten the main reason why Alicia and Chris are even living in Dunbarton – Marmalade – and because he only has a very minor role in the story is another reason why there is less humour than in the first book. I thought Alicia's Good Samaritan subplot with Molly/Rosie and it's nice resolution while having nothing to do with the main story had a real Christmassy feel and a HEA ending for all involved. And it was sure nice to see Saanvi standup and The Dragon Lady get an appropriate put down. Overall a good entry in my 2019 Xmas reading project.

### **Six Geese A-Slaying (Meg Langslow #10) by Donna Andrews**

Date Read 20191110

My Rating 3 Stars

I thought this was an OK Christmas read but not quite as funny as the other Christmas themed books by Ms Andrews in this series that I have read in my Xmas reading projects in the last few years. Also after reading it I have pretty well decided that \$8.99 for an eBook edition was a bit too high a price for this book and although I'll probably read some more in this series I don't think I'll pay the even higher prices listed for a couple of more of the Christmas themed ones I have checked out for this years reading. I mean I like Meg, Michael and the twins and Meg's mother is a hoot and the well described setting, weather and all the animals, with Cousin and Ernest being the stars of the show. The live 12 Days of Christmas themed parade was a really clever premise but I think SPOOR and all the fake geese taking over the parade was dragged out a bit too long. A reasonable mystery with a good ending and I am not disappointed in reading it but it's not my favourite Xmas read for this year so far.

### **Mistletoe Murder (Lucy Stone #1) by Leslie Meier**

Date Read 20191108

My Rating 3 Stars

I read and quite enjoyed book 6, "Christmas Cookie Murder", in my 2018 Xmas reading project so I thought it would be interesting to include the first book in this series in my 2019 Xmas reading. I'm glad that I did and it's pretty obvious that this is book 1 and it's very nice to see how Ms Meier has allowed the recurring

characters to grow and age emotionally as well as physically from book 1 to book 6. Many of the thoughts in my review of book 6 apply to this book as well as I found this to be a somewhat grittier and more violent story than is usual in most cozies but still with some humour, a few real funny scenes as well as some real loud shoot outs, a bunch of well developed characters with enough barnacles to make them realistic and believable and a surprising twist, with enough clues provided that I should have seen it coming, leading to a solid ending. Contrary to some reviews I've read I think Bill is a rather normal, caring and loving husband and father and Lucy, although stretched a bit thin, is a pretty good mother, neighbour and friend and the kids are very normal and provide some of the humour. I do however agree a bit with some reviewers who didn't like the treatment of animals although my beef is, except with the unnecessary shooting of a dog, not so much as how they are treated as how unrealistically they are not treated. Like whenever did those kittens get fed, use a litter box, get out of their beds, get any exercise or get any realistic attention? And they never really advanced the plot all that much except by getting Lucy to Bump's River Road. Anyway I see Ms Meier has written some more Christmas themed entries in this series which I'll probably try as well as some other holiday themed ones that I may try.

**Silent Night, Deadly Night** (A Year-Round Christmas Mystery, #4) by **Vicki Delany**

Date Read 20191104

My Rating 3 Stars

This latest addition to one of my favourite series is the first of my 2019 Christmas readings and as usual has been well worth the agonizingly long wait since last November for its release. I love Ms Delany's writing and this series ranks very close to her Klondike series as my favourites. This story has all the good elements of the previous books in the series with the good guys being mainly from the permanent residents of Rudolph and the bad guys being mainly from the come-from-aways. Merry, Vicky, Jackie, Alan and Noel are all their usual great characters, Aline is a hoot and it's nice to see her have a large part in this story and Mattie practically steals the show. There's more humour in this book than in the last couple and I had lots of smiles, chuckles and a few LOLs. As I find common in this series the motives for the murders, while quite logical, tend to be rather light and weak. The books in this series can almost be read as standalones because the stories in each are unique and have solid endings but I think there are some nuances in backstories that help define the various characters and allow the reader to get the most from their actions and they can only be obtained by reading the series in order. Worst luck is I have to wait

another year for Christmas in July in Rudolph.

**The Confession:** An Elizabeth Monroe Novel by Tom Lowe

Date Read: 20191120

My rating: 4 star

Although I've started my 2019 Xmas reading project I will interrupt it to read new releases, either standalones or in series, by authors that I read and this, book 2 in this series, has just been released. As anyone who follows my reviews I tend to give preference to books written by Canadian Authors but Tom Lowe is at this time the only Non Canadian author on my Favourite Authors list although there are a couple of others that may make it soon. I have read every book Mr Lowe has released and, of course, liked some more than others and I am always waiting anxiously for his every new book and this one is no exception and it surely was no disappointment as my 4 star rating indicates. I really like Elizabeth Monroe and I thought she was outstanding in her investigation of the murders in this story although I thought the id of the murderer was fairly obvious. Mr Lowe can really write characters and Elizabeth, Detective Mike Bradford and Father McGraph are all strong characters. Another thing that Mr Lowe does exceptionally well is dialogue and his characters all talk to each other like people do in real life. Mr Lowe's books usually take a look at some current social problems and this one includes some serious looks at some of the anachronisms and problems facing the Roman Catholic church today. And as usual in Mr Lowe's books we have a spectacular wrap up scene and a solid and satisfactory ending. Some of Mr Lowe's earlier eBooks suffered from many proofreading and editing errors but this series has been very clean and there was only one problem that jumped of the page at me in the beginning of Chapter 23 where we read the following quote " but that is not for man to know ... unless a person acts in a premediated way to cause the death of someone." Now I am quite sure that "premediated " should read "premeditated ". Anyway I enjoyed this story but I still like Sean O'Brien the most of Mr Lowe's series and I'm impatiently awaiting the next one in that series.



**The One Who Watches** (Knox and Sheppard #4) by Emerald O'Brien

Date Read: 20191114

My rating: 5 star

Although I've started my 2019 Xmas reading project I will interrupt it to read new releases, either standalones or in series, by authors that I read and this, book 4 in this series, has just been released. Somewhere when I started this series with "The Girls Across The Bay" I read that it was book 1 of a trilogy but ala Douglas Adams "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" that reached at least 5 books I have now read book 4 of this trilogy and it has a big hint that book 5 is on the way and am I ever glad. As anyone who reads my reviews has surely noticed I am very stingy with 5 star ratings but this book grabbed me very early and just got better and better the farther I read and I kept telling myself if the author didn't blow the ending this was going to be a 5 star rating. And what a solid ending it turned out to be! I could hardly imagine how Ms O'Brien was going to tie all of Madigan and Grace's seemingly unrelated investigations together but somehow after so many twists and turns and false suspects everything came together in an absolutely logical conclusion and enough clues were delivered throughout the story that one should have been able to identify the perp but I admit I had one of the many suspects picked as the culprit and I was dead wrong. Through the earlier books in this series my opinion of Madigan and Grace has waffled back and forth from not liking them much to liking them quite a lot but always feeling a lot of empathy for them and in this book it started out a bit like that but I sure grew to really liking them at the end and I'm looking forward to another great investigation with them. BTW Mac has become a top notch character and possibly the best one in the book. Another big surprise was the ending of the Raven/Melanie subplot which again I never saw coming. A great book and possibly one of my best reads of the year and I want more good books from Ms O'Brien.

**Picture Imperfect** (The Leafy Hollow Mysteries Book 7) by Rickie Blair

Date Read: 20191106

My rating: 4 star

Although I've started my 2019 Xmas reading project I will interrupt it to read new releases, either standalones or in series, by authors that I read and this happens to be book 7 in one of my all time favourite series and I can't help thinking that it's the best one yet in the series. The whole cast of regulars in Leafy Hollow are in fine form and Verity and her team sure manage to get into the usual hilarious situations and again need scary rescues by cops and firefighters. I thought the perp in the painting scam was pretty obvious very early in the book and I don't think it requires one to be a great art aficionado to realize something was a bit off with the "Spirit of the North" but it sure lead to some spectacular and very loud booby traps and all the bad guys met spectacular and violent endings and Verity's love life looks like it might be improving a bit. "Control" makes a reappearance and it sure sounds like Verity and Aunt Adeline are being dragged into another wild adventure in the next book. I like these light and humorous reads after reading a serious mystery story and there are very few like this series that are written by a Canadian author and set in a Canadian location such as Valerie Tate's "Dunbarton Mysteries" and "Dunbarton Christmas Mysteries" series with her new one "Gingerbread To Die For" acquired and on my 2019 Xmas TBR list. And I'll sure read the next adventure in Leafy Hollow with Verity and company by Ms Blair.

**In Winter's Grip** by Brenda Chapman

Date Read: 20191103

My rating: 3 star

Brenda Chapman is one of my favourite go to Canadian authors and I've read all of her Stonechild and Rouleau series, and I'm look forward to the next book in that series, and most of the Anna Sweet shorts. I've had this book in my library for some time and I was kind of surprised to see that it was Ms Chapman's debut mystery and I don't know why I hadn't read it yet. However I'm

very glad that I did finally try it and I really enjoyed a good mystery with some great characters and such a well described setting that I'm still shivering from the cold and snow. I thought Maja (Larson) Cleary really grew to be a much stronger character as the story progressed and she faced the demons from her and her brother Jonas's childhood. If I had to pick a favourite character I think it would be Billy Okwari. It's not often that a double murder mystery is solved following two such logical twists that I never saw coming but which led to a very satisfactory conclusion. My greatest surprise is that Ms Chapman never followed this up with at least a sequel because I think it has all the characters and locations needed to be the first book in a series. Looking forward to more books by Brenda Chapman and now I'll have to find time for the Anna Sweet stories that I haven't yet read.

**Halloween Hayride Murder** (A Small Town Minnesota Cozy Mystery Book 1) by Linnea West

Date Read: 2021101

My rating: 3 stars

This is a quite good Halloween themed read with a lot of interesting characters, likeable or not, a pretty good mystery and a solid ending although the clues leading to the real perp were kind of obvious. Although it is full of Halloween stuff it sure isn't scary at all and even has quite a bit of humour. One thing it does have is a brand new and unique take on the usually despicable love triangle so that this one almost becomes bearable. And I don't think the author knows too much about driving old tractors. A decent freebie from Amazon and I'll probably read more by this author.

**Designer Dirty Laundry** (Samantha Kidd Mystery #1) by Diane Vallere

Date Read: 20201030

My rating: 3 stars

I got this one as a loaner from the Ontario Library Service and having read one of the author's short stories I tried it as a comedown read after finishing a quite gritty novel. However while I found this to be a quite good little mystery itself with

an unexpected twist leading to a satisfactory ending and I enjoyed the read I didn't find as much humour as I expected and I don't think it quite fits my requirement. I have more of Ms Vallere's books in my library and may try another but it won't be high on my TBR list.

**Broken Through** (Adam and Grace) by J.C. Paulson

Date Read: 20201028

My rating: 3 stars

This book, much like the first book in this series, can't quite make up its mind whether it's a murder mystery, police procedural, family drama or a fairly graphic erotic romance sometimes even bordering on soft core porn. I'm no prude but I much prefer reading mysteries and really I am not a fan of reading any kind of romances so personally I'd probably rate this a 4 star read if there were just fewer sex scenes with Adam and Grace or they were kind of moved off camera or not described so graphically because the way they are written now just slows down the murder investigation and doesn't really advance the plot in any way. Now this book does examine a number of very current and relevant social problems such as PTSD, missing persons and violence against women and I really liked Adam's parents and siblings and the harvest and Thanksgiving scene at the family farm. Again, as in book 1, I am very glad to see the murderer locked up rather than killed off in some convenient way as happens in far too many novels nowadays. The Jilly thing really didn't add too much to the story other than getting Grace smashed up again and helping advance the Adam/Grace romance but at least I was glad to see that Jilly was apprehended by the Mounties, too. The writing and editing is quite good except for much of the dialogue which, as was the case in book 1, often is very stilted and nobody ever talks to each other like that. An example -

““Adam. Come live with me.”

“Live with you? Come live with you? Grace, are you sure? I can't . . . what if I hurt you again?”

“I'm as sure as I've ever been of anything. We will find the way to cope, if we are together. Say yes, Adam. Say it,” breathed Grace, rocking him. “Come live with me, love.””

Nobody would ever say the name of the person they are talking to in every sentence they say to them. If the names were just removed from the dialogue it would be much more realistic and even read smoother. Anyway I liked this book enough that I'll read more in this series.

**Chasing the Wendigo** by James D A Terry

Date Read: 20201027

My rating: 4 stars

I think it's a pretty good story, more mystery than horror which suits me fine, and the main plots and most sub plots get quite satisfactorily tied together and concluded in the end but as the author has noted this is really a trilogy of three either long novellas or short novels and even though at first book 2 doesn't seem to have anything to do with the story Book 3 sure ties it all together. Now, as usual In any James Terry/Solomon Knight book, the names alone are worth the price of the book and there are so many great ones I can't really pick a favourite but Whall and his brother Saul Ted kind of stand out! Here's a few samples of some of the better ones but you should just read the book if you really need a good laugh.

My name is Justin... Justin Case, termination agent

Mrs. Eileen Wright

Heidi Jewels

Constable Viola Fuss

Lawson D. Woods

Oliver D. Map sailed from the mouth of the Aswego River to attack Fort Fromtheback, then held by Poupon De Grasse for France

Sergeant Lou Tenant

Whall Nutzenbier

Billy Aiken, Hugo First and Saul Ted Nutzenbier

I. M. Ina Dayz

Sergeant Mal Content and this is Corporal Rob Banks

And yes this wacky story does have a satisfactory and HEA ending at least for Justin and the good guys with the great names!

**A Fool's Journey** (Marketville Mystery #3) by Judy Penz Sheluk

Date Read: 20201024

My rating: 3 stars

I found this to be an entertaining and quite enjoyable read and I learned all sorts of things about tarot cards and tattoos that I didn't really need to know nor really wanted to for that matter. I think I liked Calamity much more in this book than in either of the first two in the series and her team's investigation was very good

and sure fit the “Past & Present” thing much better than the investigation did in book 2. I did think that Adam capitulated a little too quickly and provided Callie with a bit too easy and convenient of a solution to the mystery. Lot’s of well developed characters and the solid writing and editing that is common to all of Ms Sheluk’s books. I find this series a little slower than I normally like in a mystery and with very little if any action. I still like the “Glass Dolphin” mysteries much more than this series and I wish Ms Sheluk would produce another one of them very soon but I’ll still keep on reading any books Ms Sheluk writes.

**A Hopeless Heist** (Hope Walker Mystery #2) by Daniel Carson

Date Read: 20201022

My rating: 3 stars

Another good light comedown read to unwind with after reading a serious crime novel. I really like this series, lot’s of laughs, good and bad characters, a decent mystery and a solid and satisfactory end and I’ll be back for more when I need another one like this

**The Grey Zone:** A Jack Taggart Mystery by Don Easton

Date Read: 20201019

I’ve had an extremely hard time rating and reviewing this book and must say a sad time, too, as this series has been one of my all time favourites as has it’s author, Don Easton. So this is sort of a two part review – one part a short review of this book and the second part a few thoughts on the series because I read Don & Brenda Easton’s news release of Oct 15/19 before I read this book. If I hadn’t read that I would say that this is a fairly good entry in the series while definitely no where near the best which is still “Birds Of A Feather” and is probably worth at least a 3 star rating. Alicia Munday is a fine addition to the Taggart Team, there is lots of action and a bunch of quite likely the most despicable bad guys to appear in any of the stories in the series. Jack’s McGyveresque plan to rescue Alicia, bring down the kidnappers and escape is a bit over the top although it did work fairly close to the way it was supposed too and the bad guys are all either dead or locked up in the fairly satisfactory ending. I don’t know whether or not it’s fair to downrate this book because Don has said that this is the last book in the Jack Taggart series but because he did that is exactly what I am doing. If this book had ended before the last paragraph of Chapter 62 which is sort of an epilogue beginning “ It was 11:00 a.m. the following Monday” and without knowing it was the last in the series I would have said “Good Read” and I’m looking forward to the next but there are just too many loose ends to let this series die here. What happens to Assistant Commissioner Irene Lexton’s file in her safe? Does Chief Superintendent Quaille ever get what’s coming to him or just retired? Alicia’s fate and recovery? What happen’s with Laura Secord? BTW did we ever find out if she’s called “Fanny Farmer” in the US? C’mon We need answers!

My rating: 3 stars

**Read and Buried** (Lighthouse Library Mystery #6) by Eva Gates

Date Read: 20201016

My rating: 4 stars

This is a good entry in one of my go to series and I really enjoyed it. Perhaps this one is a bit more serious than some of the previous books in the series but it still has some good laughs while it explores some current problems which stemmed from actions during and following the Civil War. The whole lot of the regular characters both the good and the bad and the likeable and not are all in their usual form and, not too unexpectedly, Charles practically steals the show. I never thought I'd be able to say for a huge change that Louise Jane is actually one of the good "guys" and even backed up Lucy and helped her when she needed help. Lots of the usual food and all the kids are something else especially the Washington kids . I will admit that I never saw the big twist coming that lead to the ending and I'm quite surprised that Ms Gates was really brave enough to do this. It'll be interesting to see what happens in the next instalment for which I am impatiently awaiting.

**She Wore Mourning** (Zachary Goldman Mysteries #1) by P.D. Workman

Date Read: 20201014

My rating: 3 stars

P. D. Workman is a Canadian author who is new to me and I have had several of her books in my library for quite a while but I have been somewhat reluctant to try any of them because, from the synopses and blurbs, I didn't think they quite fit my preferred reading genres. However when I found this Zachary Goldman series it sounded more like my type of book so I gave it a try and I am very glad that I did. This is definitely not a light and fluffy read but is quite dark and based on a very sad occurrence and has a good study of OCDs as a mental health problem woven very cleverly into the story. I found this to be a well written and edited book with a cast of very well developed, realistic and believable characters even if they are not all completely likeable. I didn't particularly like Zachary Goldman all that much to start and I kind of thought his problems were a bit overdone but he became much more understandable as bits of his back story are revealed and he sure is a dedicated and persistent investigator. I really liked Kenzie Kirsch and I think that she may even be the best character in the story. I really did not see the twist coming that led to the very tense ending scene and the generally satisfactory end to the story but it was quite logical. I am not sure how believable is the affect of the amount of the decongestant, pseudoephedrine, in the cough syrup as I've taken many doses

of it in sinus meds and never had any affect like this and I think to achieve the desired results the dosage would have to be very high but suspension of disbelief is allowed in reading most mysteries. I already have the next couple of books in this series and won't take as long starting the next one but I'm glad the latest in Eva Gates "Lighthouse Library" series, "Read and Buried", was released just in time to give me the much lighter come down read I needed after this one.

**Fat Chance** by R.J. Leahy

Date Read: 20201012

My rating: 4 stars

This is an absolutely hilarious story with a cast of some of the wackiest characters you will ever meet in any mystery book. I can honestly say that I averaged more than one giggle, smile or chuckle on every page with a good many LOLs thrown in for good measure. Oh yeah there's quite a good mystery thrown in here along with the humour and even a bit of actual investigation and a slight twist to the not overly surprising ending. It's practically impossible to pick the wackiest character from this line-up but Norma, Mrs. Akihiro, and Casual sure rank well up there and Sean McDermott is no slouch either. I'm sure glad that Sean managed to get his car keys back from the sheriff! I really hope Mr Leahy will write a sequel so I'll have another choice when I need a funny come down read after finishing a serious, gritty and violent crime novel.

**Pipeline Killers** (Detective Bernadette Callahan Mystery #2) by Lyle Nicholson

Date Read: 20201010

My rating: 3 stars

I thought this was an Ok read but I don't think this is one of my favourite series. I do like Bernadette Callahan and I really wanted to like this series by a Canadian author but there is just a bit more farfetched and over-the-top sci-fi than I like in a mystery novel and too many innocent people that had nothing to do with the story being killed. At least all the real bad guys met appropriate ends and again, as in book one, it's difficult to really determine if the one who again manages to get away is really a bad guy or not. I guess we have to wait for book 3 and I wouldn't be surprised if he escapes again. I will read the next book sometime if it isn't priced too high.

**Butcher's Hook** (Gone Fishing #3) by Melissa Yi

Date Read: 20201008



My rating: 3 stars

Good conclusion to an alright mimi-series

**Trouble and Strife** (Gone Fishing #2) by Melissa Yi

Date Read: 20201008

My rating:

**Cain and Abel** (Gone Fishing #1) by Melissa Yi

Date Read: 20201008

My rating:

**The Plain Old Man** (Kelling & Bittersohn #6) by Charlotte MacLeod

Date Read: 20201005

My rating: 3 stars

**The Illusionist Takes A Holiday** (Paladin Project Chronicles #2) by Solomon Knight

Date Read: 20201003

My rating: 3 stars

Anytime I need some good laughs after finishing a dark, gritty and serious crime novel I know I can sure find them with abundance in this series. Oh, and BTW, there's also always a good mystery buried in the laugh fest with lots of action, explosions, dark and stormy weather, some perhaps paranormal happenings and a HEA ending for the good guys while not so much for the bad guys but always at least one bad guy lives to lead to the next adventure for Bat and his buddies. Now we didn't get quite as much of Bat in this story as we usual do but Ben, the Illusionist, is a great addition to the caste which, as usual, is quite large and at times a bit hard to keep straight but that doesn't really matter because part of the reason for that is the highlight of all of these books which, of course, is the names. And they just keep getting better and better as in the following few examples -

"Good morning. My name's Bart Ender and I'm yer Publican."

The twins "Cornett D. Canter and her sister Chrystal D. Canter" and their mother "Brandy D. Canter"

“psychological profiles by Dr. E. Ville”

“Constable A. Kidd turned to check on our prisoner. That's when she noticed.  
"Noticed what Constable J. Walker?”

“Sue Vlaki, the estranged wife “ (This one is awful – I love it!)

And “Countess Vera Lee Isay Monk” I’ll admit it took me quite a while to get this one!

Read it out loud -It’ll come to you!

And all the favourites from the other books like Mynju Manners and Logan Wisdom etc.

Please Solomon and your alter ego James keep these stories coming ‘cause I know I’ll soon need another bunch of laughs!

**In Rhino We Trust** (A Jenny Willson Mystery #3) by Dave Butler

Date Read: 20190930

My rating: 4 stars

I have enjoyed reading the first two books in this series although I didn’t think the second was quite as good as the first and as I mentioned in my review of it I was curious and a bit skeptical, after the way it ended for Jenny, as to how Mr Butler could even have her continue in another adventure. However I am happy to admit that I was dead wrong and book 3 turned out to be a fine story and every bit as good as the first book if not better. I know very little about Namibia so I have to accept that Mr Butler’s great descriptions of the landscapes, people, weather and customs etc. are reasonably accurate and well researched and of course the various forms of corruption, whether it’s true or not, are a common assumption in most emerging nations. The actions of nations like China, Russia and North Korea and the poaching and poverty problems are all lifted from current headlines and provide the background for some wild drives over some almost roads and lots of action, shootouts, plans that go sideways and a pretty solid ending. Great caste of well developed characters all of them except Jenny and Tracy being newcomers and Jenny has become an even stronger character except when it comes to her love life. Perhaps she’ll relax a bit and give Danny Trang a chance in book 4 because I thought he’s a pretty nice character and played an important part in this story. I didn’t find the big twist to be a surprise as I had pretty well guessed it even though I didn’t really want it to be true but I think there were enough clues leading to it and it was probably the only logical way for the story to end. A good read that I recommend and I’m looking forward to book 4 and I guess and hope that Jenny’s back in BC.

