

Heat Wave(Paradise Cafe #1)by Maureen Jennings

Date Read: 20200329

My rating: 4 stars

I read this book in my project to read as many of the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards nominees, that appeal to me, that I can before the Shortlists are announced on Apr 15 2020. This is the first book I have read by Maureen Jennings because although I am a big fan of historical mysteries and I know most of Ms Jennings' books are of that genre I also try to read series in order and her Murdoch series was so long I couldn't start from book 1 and was reluctant to jump in at a later book. However when I found this Arthur Ellis entry and it's the start of a new series it was a perfect time to get acquainted with Ms Jennings and I must say that I am sure glad I did and now I know how much I've been missing. I really enjoyed the very realistic old Toronto setting and I thought it was quite neat and very realistic the way the next generation Detective Murdoch was brought into the story. A thoroughly enjoyable read and you can be sure that I will read any more in this series and I may even try to read some of Ms Jennings' other books.

MURDER AT LAKE ONTARIO: (DI William Gibson #2) by Kathy Garthwaite

Date Read: 20200326

My rating: 1 stars

Before I say anything about this book I suggest everyone should read my review of book 1 of this series "Murder on Vancouver Island" because almost every fault I found with that book applies equally as well with this one plus this book adds faults of its own. I really should have minded my own advice and not read this book but here's my excuse for breaking that promise. This book is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for Best Novella and the premise sounded like it

is one I'd like and I needed a shorter read to fill in while I awaited the arrival of a pre-ordered book and the \$2.99 price wouldn't bankrupt me but now I agree with my thoughts on book 1 that the price is much too high. This book shares many faults with book 1 such as too many characters, an absolutely unrealistic Police Procedure, a way, way too much detailed telling, and many plot holes, disconnects and inconsistencies and then adds some more faults of its own. I still shake my head at Gibson's investigation method – he and his partner have a big breakfast, jump in a vehicle and roar to the other side of the region, drop in unexpectedly on a suspect, have coffee and snacks, ask 1 or 2 questions, get a new name and address, rush out to the vehicle and roar off with the gravel flying to the other side of the region BUT they have to make stop to eat on the way and then repeat the whole scenario with the new suspect and they do this over and over and over. As well as good tires that vehicle better have a heavy duty suspension as Gibson and Eckhart are going to weigh so much they'd break down a normal car! I didn't like Gibson in book 1 while I did like his partner "Scottie" and I still don't like Gibson and I don't like Eckhart either. One good thing about these books is there is an almost complete lack of any of the proofreading errors that are common to many eBooks. This book is almost too long to be considered a novella and in its present form is more of a short novel but a good stiff editing to get rid of most of the excessive detail and repetitions and the amateurish and overly poetic writing and plot holes could make this a readable mystery novella. Now a couple of examples of the plot holes and there are many many more throughout the whole book. In Ontario there is no such thing as the "Queen Elizabeth Highway" . The name of that roadway is the "Queen Elizabeth Way" commonly referred to as the "QEW". Next in one of Gibson's 1 or 2 question interviews he was given a name and address supposedly in Grimsby. However "Lincoln Avenue" is in Beamsville not Grimsby. Oh yeah that's OK 'cause Gibson and Eckhart do end up eating, again, in a pub on Centre St. In Grimsby. Now here is a little quote from the last chapter while Eckhart was driving Gibson from St Catherines to the airport to catch his flight home to Victoria - "Eckhart cruised down the Queen Elizabeth Highway with the sun behind them, just about to plunge below the horizon." (Hey – Remember the

QEW?) Now I'd sure like to know what airport they were going to as the only airports with flights to BC would be in Hamilton or Toronto and in either case they would be driving WEST and the sun would be setting in FRONT of them, not BEHIND! Of course this could just be that Ms Garthwaite, like all other non native Niagarians, can still not get her head around the fact that you drive North to get to Lake Ontario and not South! (Me included and I've lived in Lincoln Ontario for 23 years!) And this time I mean it – I won't be reading any more of this series.

Lightning Strike by Jamie Tremain

Date Read: 20200324

My rating: 3 stars

I read this book in my project to read as many of the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards nominees, that appeal to me, that I can before the Shortlists are announced on Apr 15 2020. So, again, I broke a couple of my rules as I am usually reluctant to pay for a book by an author whose work I have never read but at \$4.00 the price wasn't going to bankrupt me so I jumped in to the series at book 2, without having read book 1, but it turned out to be a good enough read that I will probably read more of the series after my ArthurEllis reading is finished. The story line of D'Amico, the sexist tunnel visioned old line Police Detective, is not new or unique as it has been done many times before with some possibly better than this but in this book it at least ends satisfactorily. There are enough clues provided so that the murder or accidental death of Paul would have been solved a lot sooner except for D'Amico's fixation. Dorothy is a fine and smart character with some great friends but really got a bit of coincidental help in identifying the perp. One thing I personally do not like too much in a mystery is having the culprit die by some means like falling of a cliff and never being brought to justice as happens here in the quite tense ending scene. This, along with the old no cell phone coverage trope which is grossly overworked in many contemporary crime novels, is my excuse for downgrading this quite good read by 1 star. Overall,

though, an enjoyable read.

Closing Time: A Stonechild and Rouleau Mystery by Brenda Chapman

Date Read: 20200323

My rating: 4 star

I usually take breaks from my Arthur Ellis entries reading project to read the latest releases by favourite authors and this is book 7 in this series which is one of my all time favourite series and again this book is every bit as much of a good read as any of the previous ones. Now I do have a bit of a problem deciding if I'm writing a review or an obituary because Ms Chapman has stated in the Acknowledgements that this is the last book in the series and I'll have a thought about that later. This book has a different, but equally as well described setting, than any of the earlier books and the only returning characters are Stonechild and Dawn, Rouleau and Gundersund with a whole new caste of both good and likeable characters and a group of mainly unlikeable suspects at Pine Hollow Lodge that have enough secrets and relationships to make Peyton Place look like Mickey Mouse. I did have the murderer identified well before the confession and again I'm not a great fan of the big explosive ending where the culprit gets accidentally killed without being brought to justice but in this case it may possibly have been the most appropriate ending. I think this book has one of the most appropriate titles I've seen in a long time with the double entendre of the closing of the series and the closing of the Lodge! Never at any time in this story did I ever expect Kala's story to end as it did and that leads me to my thoughts on this being the last book in the series. That end to Kala's story leaves so many opportunities for more stories with these characters that I find it hard to understand how Ms Chapman can just stop writing about them. I know she has said "On to the next adventure" so hopefully there might be some spin-off stories with some of these characters. Anyway I hope that at least we'll have another Cedric O'Toole Rapid Read to fill in with.

Bank Shot: A Lieutenant Beaudry Novel by Michael Kent

Date Read: 20200321

My rating: 3 stars

I read this book as it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for Best Novella and I needed a shorter read while awaiting a book I had on preorder and I found it a very enjoyable read with quite a lot of action, violence and a pretty good investigation with a solid ending all wrapped up in a fairly short read. Lieutenant Beaudry is sure a unique kind of a detective and his fiancée Pat is a great character. Michael Kent is a new, at least to me, Canadian author and I liked this story enough that I am sure I'll read more of his books after I finish my 2020 Arthur Ellis reading project. One of the great things about the Arthur Ellis awards is how many new Canadian authors they introduce me to as I'm always looking for new Canadian crime writers to read. I'm not going to say any more about this story but I have a bit to say about how the book is catalogued on Amazon.ca and GoodReads and about its Arthur Ellis entry. First this book is entered in the Arthur Ellis Best Novella category but it is entitled "A Lieutenant Beaudry Novel" and on its book page on Amazon.ca it is shown as having 241 pages. Now that sure is a very long novella! However that must be an error because it really isn't that long and the book includes a lot of preview chapters for the next book in the series. So I think it is legitimately a long novella. Now GoodReads has some kind of a problem with quite a few Kindle and eBook editions listed for this book but the "search" function is messed up so, depending on what you search for, you might get 1 Kindle edition or 1 eBook edition, each of which say there are no other editions, or maybe even a Kindle and Ebook combined which each show the other edition and some with cover pics and some without and it's all terribly frustrating almost ruining a good read.

In the Dark by Loreth Anne White

Date Read: 20200319

My rating: 4 stars

I read this book in my project to read as many of the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards nominees. that appeal to me, that I can before the Shortlists are announced on Apr 15 2020. So ,again, I broke one of of my rules as I am usually reluctant to pay for a book by an author whose work I have never read but at \$1.99 the price wasn't going to bankrupt me but it sure turned out to be one of the better purchases I've made. I thoroughly enjoyed this story and some of the twists that were completely logical just left me gasping. Fabulous descriptions of the settings, weather, equipment and SAR procedures. The story is populated by a large cast of very well developed characters including the bad ones as well as the good ones. Callie is a very strong and likeable character doing a fantastic job while carrying a huge personal burden and one can have nothing but empathy for Mason, who is a very good cop, as his tragic backstory becomes

known and he gradually grows to like the remote village of Kluhane Bay. There have been many retellings and modernizations of Agatha Christies classic "And Then There Were None" including Jeffrey Round's "Endgame" which I just recently read but Ms White has produced an absolutely unique take on that story. At first I thought the jumping back and forth in the timelines with the POVs of the Mason/Callie and the group in the lodge was a bit annoying, even with the great chapter headings, as you just seemed to get invested in a part of the story when you jumped back or forward to the other POV but I really can't think of any other way this story could have been told so effectively. This book gets added to the list of the best Arthur Ellis nominees that I've read so far and I'll definitely try some more of Ms Whites mystery thrillers after the Arthur Ellis reading is finished.

River of Lies (B.C. Blues Crime #5) by R.M. Greenaway

Date Read: 20200316

My rating: 4 star

I usually take breaks from my Arthur Ellis entries reading project to read the latest releases by favourite authors and this is book 5 in this series which I have been enjoying. This is a series that I think is better if read in order but each book has a crime investigation that has a solid and satisfactory conclusion and the only storyline that carries on through the entire series is the Cal Dion story which, personally, I think is really the major plot line of the series but except for that these books can possibly be read as standalones. About the only thing you may miss by not reading in order is just what Mike Bosko role really is and what is he trying to do and since I've read the whole series in order and I still haven't completely figured that out I guess it doesn't matter if you skip around. I always thought J D Temple was the best of the cops but we see a bit of a different side to her in this book but she sure is still a great detective. We finally get a bit more insight to the Cal Dion problem and again with the Ken Poole story a bit of an open end leading to another book in the series. The Faith & Luna story ending is just a bit unbelievable but once again we have a book with an extremely appropriate title 'cause there sure were a lot of lies told by all the culprits. My rating 3.5 rounded up to 4 and now we wait another year for the next entry in the series.

Arrow's Fall (Offshore Novels Book 2) by Joel Scott

Date Read: 20200312

My rating: 3 stars

I read this book in my project to read as many of the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards nominees. that appeal to me, that I can before the Shortlists are announced on Apr 15 2020 so ,again, I broke a couple of my rules as I am usually reluctant to pay for a book by an author whose work I have never read and I don' like starting a series out of order and this time the result is kind of a mixed bag. I must say that I liked this read enough that I didn't have to force myself to finish it and thus the 3 star rating and I don't really think skipping book 1 was any problem but I'm not sure this is completely the sort of story that I really enjoy. I mean I think I have suspended the maximum amount of disbelief that I can and I still found this whole story to be so far fetched, over-the-top and away out as to be completely implausible, impossible, unbelievable and just too much to allow even the tiniest amount of realism required to make the wildest story really enjoyable. I think all the violent and torturous games and "entertainment" were described much more graphically than was necessary, characters such as Pheung and Joseph were just too impossible and Jared and Danny make Superman look like a wimp. Okay all of the bad guys get killed off along with some of the good guys in the spectacular finale and the ending is vague enough to lead to another book in the series which I doubt I'll even think about reading unless I get a freebie. And ,again, I didn't mind reading this and I'm sure that anyone who likes lot's of blood and gore, and guns and explosives and monster sharks and snakes and very graphic violent torture and death will really like it but I think there are lots of better entries for the 2020 ArthurEllis awards than this one.

Graveyard Shift (Hope Sze Medical Crime Book 7) by Melissa Yi

Date Read: 20200309

My rating: 4 stars

I read this book in my project to read as many of the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards nominees. that appeal to me, that I can before the Shortlists are announced on Apr 15 2020. Once again I broke my rule of trying to read a series in order and jumped in here with book 7 despite not having read any other books in this series but I don't think that affected my enjoyment of this story as it reads pretty well as a standalone with a just enough references to things in the previous books to make me want to go back and read the series from the beginning. Melissa Yi is not completely a new to me author as I have read and enjoyed several of her short stories. I quite liked this book and even though I don't know too much about all the medical stuff there is enough explanation to at least let a layman figure out what was going on. Lot's of well drawn characters although some of them kind of waffled back and forth as to whether they were good guys or bad guys and lot's of twists and turns leading to a solid and literally explosive ending and while I had a slight hunch as to the id of the murderer I had no idea of the motive until the reveal. Amazingly for a story with all the violent murders and attempted murders there is a lot of humour and I even had more outright laugh out louds than in many mysteries that are billed as humorous. I'm usually not a huge fan of the old love triangle thing but you have to admit this one was sure quite different. Anyway I enjoyed this story and I'll start at the beginning of this series after the Arthur Ellis reading is finished.

Legacy of Fear by A.J. McCarthy

Date Read: 20200307

My rating: 4 stars

I read this book in my project to read as many of the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards nominees. that appeal to me, that I can before the Shortlists are announced on Apr 15 2020. While I am always looking for new or new to me Canadian authors to read and I am usually reluctant to pay for a book by an author whose work I have never read I am pleased to say that this time I won the gamble and this

will definitely not be the last book by Ms McCarthy that I read. This story has just about all of the good things I like in a mystery such as great descriptions of the settings, weather, well developed characters both the likeable and the unlikeable ones and a plausible story line leading to a quite spectacular and satisfactory ending with not a too unrealistic motive for the violent attacks on Emily and the murders both past and present. Emily and Dustin are both solid characters with enough baggage in their backgrounds to make their actions quite believable and Ted is a good cop. My guess for the culprit turned out, as is often the case, wrong and all the suspicions about Dustin were easily, if perhaps a bit too conveniently, explained. If I can find any real faults with this book it would be that perhaps there were too many attacks on Emily and her property that really only dragged the investigation out a bit too long and I thought the ending was a bit rushed. Anyway an enjoyable read that I recommend and I'll read more by Ms McCarthy.

Reserved For Murder: Book 2 of The Ottawa Detective Series by Kevin Hopkins

Date Read: 20200305

My rating: 4 star

I usually take breaks from my Arthur Ellis entries reading project to read the latest releases by favourite authors and this is book 2 in this series. As I said in my review of the first book in the series I was bit doubtful that Mr Hopkins could improve on it very much and while I don't think this one is any better it sure is at least as good. Same great cast of competent, honest and likeable police officers and superiors investigating a somewhat different kind of a plot that has a quite in depth study of some very current social problems expertly woven in while managing not to get too preachy. Constable Grant wasn't quite the wonderkind that he was in book 1 but just as effective and thus much more believable and his mother in her brief appearance is really something! Again great descriptions of the settings, coffee, weather, coffee, food, coffee and Native Customs and did I mention the coffee? How in heck does Detective Penner do it? Most people drinking that much coffee would need a Pit Stop about every 15 minutes! Anyway Penner is a great character, good detective, great sympathetic people

person, perhaps a bit naive about some things like moose dinners but she sure is a good sport. I really liked that the First Nations involved were the Algonquin Nation because there are very few novels involving Algonquin people and customs. A couple of small points that are really just pet peeves of mine are that I usually don't have a lot of liking for stories where all the perps get killed off without being brought to justice or walk away even if the ending isn't really clear whether or not they were a perp. Another thing I, personally, don't like is the current very common misuse of words not just in literature but also in mainstream newspapers. In this book the word "bring" occurs many times when, in my opinion, the word "take" should have been used and would even have made for easier and smoother reading. Here is one of many examples "If it's really bad, they get in touch with the city police and bring them there." "Take" would be more accurate and read better than "bring" I know this is controversial and I don't deduct stars for it but it still bugs me. Anyway a fine read and I'm looking forward to book 3.

Nobody Move (Angel City #1) by Philip Elliott

Date Read: 20200303

My rating: 3 stars

I read this book as it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for Best Novel and for a change since this is book 1 in the series I didn't have to break my rule and jump into the middle of a series. I thought this was an okay read but nothing special and I didn't have to force myself to read it to the ending which I thought was alright and pretty appropriate but with the way it ended I really can't see how Mr Elliott can plan a sequel. Unless, of course as the series title implies, just the setting is the series and with not very many recurring characters. I am not much of a fan of stories where the MC is a criminal but in this case Eddie Vegas may be a crook but he sure is not a bad guy. At least all the real bad guys, and there are lots of pretty reprehensible characters here, meet satisfactory endings. I've read several reviews of this book, and of other books, that said the writing was reminiscent of Elmore Leonard. If this is true, though I have never read any Elmore Leonard, reading these books has done nothing to make me want to read any Elmore Leonard's. Another thing many reviews mention is humour and once again, and this only may be my sense of humour, I found very few giggles or smiles let alone any outright laughs in this book. I am always looking for new or new to me Canadian authors to read and I will sure try another book by Mr Elliott

Fire, Fog and Water (Sgt. Windflower Mysteries #8) by Mike Martin

Date Read: 20200301

My rating: 3 stars

I have read a couple of books in this series and have not been too impressed by them and have said I wouldn't read any more in the series but this book is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards and I got it for the right price so I thought I'd give the author another try. However once again I didn't find it a great read and I think this is strike 3 for this series. This is not at all a bad book and I know lots of readers like it and the series and I didn't have to force myself to finish it and thus the 3 stars but it just isn't the type of mystery I like. I found this a bit of a slow read and to me it reads more like a family soap opera than a mystery. Too many repetitious details particularly every time Windflower does anything with "joy of his life, little Amelia Louise." None of the plot lines really reach a solid ending but every branch of the Mounties involved are super good at passing the buck and handing off all their difficult cases to some other branch or Police Service. I did like that Windflower practised more of his Native customs than in the earlier books I read but again too many repetitious details and I still really have no idea of what his dreams had to do with any of the plot lines. The only thing that might get me to read another of these is to finally get some resolution as to whatever Uncle Frank and Aunt Marie are doing with Windflower. And BTW I think Lady is the best and most interesting character in the book.

Passage into Darkness: (Elliot Forsman Book 3) by Gary Coffin

Date Read: 20200227

My rating: 3 stars

I read this book as it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for Best Novel even though it's book 3 in the series and reading it when I haven't read books 1 & 2 broke my rule to try to read series books in published order. Although I really enjoyed this story it is possible that I may have liked it more if I had read the earlier books first as I could have used a bit more backstory about both Elliot and Rivka to understand the rather tenuous relations with the Montreal Police. However I'm always looking for new or new to me Canadian crime writers to read and I'll definitely add Gary Coffin to my list and I've already acquired and

will read book 1 of this series. This book has two good murder investigations running in parallel and it's kind of obvious that they'll connect somehow but I never even anticipated the very surprising twist that brought them together. However there is another almost as surprising twist that may have been a bit easier, but not by much, to see coming and along with some great and clever detective work by both Elliot and Rivka everything leads to a pretty solid ending. Lot's of great descriptions of Montreal and it's weather, food and entertainment and lot's of action but of course I was sorry to see one of the good people get murdered. There are a few loose ends that I thought might have been tied up a bit tighter such as what exactly Reverend Carillo was doing because she seemed to have a big role in Elliot's investigation then just sort of got dropped out of the picture. Now I sure would love to have been the fly on the wall when Ming's escape voyage reached it's destination! This book is fairly well proofread regarding the usual typos and errors that are common to many eBooks with a few such as this in Chapter 40 "The detective t Elliot about the call and the transcript" but not bad enough to detract from the reading enjoyment but there is another editing problem that did cause me to deduct 1 star. There are many plot anomalies and disconnects throughout the book such as this example from chapter 50 after Elliot had been beaten up by the goons who stole his wallet and phone "Elliot, lying in bed waiting for his discharge, noticed a new email." Now I'd like to know just exactly what device he was using to read his eMails and the various attachments because he hadn't yet been able to get a new phone. Somehow I don't think the back of his hand would work too well! This type of fault happens fairly often throughout the book. A bit of a tighter editing and more rewriting would make the story more realistic. Anyway I liked the story and I'll read more by Mr Coffin after I finish my 2020 Arthur Ellis reading project.

Bay of Blood by A.M. Potter

Date Read: 20200225

My rating: 3 stars

I read this book in my 2020 Arthur Ellis awards reading project because the synopsis and blurbs sounded like the type of crime novel I like to read especially with the Bruce Peninsula setting. I think I have found a new to me Canadian author to add to my authors to read list and I'm looking forward to read more by this author. This book well edited and proofread with and I found the writing style made for easy and smooth reading. Lots of good descriptions of the settings, weather, food and customs – everybody drinks lots of tea! The characters including the good, the bad, the likeable and the unlikeable, and there are many of that kind, are all adequately developed. The police procedures, forensics and use of technology all seem pretty realistic and it's nice to not have any rogue, corrupt, incompetent or completely self-centred cops as happens in many novels. Eva Naslund is a great character and Inspector Moore turns out to be a lot better and nicer person than he seemed to be by reputation and when we first met him. Thom Tyler was not really too nice of a person and he sure hurt enough people to provide lots of suspects with motives for his murder. Of course I didn't like to see two of the good guys get murdered but those murders were quite logical because of the actual motive for the Tyler murder. The ending is quite solid and satisfactory although I thought it was a bit rushed and aided by some coincidences even though it resulted from Eva's persistent investigation. I have one technical error that jumped out at me and I think should have been corrected in the editing process. Here is a quote - "They're Phillips screws not flatheads. You can sink them in deep." This statement is just plain wrong on two counts and again two wrongs don't make a right. First there is no such a thing as a "Phillips screw" and second flathead screws are the screw type that you CAN sink in deep so these screws obviously ARE flatheads. "Phillips" is the type of screwdriver with a Cross shaped tip and any screw type like a flat head, pan head, round head etc. can be made to be driven by any type of screwdriver like a Slot, Robertson, Hex, Allen or Phillips. This error gets repeated any time in the book that the investigators discuss the centre board housing screws. To me this is a serious enough fault to cause me to deduct 1 star from what otherwise is a fine 4 star debut novel. Doesn't matter, though, because I'll still read a sequel if Mr Potter writes one.

The Emerald Tablet by Eve Simpson

Date Read: 20200222

My rating: 2 stars

I read this book as it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for Best First novel even though I was a bit hesitant after reading the synopsis and blurbs because I'm not a huge fan of the Indiana Jones type of adventure that this sounded like. However I'm always looking for new or new to me Canadian authors and some reviews indicated that there was quite a bit of action in

Canada and the price was OK so I gave it a try. Now I am really stumped as to just exactly what this book is trying to be and in how to rate it. If this story is supposed to be a serious mystery adventure story I'm afraid I'd have to go with 1 star because of some things which I'll talk about later. Now this story could be an attempt to be a satirical send-up of all the Indiana Jones type of adventures and as such would probably deserve at least 3 stars and if it had a bit of humour added it would be worth 4. So it kind of looks like the compromise will have to be 2 or 2.5 rounded down to 2. Now some thoughts on the story itself. Maya and Danny keep getting themselves caught in extremely dangerous situations and the ways that Sam and "Superman" oops I mean McLaren rescue them are just so preposterous, far fetched, over-the-top and just so unbelievable that one can not suspend enough disbelief to accept them. C'mon the only thing McGyver had over MvLaren is that McGyver did it all with clothespins and elastic bands instead of all the high tech gadgets and weapons McLaren had available. And just how many of those "Emergency Packs" did Pescatori have in his copters anyway. Remember one copter was destroyed but an Emergency Pack was in another copter. Anyway after all the explosions, earthquakes, Russians, drones and radioactive stuff we have nice little romantic ending for Maya and Marc. Oy yeah that's another little problem I have – why all through all of the action the team are called "Maya, Danny, Sam and McLaren" but not "Maya, Danny, Sam and Marc" ? I found this annoying. And why did we never learn what happened to Pescatori or who, what or why was the mystery woman and what happened to her and who was the "nurse" in Petkovski's room and who hired him? Anyway I won't lie and say I actually didn't like reading this book and I really wouldn't mind reading a sequel, too, for the right price.

Murder on Vancouver Island: Hatred, prejudice, or a heinous crime without motive? (DI William Gibson #1) by Kathy Garthwaite

Date Read: 20200219

My rating: 1 stars

I read this book in my 2020 Arthur Ellis awards reading project and for a change it's book 1 of a new series so I didn't skip any books but I was very disappointed in this one. I hoped I'd found another new Canadian author writing crime novels set in Canada and the blurbs for book 2 sounded like a book I'd like to read but I'm afraid I won't waste any valuable reading time on any more by this author. This book is grossly overpriced at \$2.99 and after reading a review of book 2 which indicates it has some of the same problems as this one I think the same price being asked for it is much too high as well. It's a shame really because the premise for this story is quite interesting but telling of the story is quite bad. Maybe I'm not being fair to the author and perhaps a lot more rewrites and some professional editing before publication would have helped but who knows? A major flaw is there are just too many characters to try to keep track of and many of them sound pretty similar too each other. The next problem, and this is where editing could have helped, the whole book is loaded with plot disconnects, holes and breakdowns. As an example here's a quote " *The snow was falling heavily soon after Gibson dropped Scottie at the station. He advanced through the city streets, exited the freeway and manoeuvred through the side lanes. Five inches had accumulated and stuck to the surface, unwilling to melt. Visibility reduced by the driving sleet made him bend forwards into the windshield.*" Right after this we have big fluffy wet snowflakes falling. C'mon is it Snow or Sleet? Either one is OK but both at the same time? I don't think so. These kind of incongruities occur through out the book like with Gibson and Scottie getting out of their cruiser in pouring rain while kids and dogs are playing on the grassy front lawn. Then there's Gibson's unique method of investigation. He finds a clue and a name and he and his partner jump into a cruiser and roar off, of course with gravel flying, across town, charge into a home or office or business, ask one or two questions, get another name, jump in the car and, again with the gravel flying, roar to another address or maybe back to one they just left and repeat this process over and over. This is, at least to me, a new and different Police Procedure than any I have ever heard about! And this guy is being seconded to Ontario to help some Police Service set up a Major Crime Unit?

Wow! Must be the Podunk's Corners Mickey Mouse Auxiliary Reserve Police Service and they better have good tires on their cruisers and lots of gravel to fix those parking lots. On top of all that the sub plot with Gibson's wife, Rose, didn't really do anything to advance the main plot and nor did the kayaking. I've found some very good debut novels entered in this year's Arthur Ellis Awards competition but unfortunately this is not one of them.

One Small Sacrifice (Shadows of New York #1) by Hilary Davidson

Date Read: 20200217

My rating: 4 stars

I read this book in my 2020 Arthur Ellis awards reading project and for a change it's book 1 of a new series so I didn't skip any books but this one is good enough that I'll read more by this new to me Canadian author. Some of the action is a bit far out and over-the-top but the normal suspension of disbelief sure allows for the entertainment and escape for which we read these type of novels. This story has so many twists that your belief in what actually happened practically gets right back to where you first thought you had it all figured out but were wrong as usual and everybody sure is hiding a lot of secrets. Besides a pretty good investigation of a couple of murders this book takes a very solid look at the horrors caused by wars, drug addiction, obsessions, desires for revenge, wrong assumptions and jumping to conclusions. Lots of well developed characters and while I sure didn't like Sheryn Sterling at first with her tunnel vision and preconceived conviction of the murderer she turned out to be a very intelligent and strong detective and interpreted and accepted evidence and with the help of her partner Rafael brought on the ending that I think most readers will like. Though it sure was hard to figure out Rafael who kind of became another of those unexpected twists. I also found it hard to decide on my opinion of Alex Traynor and while I felt a lot of sympathy for him I also thought many of his problems were just results of his own actions. As I said while I think most

readers will like the ending of this book it has almost as many twists as the rest of the book with a solid ending for one of the murders, a satisfactory ending for the Will sub plot even if it was clever but maybe a bit unethical and a very vague but acceptable ending to the original murder. Another good 4 star read in the 2020 Arthur Ellis entries and although I've hit a few duds I've also hit a lot of real good ones and this is one of them.

Social Justice (Wild Justice #2) by Arthur Haberman

Date Read: 20200214

My rating: 2 stars

I read this book in my 2020 Arthur Ellis awards reading project because the synopsis and blurbs sounded like the type of crime novel I like to read especially with the Toronto setting. I thought I may have found a new to me Canadian author to add to my authors to read list but having slogged my way through this book I doubt that I'll read any more by this author. This book is well edited and proofread with only one name error jumping out at me when Danny was talking to Adam Silver and we have this quote

"Irwin Feldman at Sachs."

Singer nodded. "I know Irwin. A very straight guy. Thorough. A fine lawyer. A good sense of community"

There is nobody in this book named "Singer" Obviously it should read "Silver". The only other mechanical problem I had, after I found a downloadable file in a format that any of my eReaders or Apps could read, was that it has a very weak Table of Contents only listing 'Part I', "Part II" and so on that makes it difficult to switch around among various reading devices. I'm not sure if reading book 1 before this book would have made any difference because if it is written in the same style and I had read it first I probably would not have read this one. The following are a few of the biggest problems I had with this story. This book really has 4 separate plots – 3 murders, 2 of which are solved in Parts I and II and the 3rd of which is never solved and the thefts plot which runs through all 3 parts and has a rather soft and maybe not too ethical of a resolution. This book would possibly have been better as a trilogy of 3 long novellas or filled out to 3 novels and an end provided for the last murder. I found the writing style to be too much

tell and not enough show and much too long with pages of unnecessary and sometimes repetitive detail. I did like the Toronto setting and some off the personal life asides of the characters but even they were stretched out and repeated too much and just took the reader out of the main plots. One of my major problems is all the dialogue which I found much too stilted and formal. People just don't talk to each other like that using all those 4, 5 and 6 syllable words. A bit too literary for me, I guess, but I can see it being written that way because of the author's credentials. And one last personal beef is I don't like a large part of the ending filled with a number of chapters from the next book in the series as a marketing gimmick to try to get readers to buy the next book. Just say book 3 "Blah" is coming and knock a percentage off the prices. A lot of readers may like this book but I'm not one of them.

Operation Vanished: A Crime Thriller by Helen C. Escott

Date Read: 20200211

My rating: 4 stars

I read this book in my 2020 Arthur Ellis awards reading project and once again I skipped the first book in the series but after reading the synopsis, blurbs and some reviews for it I don't think that mattered as this book is really a standalone story and not a continuation of the first story. I know of no real reason why I didn't read Operation Wormwood last year as it was shortlisted for the AE best first novel award, I had it listed as a possible read, it wasn't overpriced and it was available. It's possible that it may have sounded a bit too religious for me or I just didn't get around to it but that didn't take anything away from my enjoyment of Operation Vanished in any way as this is possibly the best novel I've read yet in this years AE awards reading and may well be the best overall that I've read this year. Everyone who follows my reviews will know just how stingy I am with 5 star ratings and that I am even very reluctant to award 4 stars to the first book I have read by an author because I like to leave room for improvement as an author's writing, characterization, descriptions and plots progress in subsequent books but this book comes so close to a 5 star that I'm really stuck. This is an extremely well written, edited and proofread book with great descriptions of the well developed characters, weather, food and customs and the Newfoundland setting is so real it actually becomes a character in the

story. RCMP Corporal Gail McNaughton is a fine detective trying to operate in a moral, ethical way and maintain her integrity and remain within the boundaries of procedural rules and regulations within the usual male dominant RCMP while at the same time balancing a personal life filled with some adversity and actual tragedy. However Gail isn't beyond stretching the rules a bit to provide human and compassionate justice and for an unfortunate challenged individual. Luckily her supervisor, Staff Sergeant Boyd Michaels is a good modern RCMP officer while it would be very easy to classify his second-in-command, Sergeant Wayne Harvey, as a cliched stereotypical male RCMP dinosaur except for this quote from Michaels - *"Yes, I know your story. Some got into this unit because they're too incompetent to be in the field, and they're hidden at headquarters to keep them out of trouble."* If you read the fine Jack Taggart series by Don Easton who is a retired undercover RCMP officer you will find that scenario repeated a few times so out of curiosity I asked Don if this was really true and he told me definitely because that's the normal way the RCMP operated. Larry Morgan is another fine character who really helped in Gail's strong investigation. Lots of suspects and wrong leads and a quite solid ending to both the disappearance and the murders but one of my pet peeves in a murder mystery is having the perp die in some way without being brought into the justice system so this is one reason I deducted a star. One thing I really like in a mystery is if it includes a look into a current social problem as this book does with Gail's mother, Doris, and her battle with dementia. This whole sub plot is probably why this book has had such a profound affect on me and why even days after finishing reading it I'm am still actively thinking about it because it hits a bit too close to home as you will see in a little anecdote I'm going to include in this review. First though I'm not really sure Gail's nightmares advanced the main plot in a big way and maybe there were a few too many of them and they were so well written that it was hard to tell if they were dreams or actually real but they sure provided fuel for Gail's relationship with her mother. As I read Gail's conversations with Doris in the Long Term Care Home I was immediately reminded of a little episode that actually happened to me. My late sister who was 8 years older than me had been suffering from some form of dementia and eventually it became necessary

for her to be placed in longterm care. Her son xxxx , my nephew, still lived in his apartment in her house. It was the custom for her daughter, my niece, to bring my sister out of the care home to her home for Holiday dinners and one year we were all sitting around in the living room having snacks and cocktails and waiting for my nephew to arrive for dinner when my sister got up and said “Will somebody take me home” My niece said “Mom, we’re just waiting for xxxx and we’ll have dinner” My sister said “xxxx is not coming and will somebody take me home. My family will be worried because they don’t know where I am.” It’s a horrendous problem that’s only getting worse with the aging population and it is very welcome to have the reality of it described so realistically and with no candy coating as Ms Escott has done in this fine book.

Too Close to Home (Anna Sweet Mystery, #8) by Brenda Chapman

Date Read: 20200209

My rating: 3 stars

Although I have read some of the early books in this series I broke one of my personal rules and jumped over a couple to read “Killer Heat” out of order because it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for best novella and I liked it enough that I did something I wouldn’t usually do and started reading “Too Close To Home”, which is also a 2020 AE entry, right away. This book is a bit different from most Rapid Reads novellas as it has two solid plots which do get tied together somewhat and both have satisfactory endings. It also introduces a new character, Max, who is quite more fully developed than is usual in these type of novellas. And as a crowning glory Anna’s love life comes to a much appreciated happy ending. This book is a fine example of what a good author can do with a story within the constrictions required to meet the Rapid Reads criteria. A good read for anyone needing a short, quick and easy read with a good mystery, a sound investigation and a solid ending. Now I’m waiting impatiently for “Closing Time” the next Stonechild and Rouleau Mystery to be released on March 21/20 which, of course, will interrupt my AE awards reading!

Killer Heat (Anna Sweet Mystery, #7) by Brenda Chapman

Date Read: 20200208

My rating: 3 stars

Although I have read some of the early books in this series I broke one of my personal rules and jumped over a couple to read this one out of order because it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for best novella. This is one of those Rapid Reads novellas and I like to read some of them when I need a short fill in book that can be read without a lot of heavy concentration and this one sure meets those criteria. This is most definitely not a light and fluffy read as it has a solid plot, a brutal murder, a good investigation by Anna, her dad and her partner Jada, a bit of a surprising twist leading to the motive and a satisfactory ending and a bonus with Anna taking a positive step in doing something about her doubts in her office romance. BTW the next book in this series "Too Close To Home" is also a 2020 AE entry and I liked "Killer Heat" enough that I did something I wouldn't usually do and started reading it right away. I probably only did that because Brenda Chapman is one of my favourite authors and I'm waiting impatiently for "Closing Time" the next Stonechild and Rouleau Mystery to be released on March 21/20 which, of course, will interrupt my AE awards reading!

Evidence of Uncertain Origin by Nikki Everts

Date Read: 20200207

My rating: 3 stars

I read this book in my 2020 Arthur Ellis awards reading project and I think it's quite a good effort for a debut novel and I enjoyed the read pretty much with a few reservations. I really liked the setting in Montreal in the late 1960s during the FLQ crisis and I think it is fairly historically accurate as well as very well described along with the weather, fashions and food. This book is very well edited and proofread and I can't remember any great errors jumping out at me which is very rare in a debut novel by an Indie author and is a great credit to the small co-op publisher, Arboretum Press. While basing the plot on the FLQ crisis is hardly unique having been done before and arguably better in such works as, for instance, John McFetridge's "Eddie Dougherty series" or John Farrows fine "River City" this book does place a bit of a different spin on it. I didn't like Katherine "Kit" Flanagan much at the beginning and I never grew to like her much better at the end. I found her too opinionated, self-centred, stubborn, holding on to old grudges, sometimes just plain stupid and really only looking out for number 1 especially when she was trying to get into bed with any man but her husband. I mean "Once Bitten, Twice Shy" didn't hold anything for our Kit! I kind of liked Sondra but when they were handed all the clues to id the murderer and didn't bother to follow up on them I don't think either of them

should give up their day jobs to become PIs. There are a lot of impossible logistics throughout the story with the biggest one, of course, involving Gramps “accident, suicide or murder” with the timing of when a car would come around that corner. OK the big twist and the ending was pretty spectacular but I had guessed at it sooner but I still wasn’t really sure. Perhaps there were a few too many mailbox bombings that didn’t really advance the main plot too much. Overall a quite enjoyable debut novel and I wouldn’t mind reading a sequel.

SIMPLY THE BEST (Dale Hunter Thriller Book 2) by Delvin R. Chatterson

Date Read: 20200205

My rating: 3 stars

I broke one of my personal rules and jumped into book 2 of this series not having read book 1 first because it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis Best Novel awards and I’m trying to read as many as I can before the Shortlists are announced on April 15/20. Although I did like quite a lot about this book I think I may have enjoyed it more if I had have read book 1 first. Book 3 in the series “Merger Maniac” is also entered for the AE award so I’ll probably try to read it also and I did like this book enough that I’ve bought book 1 and I’ll read it but not until after my AE reads. This book is well written, edited and proofread and the various settings are described adequately but I did find the jumps in the timeframe between 1988 and 2018 a bit confusing like if Dale was talking to Sean at age 8 or 38 for instance. I don’t know whether or not I really like Dale but I sure have to feel a lot of sympathy for him and he can sure get himself in some awful messes. And then there is “Superman”, oops, “Frank the Fixer”! What a character he is! McGyver and Hawk have nothing on him. One thing Mr Chatterson could have done better would be having picked some other name for Dale’s wife as “Susan Hunter” is the name of the amateur sleuth MC of Maddie Cochere’s “Susan Hunter” cozy mystery series! Anyway an enjoyable read and I guess the maybe good guys had a happy ending.

Lion's Head Revisited: A Dan Sharp Mystery(Dan Sharp Mystery #7) by Jeffrey Round

Date Read: 20200203

My rating: 4 star

I usually take breaks from my 2020 Arthur Ellis entries reading project to read the latest releases by favourite authors and this book is the latest release in Jeffrey Round’s fine Dan Sharp series. I sure am glad I read it because I found it

a very enjoyable read and it possibly ranks as one of the best yet in the series. Although this book has a great main plot and lot's of suspects and the usual Dan Sharp persistent investigation and some really surprising twists it also is very character oriented and his friends private lives play large roles in the story. Ked, who is one of my favourite characters in the series, didn't play such a large role as he does sometimes but that is probably realistic with his school situation but he sure is a mature young man and he sure provides Dan with lots of support. I haven't really decided on my opinion of Nick and I think if his relationship with Dan is to succeed they will both have to open up some of their backstory a bit. Horace McLean sure turned out to be quite the character. I never saw the big twist coming that led to the big and tense ending scene but as usual in this series there is a solid and satisfactory ending and no loose ends. Although I've read this series in published order I don't think the fact that chronologically this book fits between two of the previous published books really impacts the story and to me this book can almost be read as a standalone. The settings on the Bruce Peninsular are super and this quote brought me a personal memory - "The grey-white cliffs unfurled along the promontory" . I remember many, many years ago when my mom and dad and I took the ferry from Manitoulin across to Tobermory and stayed in an old hotel in Wiarton and did the sightseeing thing around Lion's Head. The thing that I remembered the most from that trip was the white cliffs near Lion's Head! Overall a good read and I hope Mr Round has some more Dan Sharp's to follow in any chronological order.

A Striking Similarity: Book 1 of The Ottawa Detective Series by Kevin Hopkins,

Date Read: 20200131

My rating: 4 stars

I read this book as part of my 2020 Arthur Ellis awards reading project as it is entered for the Best First novel award and I believe this is definitely a very well deserved entry. This book is so well written and edited, especially for a self-published work, that I am having a hard time to keep remembering it is the authors first novel and I can't really imagine how further books in this series could be at least as good let alone any better. I will most certainly find out, though, as I have Book 2 "Reserved For Murder" pre-ordered with an ETA of

March 4/20 and the synopsis sounds like it might be an even better story than this one. It is a real pleasure to read a police procedural like this with no corrupt, dirty or dumb cops who are mainly likeable along with competent, ethical and likeable commanding officers who are not out to get one of the detectives or constables. Detectives Millar and Penner are great characters and Constable Grant may be just a little too good to be real and the Ottawa setting is so good it really becomes a character in the story. Lots of twists and turns and clues and evidence pointing at different suspects and I was sure I had the perp identified but, Wrong Again!, as the logical reveal and solid ending shows even if it isn't quite the ending I would have liked to see although the clues are all there throughout the story. Anyway another new Canadian crime writer to add to my list of authors to read and I'm impatiently awaiting March 4.

Man at the Door: Book Three in the Mike O'Shea Crime Fiction Series by Desmond P Ryan

Date Read: 20200129

My rating: 4 stars

I really like this series and I think this book is the best one so far and thankfully there are no pistachio shells left for 13 years in the cruiser! This book has the usual good mystery plot with Mike, no matter how beat up he is, and his team doing the usual fine investigation with some twists, false leads and red herrings and finally achieving a satisfactory ending. What could be an overwhelmingly gritty and violent story is tempered by an adequate amount of humour provided as in the previous books mostly from the dialogue and banter among the police officers but in this book Mr Ryan places Mike's mother, Mary Margaret, in a prominent role and she is a real hoot. Sure not afraid to say what she thinks and really brings lot's of laughs. I read somewhere that Mr Ryan is starting a spin-off series starring Mary Margaret and I can hardly wait to read the first one. I also read that this is book 3 of an expected 6 book series but I'd sure like to see this series extended because I've really grown to like Mike's family and I like how tightly and realistically the detectives family life is integrated into the stories. I did find one editing error that violates one of my more serious pet peeves which is a name mixup. Here's a quote from chapter 28 at one of Mary Margaret's Sunday family dinners - "Max!" Mike admonished.

"No, seriously. I'm going to barf." Max sprang from the table and bounded up the stairs to the bathroom.

"Please tell me this happens in your house, too," Max said to Amanda.

"Pretty much, yep. Just with girls." Now it would be impossible for Max to have said anything to Amanda after he had already bounded up to the bathroom. This obviously should read "Mike said to Amanda". I'm glad this book is entered for the 2020 Arthur Ellis award and it ranks with the best AE entries I've read so far but I would have read it anyway in my regular reading. Bring on book 4 quickly,

please!

An Excuse For Murder by Vanessa Westermann

Date Read: 20200127

My rating: 3 stars

I received this book as a giveaway from the author and I decided to read it because it is entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards for best first novel and I like reading books by new Canadian crime writers and I have found some pretty good authors that write books that I like to read and, of course, I've also found some I didn't like and whose works I won't buy again. I was a bit hesitant to start this one because I am not a huge fan of stories where one of the MCs is the murderer and that is known from the start and every second chapter is told from his POV. This is a purely subjective observation but it seems to me that this is sort of a current trend as I have found many of the recent releases I have looked at tend to have some or all of those characteristics. Also I haven't liked reading too many stories set in England even by Canadian authors unless there is a strong Canadian connection and when I found out this book was set in England I almost DNF'd it but when I discovered Kate Rowan was an ex-pat Canadian and her immediate family all still lived in Canada I kept reading and I am quite glad I did. When I finished this book I rated it 4 stars but after a few days to digest it I have dropped it back to a 3 star read and actually only because of a few minor personal preferences. Besides my prejudices mentioned above I thought the ending was a bit vague and a bit weak and I became very annoyed after a while with Kate almost always calling Roselyn "Great Aunt Roselyn". Nobody talks to or about a relative like that. I have a number of Great (in many ways!) nieces and nephews and none of them ever call me "Great Uncle Phil" but just "Uncle Phil" the same as their parents, my nieces and nephews, do. Another small and very personal nit-pick is that I found this book to be a bit more of a literary read than most of the crime stories I enjoy. This book is extremely well written and edited and I found it smooth, easy and enjoyable reading and overall it is a very good read that I think most readers will like.

A Matter of Malice: A DreadfulWater Mystery by Thomas King

Date Read: 20200125

My rating: 4 stars

I read the first book "DreadfulWater" a few years ago and found it an OK read

that I enjoyed but somehow I just forgot about this series until I found this one entered in the 2020 Arthur Ellis awards. I know I jumped past a couple of books in the series to read this in my 2020 Arthur Ellis project but that didn't detract from my enjoyment of this story but it has made me want to read more of this series after my 2020 AE awards reading. Thumps Dreadfulwater is a marvellous character and a good detective and this book has a good plot, lots of good and sometimes a bit eccentric characters and a good ending. Besides that I found more humour in this story than in many books that are advertised as humorous mysteries but very often never provide me with a giggle let alone the number of LOLs I had reading this one. I recommend this book but I think it would probably be better to read the series in order but at least read the first one, like I did, before this one.

Traps: A Robin Macfarland Mystery by Sky Curtis

Date Read: 20200123

My rating: 4 stars

I have read and enjoyed the first two books in this series and it has been a long wait for the release of this the 3rd and I was very glad to see that is nominated for the 2020 Arthur Ellis Best Novel award as it has become my first read in my 2020 Arthur Ellis reading project. I think this book is deservedly and rightfully entered in the Arthur Ellis contest because I found it a really fine read. I was a little worried about the moving of the setting from the Muskoka region in Ontario to Nova Scotia but Ms Curtis's good descriptive writing makes the setting an important character in the story and helped to easily make the social commentary about environmental, racist and sexist issues all an important part of the story. Ralph, Cindy and Robin (all of her!) are all great characters and Robin's family are almost too nice to be true. The murder mystery was a bit slow getting started but once it got rolling it sure raced along with all sorts of suspects, motives, opportunities and methods and, to me anyway, a bit of a surprise in the id of the culprit but definitely logical and not flung in from left field. Quite a few laughs and a satisfactory ending to a story I enjoyed. I do think that both Ralph and Robin are going to have to share their backstory baggage if their relationship is going to last. Now a little anecdote that has really nothing to do with this story except that when I read about them putting vinegar, ketchup or gravy on their chips I remembered a little incident that happened to me many years ago. In the winter of 1961 I spent 14 weeks in Halifax while we were installing the CJCH TV studio on Robie St. We stayed in the Lord Nelson Hotel and when we ordered French Fries for the first time in the downstairs diner and asked for vinegar they had never heard of anyone putting vinegar on chips and didn't have any in the hotel and had to send someone down the street to a grocery store to get some.

His Hand In the Storm (Chief Inspector Gray James #1) by Ritu Sethi

Date Read: 20200120

My rating: 1 star

I was hoping I'd found another new Canadian author writing mysteries set in Canada to add to my preferred reading list but unfortunately that isn't the case. This is another case of where we need a 2 tier rating system with one rating for the story stuff and a second rating for the mechanical and technical stuff. As far as the story, plot, characters and descriptions this is definitely not a bad book although the story is not too original or unique as I think it has been done, and usually better, quite a few times before for instance in such series as John McFetridge's "Eddie Dougherty Mystery" series and Peter Kirby's "Luc Vanier" series. I did quite like Gray James with all his warts and Etienne is a strong and complex character. Lot's of twists and unlikeable bad guys and suspects and probably worth at least a 3 star rating. And now we come to the mechanical and technical stuff which is so bad that it deserves a negative 2 star rating bringing the overall down to 1 star and I'm not deducting anything for the actual writing style but just for the grammar, punctuation, editing and proofreading which are all atrocious. I'm going to include a few samples but these things exist in almost every line from cover to cover and in some cases like in these examples make this book almost impossible to read or at least to understand. Now I realize this book is self-published but I have read many self-published books like R. E. Donalds "Hunter Rayne Highway Mystery" series in which some books may have one or two minor problems like these but never enough to make the books unreadable.

In Chapter 9 we read this -

"Jumping to his feet, the engineer gripped the edge of the table. Something had gone terribly wrong during their conversion, and urgency hit Gray like a shovel."

I still haven't figured out what was being converted

Then still in Chapter 9 we read -

“The planked boardwalk under his feet jostled slightly with each step; bikers passed him, fit and seemingly warm in their thin tight jackets; an occasional jogger bolted by, panting and wearing.”

“wearing”??

And notice all the “;” and “,” stuck all over the place in the middle of these sentences. The whole book is full of these “;” and “,” scattered randomly in most sentences.

One thing I can not stand in any book is a mix up in characters names and in Chapter 10 we meet “Dr. Jenna Peters” then in Chapter 11 when Gray goes to her house to ask her some questions we read “Jenna still had her work clothes on.” then in the same paragraph we read “Jemma’s eyes flicked up to his; she smiled, turned, and sat on the sofa” “Jemma” appears few more times in the same paragraph and there’s that “;” again!

I’m glad I got this book as a Kindle freebie and I already have book 2 as a freebie and I will read it but it won’t be until after April 15 2020 as until then, at least, I will be reading Arthur Ellis nominees except for new releases in series by my favourite authors.

Blood Ties (Cedric O’Toole Mystery Book 4) by Barbara Fradkin

Date Read: 20200118

My rating: 3 stars

Another good read in Ms Fradkin’s Rapid Reads Cedric O’Toole series that I found a bit grittier and more serious than the previous books in the series but just as enjoyable. Cedric is still the same likeable guy and just as reluctant a sleuth and hero but he again shows what a hero he really can be when it’s needed. I had Steve tagged as a con artist but I sure had that all wrong. We finally learn the secrets that Cedric’s family and some of the town folks have been hiding from him for some 35 years and the book wraps up with a fairly satisfactory ending. This story is worth 4 stars except for one sentence that would cause me to deduct at least 1 star from any book. Here’s the sentence - “She was sixteen years old, in eleventh grade.” Now this book is by a Canadian author and set in a small town in Ontario, Canada with all Canadian characters and therefor should be written in Canadian English not American English. I am sure that Ms Fradkin is fully aware that Canadians would say “She was sixteen years old, in grade eleven.” Check my reviews – I downrate any books for these

kind of errors like cars in Canada or the USA having Boots and Bonnets and Tyres instead of Trunks and Hoods and Tires. Another little pet peeve of mine is reading reviews that knock these books for having no character development or backstories and simple plots and quick endings when if the reviewer would check that is exactly what a Rapid Reads book is supposed to do and if readers read the series in order, which I think is absolutely necessary in most mystery series, instead of starting with book 4 they would see Cedric's backstory and character development and much of whatever else they see as missing. Anyway a good read but I hope Ms Fradkin is writing another Inspector Green novel and soon because that is much her best series.

Mourning After (The Funeral Fakers #4) by Stephanie Damore

Date Read: 20200117

My rating: 1 star

This is not a really bad book as far as the mystery goes and I'm sure many readers will like it but for various reasons I just didn't. I didn't really like any of the characters very much and it's hard to like a book when you really don't like the MCs. However my greatest dislike is that this is advertised as a humorous mystery which was what I was wanting to read but I did not find any humour in this book whatsoever. I did not get even a hint of a smile at any place in the story. Perhaps it's my non-American sense of humour but I am getting a bit tired of how many of these cozies that are touted to be funny turn out not to have any humour at all. However one good thing is that I got this book as a Kindle freebie because if I'd have paid \$0.01 for it I would have been really browned off.

Death on a Short Leash Gwendolyn Southin

Date Read: 20200115

My rating: 4 stars

After having taken so long to start reading this series although I have had all 5 books in my library for quite some time I have absolutely fallen in love with these stories. This book like the 2 previous has everything you like to find in a good mystery such as a good main plot with some sub plots that either advance the main story or provide red herrings, good writing, editing and proofreading, great descriptions of the settings, characters and, of course, the food, a fine investigation by the MCs, Maggie and Nat who are both good and likeable characters, some twists leading to a solid and satisfactory ending for all the bad guys. Then there's Harry who is just as obnoxious and unlikeable as in the

previous books. Now as a bonus throw in a fair amount of humour much of which is provided by Henny who is a fabulous and hilarious sidekick and you have a novel well worth the 4 stars I have awarded. As anyone who follows my reviews knows I'm very stingy with 5 star ratings but this one came quite close except I think Maggie jumps into a few too many dangerous situations on her own, the puppy rescues got a bit repetitious and I did have a slight bit of trouble keeping track of some similar names like Johanna and Jasmine. Anyway I won't wait too long to read the next books and I hear there is a 6th to be expected early in 2020 but unfortunately it is supposed to be the last in this fine series.

A Deadly Venture (A Max Dexter Mystery Book 2) by Chris Laing

Date Read: 20200113

My rating: 4 star

I read the 1st book in this series, "A Private Man", over 3 years ago and I really liked it and wanted to read the rest of the series but since my old eyes have decided they're happier reading eBooks rather than print books it has only been this year that I have been able to find eBook versions of the subsequent books. However the long wait has been well worth it because I found this book to be at least as good as book 1 if not better. This book really hit the target for me with the late 1940s post WWII setting in Hamilton and the old fashioned detective methods not to mention those 10 cent drafts! Max and Izzy are fabulous characters and although I thought I had the murderer figured out the actual perp was a bit of a surprise but wasn't wrung in from left field with no clues. Another thing I really like in these books is that there is actually more humour than I find in many books which are touted to be humorous. A satisfactory ending and now I'm looking forward to the rest of the series which I have already acquired and I hope Mr Laing has some more great cases planned for Max and Izzy.

The Mill Pond (A Milton Mystery Book 2) by Ron Base

Date Read: 20200111

My rating: 4 stars

My initial reaction when I finished this book was "WOW" and now after a couple of days to digest it my reaction is STILL WOW! We read these type of books for entertainment and escape and that's exactly what we get from this super action thriller but of course, as with most books in these genres, a certain level of

suspension of disbelief is required. I usually have trouble really enjoying a story when I pretty well know who the bad guys are right from the start but somehow Mr Base found a way to to keep me turning pages to find out what happens next and to even cause me a lot of confusion and doubts as to on whose side some of these characters really are. I'm not usually a big fan of stories where the bad guys all get killed off somehow rather than ending up in the justice system but I have to admit our heroine "Wonder Woman", oops sorry, Jean Whitlock sure wiped out a huge hunk of corruption in the RCMP and laid the groundwork for helping clean up some of the corruption in the local politics in Milton. In fact the blurbs sound so good for the next book, "Main Street, Milton" that I've already bought it even for a higher price than I like to pay for an eBook. And, BTW, the bad guys getting killed in this book is offset quite a bit by the perps in one of the subplots being apprehended. Anyway although it's an extremely small sample I think this is the best book I've read yet this year and I think some of the ones to which I'm looking forward will have to be great to beat it, although I hope some of them can. I highly recommend this book but I think this series must be read in order for the most enjoyment.

Death in the Park (Firefly Junction #1) by London Lovett

Date Read: 20200109

My rating: 3 star

This is quite a good start for a new series by London Lovett the author of the Port Danby series of cozies of which I have read and enjoyed a couple and will possibly read more. This story has a lot of characters, both likeable or not, and it's a bit difficult keeping them all sorted out but I really like Sunni and whether you liked Detective Jax or not his interactions with Sunni provide much of what little humour there is in the book. Oh yeah Newman and Redford are OK, too! Oh there are definitely a few smiles and chuckles and misunderstandings that, along with Sunni's sisters and Ursula and Henry Rice, her renovators, lighten up a quite good mystery that has a bit of a surprise ending that really seems a bit rushed and maybe achieved with a bit of a convenient coincidence. Talking about coincidences I seem to have been reading, recently, quite a few mystery books like this that have ghosts and haunted buildings involved. I don't mind a little paranormal or apparently paranormal stuff in a mystery and i thought it was very well written in this book and Edward Beckett has actually made me want to read more in this series when I need another fun and not too serious of a read.

Gumboots, Gumshoes & Murder (The Gumboot & Gumshoe Series) by Laura Hesse

Date Read: 20200108

My rating: 1 stars

I've been having a very hard time deciding how to write my review of his book which has been a huge disappointment to me. I had hoped to have found another new, at least to me, Canadian author writing humorous cozy mysteries that I can use as lighten up reads after finishing a dark, gritty and violent crime novel but, unfortunately, that is not the case. After reading all the 4 and 5 star reviews I'm wondering if I've actually read the same book as these readers. There are a couple of reviews that seem to have the same thoughts as I do but I don't understand how they could award 3 stars but say it was a waste of time and money. There is just so much bad about this book that I have to mention the only 2 things that I found good – One is a very unique Table of Contents and the other is that I got this thing as a Kindle freebie because I would really be put out if I'd paid even a dime for it. Ok maybe 3 – the cover is kind of neat! My first major beef is that this is not a complete story and does not really have an end. Well that's not quite true because it did have an end where the perp, who had been obvious through out the story confesses, sort of, to the murders before he dies in one of those convenient falls, BTW another trope that I don't like, off a cliff. But then we have another scene, sort of like an epilogue, with new evidence introduced and the book segues into the first chapter of the second book which is obviously a continuation of this story. Of course there is no way to know without reading book 2 if the story ends or just continues on into book 3. To me this is a cheap and almost fraudulent way to get readers to buy books. An author must make it extremely clear from the beginning that each book is only a part of the story or in this case get a good editor for each part and chop out all the unnecessary filler and combine the story in one volume. As it is this book sure needs a good editing anyway because my next big problem is the many editing problems some of which are outright errors of facts and the use of wrong words which, of course, are AOK according to the computer spell checker which was possibly the only proofreading done before publishing. Here are a few of the major goofs that jumped at me -

In Chapter 5 Blazing Virtue while Andy and Betty are picnicking someone who Betty thought was Jim approached in a small boat and we have this line -

“He saw Andy waving and waved back. He then reversed the boat and pulled away with a backwards glance over his shoulder at Betty and Jim” where “Jim” should read “Andy”

I hate it when names get mixed up.

In Chapter 9 Shattered –

“pour girl” should read “poor girl”

In Chapter 10 In a Sow's Ear we read the following -

"It was the usual poker night at the Bruce house. Archie, Barney, Stew and Reggie sat around the kitchen table, cards in hand, shots of whiskey in front of them.

Barney chewed on a cigar. He had a royal flush, Jack high, normally unbeatable, but Reggie was tugging at his beard, a sure sign that he had a good hand."

I can not believe any author could ever write that! Every Boy Scout and Girl Guide from the age of 12 knows that a Royal Flush is a 10, Jack, Queen, King and Ace of the same suit. 5 cards of the same suit topped by a Jack or a Queen is called a Straight Flush.

And there are more flubs like these that are common in many self-published works that tend to have had very little, if any, proofreading and editing.

Besides all of this there is no way that Betty could act the way she does and remain an RCMP officer let alone be promoted. But then as Don Easton has said the RCMP are famous for promoting officers who are incapable of performing in the field.

Then I found very little humour in this story except for the improbable, contrived and usually impossible antics of the animals which very soon became repetitious and boring. If Ms Hesse wants to write humorous cozies set on a Vancouver Gulf island I suggest she should read William Deverell's "Arthur Beachamp" series set on Garibaldi Island. I doubt that I'll read any more of this series and I sure won't pay anything at all fo

Bittersweet (Bitter Root Mysteries #4) by C.J. Carmichael

Date Read: 20200106

My rating: 4 star

I really enjoyed this 4th entry in the "Bitter Root" trilogy and I'd be very happy if Ms Carmichael would pull a Douglas Adams "Hitchhikers --- " trilogy thing and continue with at least book 5 or maybe try to beat the record number for a trilogy. At first I thought I liked her "Twisted Cedars" books the most but I've grown to like Zak and Nadine and all the regular inhabitants of Lost Trail so much that I think I like this series even more. Besides all the great characters and descriptions of the setting and weather there is the usual mystery with Zak and Nadine's thorough investigation and the usual solid and satisfactory ending both for the main plot as well as for the major sub plots. It appeared kind of easy to identify the perp but there were so many doubts and gaps in the evidence

that it was pretty easy to stay involved with the investigation leading to the reveal and pretty tense take down scene. Now I'm willing to make a little bet that there aren't too many readers that hadn't figured out Nadine's big secret long before she found the right time to tell Zak. In many ways Nadine is my favourite character in this series and I was really impressed with the way she handled the Amber and Pete situation. Overall a very good read and I'd sure like another adventure with these fine people.

Mind Your Manors (Flamingo Realty Mystery #1) by CeeCee James

Date Read: 20200104

My rating: 3 stars

This is the first book by this author that I have read and I will say that I'm very sure it won't be the last one that I read. While this book qualifies as a cozy mystery it really is a bit grittier than most cozies although the Valentine sisters sure are a weird and wacky pair. Lots of fairly strong characters and I really liked Stella O'Neil. One twist came as a bit of a surprise to me but I thought the identity of the murderer was fairly evident quite early but the motive and method took some investigation and of course led to a scary car chase and lots of other weird and creepy actions. Not a whole lot of humour but there sure is a bit of welcome subtle funnies to go along with the pink Flamingos! I think Stella should have braced herself a bit sooner to meet Grandpa but it's quite obvious a lead into the next in the series. I already have several more of Ms James books in a few of her series in my library and I'll surely be looking forward to reading more of this series and trying some of her other series.

She Felt No Pain: A Holly Martin Mystery (Holly Martin #2) by Lou Allin

Date Read: 20200102

My rating: 3 star

It is my policy not to write reviews for books whose authors have passed on but Lou Allin left us much too soon and I just must say I liked this entry in another good series and I intend to read any of her books that I haven't read and that I can get a hold of

