

Wine and Punishment (Literary Pub Mystery #1) by Sarah Fox

Date Read: 20200628

My rating: 3 stars

This is a good read in a pretty good Cozy mystery series by an author who I am not afraid to go to when I need a bit lighter comedown after finishing one or more serious crime novels. Although this has all of the required elements of a cozy it is a bit grittier than most cozies and has a bit of a more serious mystery plot. Lots of characters with motives for the murder and the rest of the mayhem and thus lots of suspects and red herrings and, surprisingly, many of the suspects have the same motive. Now of course the MC, Sadie Coleman, manages to solve the whole mystery but not by her investigation but by luck and coincidence and the security prudence of her neighbour Grayson Blake. Oh yeah there's quite the romantic interest between them – pretty obvious by Grayson and quite reluctant but definitely there by Sadie. Now I never imagined the twist leading to the culprit and it wasn't really telegraphed through out the story but it wasn't hidden either and it sure was logical. Yeah and the same motive! Sadie has some great friends like Mel and Damien and Aunt Gilda and Shontelle and Wimsey. The only thing really missing that would make these books great cozies would be some humour which I expect would be provided by Wimsey but it isn't. The only real smile I had was in the ending and the catapult scene. Overall an enjoyable read by a goto author and I'll read more of her books.

Death Plays With Fire: (A Margaret Spencer Mystery) by Gwendolyn Southin

Date Read: 20200624

My rating: 3 stars

Another good instalment in a fine series with Henny, Nat, Maggie and her family all in their usual great form and Harry as obnoxious and annoying as usual. There is very interesting bunch of new characters, both good and bad and likeable or not, with Fiona Phelps something else and Gordon a real wimp but "Livingstone Stanley Gibbs" is sure a standout but although Henny is the usual star of these stories in this one top billing has to go to Oscar. Maggie can sure get herself into some awful predicaments but, as usual, she pulls a McGyver and gets everybody out safely. I had the big boss identified long before the reveal but his two thugs were a pretty dumb pair and I thought the whole Hermann part of the plot was quite apparent and predictable. Lots of the usual great descriptions of the settings, weather, apparel and food (aside from Gordon and the bear's!) and a satisfactory ending made this an enjoyable read even

with a bit less of the humour from the previous books in the series. This should be a 4 star read except for there is one error which I just can not accept. I don't know if this just a typo or a spelling error and I sure hope so because I would hate to think that Ms Southin being a Canadian author would actually deliberately have written this quote - "Standfield's underwear". C'mon I wear "Stanfield's" underwear and PJs so this has to be worth a 1 star reduction. I read somewhere that this was the final book in this series but there sure were a lot of hints in the ending that some more of these stories might happen and I sure hope so because I'd love another wild adventure with Maggie, Nat and the Gang.

Burn Country (A March and Walker Crime Novel #2) by Michael J. McCann

Date Read: 20200626

My rating: 3 stars

This book is a very good read that I really liked and would be a solid 4 star read except that the Kindle edition I read has no table of contents just a "Start" that takes you to the cover and makes it very difficult for someone like me who likes to read on various devices such as my iPad, Kindle reader or Kindle app on my iMac for instance which all give different %ages of reading thus making for a lot of annoying scrolling Therefore I have deducted 1 star. Now for all the good stuff I enjoyed! This book really has 3 separate mystery investigation going on simultaneously that appear to be connected but really are only by a couple of coincidental copy cat events and the OPP team led by Ellie March manages to wrap them all up with solid endings although I wasn't, personally. too happy with the way one ended. The main plot with the death of Senator Lane was solved through good sound police procedurals aided immensely by Kevin Walker's fine observational skill and a slightly convenient coincidence. Then perhaps that's the realistic way many such crimes are solved. I still think Kevin Walker is the real star of this series and has so many fine and deep characteristics, aptitudes and abilities and is a person that I would definitely like as a friend. I still find Ellie March a bit of an enigma because I've liked her much more in "Burn Country" and "Sorrow Lake" than I did in the 3rd book "Persistent Guilt" which, unfortunately, I read first because of it's 2020 Arthur Ellis nomination. Lot's of well developed secondary characters and Rosa Battaglia is sure a real nasty piece of work. All of Mr McCann's books are well written and edited with few, if any, typos, but with great descriptions, if perhaps a bit too detailed, of the weather, settings, clothing food and drink and incorporate a pretty accurate picture of the various law enforcement agencies, jurisdictions, protocols and procedures in Ontario including all the in house politics. I did have Janie's "problem" figured out before she ever told Kevin and I guessed Kevin's reaction and for once I was right! There is one thing in this story that I really liked and I think is quite unique in contemporary crime fiction and that is when Mr McCann has Ellie talk to the Prime Minister of Canada in person and informally. This type

of interaction between real and fictional characters happens quite often in historical mysteries but I think this is the first time I have read it in a contemporary crime novel and it was very well done and appropriate to the investigation. Overall a fine and enjoyable read and I hope Mr McCann has some more instalments on the way.

Death Plays With Fire: (A Margaret Spencer Mystery) by Gwendolyn Southin

Date Read: 20200624

My rating: 3 stars

Another good instalment in a fine series with Henny, Nat, Maggie and her family all in their usual great form and Harry as obnoxious and annoying as usual. There is very interesting bunch of new characters, both good and bad and likeable or not, with Fiona Phelps something else and Gordon a real wimp but "Livingstone Stanley Gibbs" is sure a standout but although Henny is the usual star of these stories in this one top billing has to go to Oscar. Maggie can sure get herself into some awful predicaments but, as usual, she pulls a McGyver and gets everybody out safely. I had the big boss identified long before the reveal but his two thugs were a pretty dumb pair and I thought the whole Hermann part of the plot was quite apparent and predictable. Lots of the usual great descriptions of the settings, weather, apparel and food (aside from Gordon and the bear's!) and a satisfactory ending made this an enjoyable read even with a bit less of the humour from the previous books in the series. This should be a 4 star read except for there is one error which I just can not accept. I don't know if this just a typo or a spelling error and I sure hope so because I would hate to think that Ms Southin being a Canadian author would actually deliberately have written this quote - "Standfield's underwear". C'mon I wear "Stanfield's" underwear and PJs so this has to be worth a 1 star reduction. I read somewhere that this was the final book in this series but there sure were a lot of hints tn the ending that some more of these stories might happen and I sure hope so because I'd love another wild adventure with Maggie, Nat and the Gang.

Bear Runners by David G. Ferguson

Date Read: 20200622

My rating: 4 stars

This book, by a then new to me Canadian author, was actually the one recommended to me by a friend on Goodreads but I decided to read Mr

Ferguson's debut book "Toxic Waters" first (see my review) and I liked it so much I have continued reading his works with this one. This book is every bit of a great read as the first one, if not even better, but as I think any one reading my reviews knows I am very stingy with 5 star ratings and I've had to rely on some personal preferences to find an excuse to only rate it a 4. (Maybe a 4.5 rounded down?) Fabulous descriptions of the settings, weather, road? conditions etc, lot's of action and maybe a bit far out rescues and a rock solid ending made for quite a few very late bedtimes. Rob McNabb and Sam Williams are wonderful and superbly likeable characters with enough backstory warts to be believable and Detective Inspector April Jones, "Mother", is a standout. The poacher, Eagle Feather/Gerald Morgan, is one of most sadistic and horrendous villains I ever met in a novel. I like the way the various agencies work together as a team rather than all the territorial bickering that is common in a lot of books and I think Mr Ferguson has done a fine job of integrating the lack of necessary resources and funding in so many of our governmental agencies that is actually becoming so apparent today under our present pandemic situation. One thing I am not usually too keen on in a novel is the POV alternating back and forth between the good guys and the bad guys but in this case it was so well written and I think it was probably the best way to tell this story. Another of my personal preferences has to do with romance in a mystery story where I don't mind a bit but I don't like the romantic stuff to bury the mystery plot and I read somewhere that Mr Ferguson explained that his 4th novel "White Gold" is the exact same story as this book with the romantic stuff toned down so I debated a long time as to which one to read and finally chose Bear Runners. I am very glad that I did because I think Rob and Sam's romance is so well integrated into the mystery plot and is so important to the investigation that I would definitely recommend everyone should read Bear Runners. I think the only excuse for not rating this book 5 stars that I can dream up is there may have been a couple of too convenient coincidences leading to and aiding in the takedown and wrap up scenario. Some readers may not have liked all the technical detail that Mr Ferguson has written in the story but, perhaps from personal memories, I found it very interesting and I had an erroneous memory corrected by one fact and I really thought the superbly researched info added some realism to the story. I have personally flown in a number of different Cessna 180s on wheels, floats and skis in various places in Ontario and even driven one when up in the air but, of course, no take off or landing. Now I have seen and heard an Otter DHC 3 fly past and actually flown in one both on floats and skis. In my old memory error I always believed the Otter had a Rolls Royce engine but I have now learned it was actually a Pratt and Whitney! Anyway when we cottaged on the Upper French River and the Otter flew out of Trout Lake you could hear it coming from 30 miles away and everybody at the lodges and cottages called it "Old Snarley". Overall a great read and I'll definitely read "Up Halfway Creek" and I hope Mr Ferguson has some more to follow.

A Moment on the Lips (Dix Dodd Mystery #3.5) by N.L. Wilson

Date Read: 20200623

My rating 1 Stars

I read this novella as a fill in after finishing a serious crime novel too soon before bed time and because I had found the previous books in this serious pretty decent mysteries with lots of humour. However this book has none of the humour of the earlier books and not really much of a mystery plot or investigation. It was short enough to work as time filler and it was not bad enough for me to abort but I won't read any more in this series unless they're freebies or loaners.

Matchpoint (Matchmaker Mystery #2) by Elise Sax

Date Read: 20200620

My rating: 3 stars

I like to read a cozy type of mystery as an unwind after reading a serious, tense, gritty, dark or violent crime novel and I like it even more if it includes a fair amount of humour and so far I think the books by Elise Sax that I have read fit the bill really well. I sure got my full quota of laughs from this story although I don't think it was quite as humorous as the first book in this series because Grandma Zelda didn't have as big a role and didn't get into all the ridiculous situations and I have to admit that much of the humour is a bit far fetched and over-the-top but it's still funny. Again this book has a pretty solid and somewhat grittier mystery than in most cozies buried away in all the laughs. I did have the perp identified long before Gladie did but I didn't figure out the how and the alibi's etc until the big final scene.

There is a major proofreading problem in Chapter 20 at the very end of the book that I can not accept and for which I will always deduct at least 1 star and that is a name mix up.

Here's a partial quote and I am still at a complete loss over which of the names is correct because Gladie says she saw and is talking to Holden but the last part with the Pinkie and disco Scarlett is definitely Spencer talking.

My plans were derailed, however, when I drove into my driveway and saw Holden's truck parked next door. I ran into the house, up the stairs to the attic, and spied on him through the window

xxxxxx

xxxxxx

"Crazy week, huh?" I said.

"I think you make people go crazy, Pinkie. Lots of people, not just me."

"You make a lot of people go crazy, too, Spencer."

"So, to what do I owe this honor?" he asked.

I took a deep breath, but no words came out. Our eyes locked, and my body grew warm.

"I just came over to see what you think," I said.

"Oh, yeah? This is a first."

"So, what do you think?"

Spencer studied me a moment and then leaned in close to me. "My dear disco Scarlett," he said, caressing my cheek. "I think you should be kissed and often and by a man who knows how."

Anyway a good fun read and I'll go back to Ms Sax's books when I need some more laughs.

The Assistant's Secret by Emerald O'Brien

Date Read: 20200618

My rating: n stars

Emerald O'Brien is one of my favourite authors and I have read and enjoyed her "Avery Hart" trilogy and her 4 book "Knox and Sheppard" trilogy which ended with hints of a 5th book and the fabulous standalone "What She Found" but I didn't really understand the concept of this new series until I read this book. Now I see how this ties in with "The Nanny's Secret" by Kiersten Modglin and I have decided neither to write a complete review for this book nor to rate it until I have read "The Nanny's Secret". However here is a quote from Chapter 10 that I think needs some editing -

"She just needs to know what she's getting herself into if she stays." I can feel her eyes on my but I can't stop staring at this guy. The dark circles under his eyes and his greasy hair beneath the visor hat he wears higher on his forehead. "She's a good person. She needs to get out before—"

I don't know whether 'my but' should read 'my butt' or just 'me' but it sure isn't right the way it is.

And then we have the controversial 'Bring/Take usage appearing again in the following quote -

"Tell me right now."

"The last time your sister O.D.'d, he's the one who brought her to the hospital."

Which I think would not only be more correct but would also read a lot smoother if 'brought' read 'took' instead.

Besides that I didn't like any of the characters in this story with the possible exception of Tackman and Carver. The whole Locke family are horrendous people and Jo Oliver is a whiny, selfish wimp with no ethics or morals. My review will be continued after I have read The Nanny's Secret.

Dessert, Diamonds and Deadly Secrets (Piece of Cake Mysteries #1) by A.R. Winters

Date Read: 20200616

My rating: 2 stars

I have read a book in another series by A.R. Winters which I actually found to be quite humourous so when I saw this 1st in a new series advertised as a humourous mystery I thought I'd try it as a lighten up read after finishing a couple of rather dark, gritty and a bit depressing novels. However I found no humour anywhere in this book and I can honestly say I never cracked a smile at any time reading it let alone a giggle or a laugh. It's an OK but not a standout mystery with an OK ending with a bit of a twist leading to the perp who if any kind of a proper investigation had been done would have been identified much sooner and there would have been no story. Also the motive was pretty weak and just sort of rung in at the end without many previous clues. It gets 2 stars 'cause I didn't have to force myself to finish it and it is fairly well edited and proofread. I did find the line in the following quote to be rather strange and maybe would read better if the extra word "we" was removed -
In Chapter 11

"Beth and I we were both high on life, endorphins, and too much"

Anyway I doubt that I'll read any more in this series but I may read more by this author if I can get freebies or loaners.

Sorrow Lake (A March and Walker Crime Novel #1) by Michael J. McCann

Date Read: 20200615

My rating: 3 stars

I found this story to be a good solid and well written police procedural with well described settings and weather in a locale with which I am fairly familiar and populated by a caste of adequately developed and very realistic and believable characters whether or not they are likeable or good or bad guys. Lots of action, tense situations, the usual amount of in unit jealousies, prejudices and politics and a solid and satisfactory ending with a bit of a surprise in some of the characters. Now I have a slight problem with how to rate this book because I broke one of my cardinal rules and started this series out of order by reading book 3 "Persistent Guilt" first as part of my 2020 Arthur Ellis reading project. Once again I have just backed up my contention that most mystery series are definitely better when read in order and I am sure that applies with this series. Character wise I think Kevin Walker is the best character in these books and surprisingly I quite liked Elle March in book 1 "Sorrow Lake" much more than I

did in book 3 "Persistent Guilt" where I feel she had regressed a whole lot. I think I'll have to reserve my judgement on these books until I have read book 2 "Burn Country" which I already have acquired and will read soon and when I review it I'll update my reviews of this series so far.

Vendetta: A Diamond & Doran Mystery by Tracy Tonkinson

Date Read: 20200613

My rating: 3 stars

Another fine read in this good historical mystery series set in Chicago in the 1880s after the Haymarket riot and while the books are centred around police investigations of various crimes they are really much more of character driven family stories and I think that is particularly true of this book. Ms Tonkinson has the superb ability of being able to flawlessly integrate real historical characters, such as "Dr. William Jaggard" doing in the story exactly what he is known to have been doing in 1881, along with all her fictional characters like the Doran family, Arthur Diamond, the Callaghans, the Blithe family and Captain O'Rourke and have them engage in realistic conversations appropriate for that time and this story. With this ability Ms Tonkinson joins a very small and select group of historical mystery authors two of which which immediately come to mind being Stephen Legault in "The Third Riel Conspiracy" where Durrant Wallace questioned Louis Real in prison after The Battle of Batoche and John Farrow in the superb "River City" where. among other conversations, Emile Cinq-Mars talks to Pierre Elliot Trudeau in the PMO's office in Ottawa. Ms Tonkinson has one other habit which I find slightly confusing and a small bit annoying of naming characters such as "Dr. Niels Jensen" (he's a contemporary Orthodontist) here or "Liam Corcoran" (he's a contemporary Canadian musician) in "Madman" after real people although her characters in the books are definitely not based on the real ones. This book has takes on a great and well researched look at living and working conditions in Chicago and Toronto in the 1880s and I really got a big kick out of the train travels from Chicago to Toronto and Toronto to Newcastle and the buggy travels to Orono (where I raced Harness Horses every Friday night for a good many years!). This story has an adequate amount of action, both in Chicago and Toronto, a good look at the drug culture of the period and the racist bias against the Orientals. Billy Doran seems quite OK with the Irish mob and the Italian mob, both good Catholic organisations, but not OK with the Chinese tong. The story has a sad and somewhat depressing but entirely realistic ending for the Doran family. I know now that I should have read this book before reading the Diamond and Doran Christmas novella because I would have had a lot better understanding of that story had I read this one first. This book should rate more than the 3 stars I have awarded but I have a couple of problems with it. This is a minor problem and didn't cause me to deduct and stars or really distract me from my reading enjoyment but in Chapter One while Bridie is talking to Mrs Rutledge we have this quote -

“was standing, her thin frame quivering with distain”

I can not find the word “distain” in any dictionary or Thesaurus I can find or access. The word should be “disdain”. This may only be a spelling error that got by the spell checker except I remember seeing it repeated several times in some other book I have read recently and I thought I mentioned it in a review but unfortunately my senior’s mind can’t remember the title where I read it!

Now the next problem is more serious and did cause me to deduct a star and that is the book has no Table of Contents just a link saying “Start” that takes you to the cover. This is a serious problem for a reader like me who tends to read on multiple devices such as my iPad, Kobo eReader, calibre eBook Reader, Kindle Reader etc. which ever I happen to be using at the time and all have different page numbers and cause a lot of scrolling. I can’t think of an excuse for the lack of an interactive TOC because while there is none in “Madman” this book or the Christmas novella there is a perfect TOC in book 2 “Poison”.

Anyway this is a good, if a bit depressing, entry in the series and I’ll sure read the next one.

A Devious Dame (A Max Dexter Mystery Book 4) by Chris Laing

Date Read: 20200508

My rating: 3 stars

Another fine and fun read in this good historical mystery series set in Hamilton On in the late 1940s just post WW II but I don’t think it was quite as good as most of the previous books in the series. This is much more of a very well written character driven story with the mystery, eventual murder and their investigations taking a back seat to the personal lives of the characters although they are very definitely and tightly linked. The plot of this book includes an extremely well integrated look at the racism, sexism, drug addiction and the discrimination against handicapped people that was common in society in the almost 75 years ago that these stories are set and, unfortunately, is still very current today. How about George Floyd, eh? This story is more about the personal lives, problems and the bravery in facing them of Bob, Danny and Vincent and the upper and lower class discrimination of things like the Hamilton Club and political and police corruption and involvement with the local Mob than about Peterson’s apparent murder. However I did think that the ending of this story was a bit vague with enough loose ends that seem to suggest at least one more book in the series and I really hope Mr Laing has another adventure planned for Max and Izzy and Phyl.

Now with all that this book still has all the great elements of historical facts and locations and 1947 nostalgia that has made this series such a delightful read and I’m going to quote a couple of examples that really stood out for me -

"I hit the button on the phone for the second line – this new feature was a recent addition to the office; one that Isabel said we couldn't do without. What the hell's next, I wondered – maybe a real-life version of Dick Tracy's two-way wrist radio? I shook my head, banishing that impossible thought."

"Years ago, my father bought that property on a hunch that it might be valuable someday. Think he might be right, Max?"

Beyond the billboard, there was a huge weedy field, Lake Ontario off in the distance, and we were still a few miles from Burlington. "It's in the middle of nowhere so I don't think anyone will ever build this far out of town."

Yeah, Right On!!!!

Blood Tail: A Lieutenant Beaudry Novel by Michael Kent

Date Read: 20200606

My rating: 3 stars

I'm rating this book the unacceptable 2.5 stars for a reason I'll talk about later and rounding it up to 3 because I really enjoyed reading this story. I read this because I needed a short fill in book while I awaited a pre-ordered novel and I had read and enjoyed "Bank Shot" by Mr Kent although it has some of the same problems as this book. (see my review of Bank Shot). Beaudry is sure a detective of a different colour but with the proverbial big heart but he sure changes girl friends as fast as I change my underwear! Captain Jean O'Neil, Beaudry's boss is a great character with lots of patience and common sense and Dobson is a great addition to the team and obviously should be a detective. Besides the pretty good plot, realistic motives, lots of action and bodies what I really like about these books is all the humour. I had many smiles, chuckles, giggles and a few LOLs from this story. Now to the reasons why I have downrated this good story. First the murder investigation doesn't really have a solid ending and I was very surprised that the book just stopped suddenly with all sorts of loose ends obviously designed to entice the reader to buy the next book in the series. Actually I would have no big problem with the open ending if the author made it clear from the beginning of the first book that this was a continuing story and must be read in order and included the number of the book in the series per GoodReads conventions but that is not the case. Next problem, and yes this may be a GoodReads problem and perhaps it's not fair to downrate a book because of it but it is at least partly the author's fault because the books titles and the author's name change quite randomly and unless GR has straightened this out it is impossible to tell anyone what to search for on GR to find this book that I have read and reviewed. If you search for "Michael Kent" for instance you won't find it! This isn't the only author on GR with this problem so try "Ron Crouch" for instance. Now a couple of little personal nit picky things specific to this book that I probably wouldn't see as a reason to down rate it but that annoy me somewhat. Here's a quote from when Beaudry inherits the cat -

“This thing is a probably a thoroughbred Maine coon” This is an error of fact because there is only one animal species on Earth that is called a “thoroughbred” and that is the “Thoroughbred Horse” . All other animals that aren’t crosses or 57 varieties are called “Purebreds”! Now I don’t know if the next quote is an error or if it is actually true -

“highway also led to Ottawa, and at each road sign announcing miles to-” I would have thought the signs would have read in “metres” not “miles” in Quebec as they do in Ontario. Anyway an enjoyable read and please, Mr Kent and GR, get the rest of the series published in digital editions that I can read and get the series order identified.

Postmark Berlin by Anne Emery

Date Read: 20200604

My rating: 3 stars

Ok I’m rating this as a 3 star read because mechanically and technically it is a well written, proofread and edited book. However personally I didn’t really enjoy the read and I don’t think it was as good a read as several of the earlier books in this series. I acknowledge that Ms Emery did a massive amount of research into historical events in both East Germany and Canada and wove a lot of history into the narrative and the 3 separate investigations by Piet, Brennan and Monty was a somewhat different way to tell the story but I think it’s possible that all of that contributed to what I didn’t like about this book. I thought this was a rather slow reading story with quite a lot of telling not showing, many long information dumps, too much dark and depressing angst and guilt by many of the characters, some mildly interesting tourist travelogues, very little, if any, action, some side-stories which didn’t do anything to advance the main plot and none of the humour that made the first books in the series such great reads. I don’t think I will be very likely to read any more books in this series, if there are any, unless I can get them as freebies or loaners and the synopsis really appeals to me.

Die Noon (Goodnight Mysteries #1) by Elise Sax

Date Read: 20200601

My rating: 3 stars

When I stop laughing I’ll try to write a few thoughts on what I thought about this book. Finally I have found an author whose books actually live up to the hype in the synopsis and blurbs and in most of the reviews and that gave me lots of LOLs and ROFLs and, oh yeah, somewhere in this non-stop giggle fest there actually is a mystery and some sort of an investigation and a pretty good ending. Lot’s of wacky characters, a somewhat improbable setting, a completely different love triangle and a bit of a paranormal element all add to the great

entertainment value of this book. Sure a lot of the humour is a bit juvenile and the whole thing is a bit over-the-top, far-fetched and a way out but you have to admit it sure is good entertainment and that and escapism is why we read these books anyway. I mean who couldn't like Vegans and Andromedans and giraffes and 10 ton UFOs and rattlesnakes? I have most definitely found an author whose books I'll surely jump into when I need an unwind book with lots of laughs after reading some dark, gritty, violent and serious crime novel. Only 3 stars this time 'cause I want to see if it's even possible that the next in the serious could be just as good if not better.

For Whom the Bread Rolls (Pancake House Mystery #2) by Sarah Fox

Date Read: 20200530

My rating: 3 stars

Ok this is another light cozy mystery read that I liked as an unwind after reading a couple of really violent and gritty serious mystery novels. This series has a nice and well described setting and a bunch of very likeable returning characters and lots of good food. A good main blackmail and murder plot that appeared fairly straight forward until a couple of really great twists which, although they are quite logical, I never saw coming and an almost equal subplot involving illegal junk dumping that quite cleverly was tied into the main plot. Everything gets resolved very satisfactorily with a solid ending through Marley and her friends investigations. Ivan sure is a surprising character. Nice to see Marley and Brett overcoming their backstory reservations and having their romance progress quite nicely. One thing that is very nice to see in this book is how much love and care Marley and Brett give to their animal companions contrary to what is quite the normal case in many other cozy mysteries. The only thing missing that would make this a top notch cozy read for me would be some humour. Anyway I'll sure read the next in this series.

Toxic Waters by David G. Ferguson

Date Read: 20200528

My rating: 4 stars

This new to me Canadian author was recommended to me by a friend on Goodreads and because the themes and settings of his stories sounded like they really fit the type of crime novels I like it didn't take a lot of pressure to get me to try the first of this series. And am I ever glad that I did and you can be sure that I will definitely read the rest of Mr Ferguson's books. I have rated this book as 4 stars which I very seldom do for the first book by an author as I like to leave room for growth in subsequent books but this one is so good I had little choice. This book

has just about everything you'd want to find in a good action adventure story like superb descriptions of the settings (I'm still cold, wet, hungry and scared 3 days after finishing reading it!) a quite plausible plot, lots of action, suspense and violence, some interesting legal and courtroom scenes, a very solid and satisfactory ending, some references to very serious and current environmental problems are very well integrated in the plot without being preachy but I think the best thing about this book are all the very well developed characters including the good and likeable ones like Rick, Erin and Jim and the bad and unlikeable ones like Reiger, Gant and his goons but especially the whole crew of the tugboat with Mike Small and Ray Ethier being standouts with Captain Lorne Henry of the "Blue Mountain" a fine character too. I particularly liked the way the slow progression of Erin and Rick's romance and them overcoming their past hangups that enhanced the plot but didn't overwhelm it. The resumption of Rick's vacation has shades of Travis McGee!

The book is quite well edited and proofread with only a couple of cases of misplaced words like in this quote - "*the part about going full throttle. I can't afford car my payments, so you'll have to take an IOU if the engine*" where "car my" should obviously read "my car" .

I did find it a bit of a strange coincidence that I read this book back to back with "Nobody Drowned by Peter Kingsmill" which is also a mainly nautical action adventure story with a fabulous ship "The Beaver" like Rick Webb's "Water Baby". Oh and BTW I am acquainted with Rick Webb – he is a former trainer of Standardbred harness race horses in Ontario!

Nobody Drowned by Peter Kingsmill

Date Read: 20200526

My rating: 3 stars

Although I liked this book I don't think it was quite as good a read as book 1 in this series. This is a very good action adventure story with a great setting and some fine and likeable characters plus quite a large collection of some very unlikeable bad guys that takes some pretty broadsided slaps at corporate and governmental greed and corruption both in Canada and the US. Of course it requires a high level of suspension of disbelief to really enjoy the entertainment and escapism that we look for in reading these type of stories. Frank Anderson is still a super mixture of Reacher, Spenser, McGyver and Travis McGee but I didn't find him as close to Superman as in the first book and "The Beaver", while still quite a potent ship, doesn't quite get to perform as powerfully as it did in the first book. I found quite a bit more character interactions and small town life than in book 1 and everybody seems to have a drink in one hand and a cigarette in the other 24/7 except when they're eating some delectable foods. The writing is quite readable but it sure isn't classic literature! I do think there were a few too many bodies and fires and although there is a pretty solid ending to the current local mystery there are too many loose ends to the political and international mysteries for my liking. I am not a huge fan of a book ending as this one does

with this quote -

"She took his hand and looked into his eyes for a long moment: "Is it over, Frank?" He leaned forward and kissed her gently on the tip of her nose before turning away to stare out the window for a few moments: "No, it's not over. Let's hope the dying has stopped for awhile, but in reality, we have only just begun, and tomorrow isn't even here yet."

Of course it does what it is designed to do and that is to encourage you to buy the next book in the series.

I thought the use of the Time and Date for chapter headings was kind of unique but I would have like a detailed Table of Contents instead of just a "08:35 JULY 30".

Editing and Proofreading were pretty good except for this name mix up in Chapter 10:00 AUGUST 3 which caused me to deduct 1 star -

"At 10:02, Jim Russell tapped on his front door.

"Hi Jim, come on in. Coffee's just about ready, so let's sit here at the table."

"Man, that's a lovely big table. Where did you find it, or did you make it?"

Arnold chuckled: "No way did I make it. I'm not good at stuff that I can't build with a chainsaw and a big hammer! Actually, I bought it at an auction at Maple Falls just after I got here."

"Arnold" should read "Anderson"

Overall a good read and I'll read the next one!

Death as a Fine Art (Margaret Spencer #5) by Gwendolyn Southin

Date Read: 20200524

My rating: 3 stars

I have enjoyed all the books in this fine series and, of course, some more than others and this one is just as good a read as the previous ones. These tend to be a bit grittier reads than cozy mysteries and are populated with well described recurring characters headed by Nat and Maggie and starring Henny who I think almost steals the show every time she gets involved. I rate Henny and her cookies as one of the all time great sidekicks in Canadian crime fiction ranking right up there with R.E. Donald's "Sorry", R.J. McMillen's "Walker", Howard Shrier's "Dante", Mary Jane Maffini's "Alvin" and Ted Wood's "Sam" to name a few. Maggie has become a pretty good PI but she can sure still get herself into some pretty awkward and dangerous situations. Harry is still his obnoxious self. Of the new characters in this story I think Jenny is a standout. I did think the art plot was somewhat obvious and I pretty well had the perp figured out before the reveal but the ending was still very satisfactory. This book is, as usual, quite well written, edited and proofread with no huge problems jumping out at me and is very smooth, easy and fun reading. Here's a quote that really got my attention -

“Sergeant Cadbury, a tall, dark man in his early forties,”

I don't know if this name was intentionally chosen but while it is borderline not politically correct I found it to be quite humorous.

I have bought and definitely will read book 6 “Death Plays With Fire” which the author has indicated will, unfortunately, be the final book in this good series.

Exit Strategy (Katerina Carter Fraud Thriller #1) by Colleen Cross

Date Read: 20200522

My rating: 3 stars

I have no idea why I have waited so long to read this book as I have had it, the next in this series and some others by Colleen Cross in my library for quite a while but I sure won't wait too long to read another by Ms Cross. This is a quite gritty crime novel with lots of quite violent action and some great characters particularly Kat and Jenny. Kat can sure get herself in some pretty bad situations and need some ingenuity and plenty of luck to get out! Lots of twists that kept me guessing the perps and a pretty satisfactory ending and like a lot of other readers I never thought that accounting could be such a dangerous profession. Although I have come across, in some other stories, some of the mechanics of moving money around in various tax havens it was quite interesting, especially the timing, but I did think it may have been dragged out a bit too long and with a bit too much detail so it became a bit repetitious. This book, like many eBooks, could do with a thorough editing and proofreading because it is plagued with many errors such as in the few examples I am quoting here -

“Right over there,” Kat said as she pointed towards at the vegetable garden.

Had he had framed Bryant? If he had, there was no telling

Chapter 35

company, makes huge profits on one stock, and you don't anything about it?”
Jace walked over

“See this?” Kat drew pointed at a line halfway down “

I don't recognize the publisher “ Books on the Green” but if it is a professional publishing house I am surprised that so many errors like these were not caught before publishing.

I will definitely read more books by Colleen Cross.

The Girl Who Crossed The Line (Red Heeled Rebels #0.5) by Tikiri Herath

Date Read: 20200520

My rating 1 Stars

I'm always looking for new or new-to-me Canadian authors of Crime fiction and I was happy to receive free copies of this preview and the first book in the series to try. However after reading this I just don't think this series is going to be the type of stories I like to read so I don't think I'll be spending anymore of my precious reading time on them. I'm sure many readers will like them but unfortunately I'm not one of them.

Sunrise by Ron Crouch

Date Read: 20200519

My rating: 3 stars

I really liked this book which is the 2nd one by Ron Crouch that I have read and I will definitely read more of his books. This is a well written and edited book with very few if any of the proofreading errors common to many eBooks with just a couple of little personal nitpicks that I'll talk about later that didn't really detract from my reading enjoyment. Well described settings and adequately developed characters whether likeable or not, a plausible plot, lots of action and a satisfactory ending made this an enjoyable read for me. I will say that I have rated this as the unacceptable 3.5 stars and because of these personal little things have rounded it down to 3 rather than up to 4. First let's talk about "*Ontario Police Department*". I can't quite understand why a Canadian author writing a book set in Ontario has to invent a name for the provincial police. The name of the service is "The Ontario Provincial Police" (the "OPP"). Authors never seem to have a problem with the "RCMP" and authors writing books set in Quebec never seem to have a problem with "Surete du Quebec" but in Ontario we have Mr Crouch using the "OPD" and other authors such as Inger Ash Wolfe using the "OPS" (Ontario Police Service"). Just a personal dislike that detracted me somewhat from the story. Second point, and this is surely a bit ambiguous, is the word "whiskey". In most of Canada and particularly Ontario it is common to spell this word as "whisky" unless referring to a US brand and in the context of it's use in this story I would guess that it refers to a Canadian brand.

Now I do have another annoying problem which has nothing to do with this book specifically and has not influenced my rating but is a problem with all of Mr Crouch's books on Goodreads and here are a couple of examples -

The Weatherman (Sam Stephens #1) by Ronald Ady Crouch

Sam Stephens 1: The Weatherman by Ron Crouch

Sunrise by Ron Crouch

Kapuskasing Sunrise by Ron Crouch

The titles and author's name of most of Mr Crouch's books seem to change with every edition shelved on Goodreads making it almost impossible to find a specific edition using Goodreads search function. Mr Crouch and a Goodreads Super Librarian should get together and clean this up or at least come up with a way to combine all the editions of the same book with different titles and author's names so any search can find them all.

Rolling Thunder ("Hammerhead Jed" Mysteries) by A.J. Devlin

Date Read: 20200517

My rating: 3 stars

Another super fun read with lots of raucous humour although some of it is quite locker room and perhaps even a bit juvenile but I really appreciated the ability to just let go and enjoy the LOLs and ROFLs during this trying time of the COVID-19 pandemic. I'm not sure if I think this story was as good as Mr Devlin's first book "Cobra Clutch" but it sure comes close. I do think, however, that to really get the most out of this one you should read "Cobra Clutch" first. It also helps if the reader has at least a bit of familiarity with some Canadian cultural references like Timmies and Timbits and various Sports teams and personalities and there are also lots of references to various movies etc. which all contribute to the story as well as the humour. Oh yeah and buried in all the fun is a pretty good murder mystery, a bunch of blackmail schemes, some new and highly entertaining characters, a good investigation by the Ounstead PIs, the takedown of a political/legal corruption scenario all wrapped up with a solid, spectacular and satisfactory ending and maybe Jed has even gotten his love life straightened out! I really liked the sub plot with Sykes and Napoleon and it's outcome. The only excuse I can think of for not awarding 4 stars is that as much as I like Declan and his sayings as a sidekick I think he and Hammerhead to an extent are a bit far out and over-the-top with single handedly wiping out all the thugs, armed or not, sent to eliminate them. With these guys who needs Superman? Anyway I'm ready for the next hilarious adventure with Jed and Declan and Stormy and it'll be hard to wait the requisite year again.

White Sand Blues (Ashley Grant #1) by Vicki Delany

Date Read: 20200515

My rating: 3 stars

I like these Rapid Reads novellas as quick fill in reads as in this case I needed an evening read while waiting for a Pre-Ordered novel to arrive the next day. It amazes me just how much description of settings, weather food and drink and how much character development a good author like Vicki Delany can actually pack into the short format along with a decent plot and some good investigation while conforming to the vocabulary restriction required for a Rapid Reads book. While I did have the perp correctly identified well before the reveal I quite enjoyed this story and except for a major proof reading error it should be worth more than the 3 stars I have awarded. I refuse to accept name mix ups in any book and I can not think of any excuse for them to get past an editor. Here is a quote from Chapter 4 while Ashley is having dinner at Club Louisa with Sally -

*"She put her wineglass down and looked at me. Her eyes were wet. "You're the only person I know here, Ashley. Other than her, of course."
I let out a long sigh. Now I remembered why Ashley and I hadn't been close in school. She was strong-willed and determined."*

Of course this should read *"Now I remembered why SALLY and"*

Anyway a good read and I have read others of these novellas by Ms Delany and I'll definitely read more of them when I need another short fill in read.

Tea, Tiramisu, and Tough Guys (Cape Bay Cafe Mystery #2) by Harper Lin

Date Read: 20200514

My rating: 3 stars

I enjoyed this good example of a cozy mystery by Ms Lin who is a Canadian author although I don't think it was quite as good as the first book in this series. Fran and Matt are very likeable characters and it's nice to see the romance proceeding slowly and realistically. This story includes most of the elements of a cozy with perhaps a bit grittier plot and more serious investigation and a satisfactory ending. I never saw the twist coming in the Jack character's story and I admit I had him pegged, erroneously, as the culprit! The only thing missing that I like in a cozy is a bit more humour but I'll still read more of Ms Lin's books when I need a lighter read after finishing a serious crime novel.

Avalanche (A Stone Mountain Mystery #3) by Kristina Stanley

Date Read: 20200511

My rating: 3 stars

While I liked reading this story quite a bit I don't think I enjoyed it as much as the

first two books in the series. This book has all of the good stuff found in the first books such as smooth easy reading, great descriptions of the settings, weather and the well developed characters both recurring and new and likeable or not. However it also has most of the flaws of the first books which caused me to only rate them as 3 star reads and it also introduces some new problems. I still haven't grown to like Ben too much because even as how nice a guy he appears I find him a bit weak and indecisive and just sort of a follower. I am also finding that I don't like Kalin as much as I did because even knowing her backstory I think she is a bit whiny, self-centred and far too impulsive. I thought the "mystery" of Jack's death was pretty obvious and although the stolen money plot was tied up pretty solidly there are too many other characters all with their own problems and schemes that just seem to be forgotten about with no wrap up of any kind and in particular Paul Turner's story. Here again we have two things I do not like in a mystery, one being any perp walking off into the sunset unpunished with a bag of money like Turner had been "borrowing" from Stone Mountain and the second one being the main culprit dying in some kind of an accident without being brought to justice even if the accident was, in this case, very spectacular. Definitely not a bad book and I will read another in the series but just not one of my favourite reads.

The Fear Hunter (Agatha Bright Mysteries #1) by Elise Sax

Date Read: 20200508

My rating: 3 stars

This was an OK read that I didn't have to force myself to finish but it wasn't exactly the kind of a story I was expecting. This book had a bit of humour but I didn't find it nearly as funny as the other books I've read by Ms Sax. An interesting premise and setting and a bunch of weird quirky characters and a perp and motive for the murders that I never suspected kept me interested enough to keep reading. Although I don't mind a bit of paranormal stuff in a mystery novel I am not really into witches, witchcraft, witchery and ghosts and I'm afraid there was just a bit too much of it here to suit me especially that last twist at the end – C'mon I know we have to suspend disbelief to enjoy reading these books but that was just plain too far from any reality for me. Even so I might possibly read another in this series if I can get a freebie or a loaner but I won't waste a lot of time looking for one.

Death as a Last Resort (A Margaret Spencer Mystery) by Gwendolyn Southin

Date Read: 20200507

My rating: 3 stars

I've enjoyed this series so far and I liked this book pretty well although, while it had quite a lot of humour, I didn't find quite as many laughs as in the earlier books. Lots of action and cold miserable weather and it sure makes for a different sort of investigation with no cell phones! This series has a great cast of recurring characters some like Nat and Maggie, of course, more likeable than others like Barbara and Harry who is still just as irritating and trying to be controlling as ever and it was nice seeing Midge kind of leaning toward Maggie. Nancy is something else again and it's not hard to see why she and Nat split up. And then there is, INMHO, the best character in these books – Henny! Henny ranks well up on the list of sidekicks in Canadian crime fiction including such as R.E. Donald's "Sorry", R.J. McMillen's "Walker", Howard Shrier's "Dante", Mary Jane Maffini's "Alvin" and Ted Wood's "Sam" to name a few. I'm not usually too fond of crime by committee but I thought the whole smuggling thing was pretty evident all along, I never saw the twist coming that led to the solid ending and I was absolutely floored by the other little twist at the end. A good read and I still have two more to read in this fun series.

Poison (The Diamond & Doran Mysteries Book 2) by Tracy Tonkinson

Date Read: 20200504

My rating: 4 stars

One of my favourite sub-genres of crime fiction is historical mysteries and this is one of my favourite series. This series, at least in the books I've read so far, is a bit unique in this genre because it is mainly only the settings, timeframe and some of the characters that are historically real and not many of the events in the stories although of course there has to be references to real events like the Haymarket rally for instance. Now the big mass murder story in this book does sound quite a bit like it was loosely based on a real life mass murder case that took place in Chicago, London, and Toronto Ontario in the late 1880s involving Herman Webster Mudgett aka H._H._Holmes (reference the Wikipedia article at URL - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/H._H._Holmes). Although these stories always have a good mystery and police investigation the best thing about them is the fine family characterization of all the MCs and particularly of Billy Doran and his daughters and their families, Niels Jensen, Jerry Callaghan and especially in this book Arthur Diamond. The family relationships, customs and everyday activities include a lot of humour and give a good look at life in Chicago in the late 1880s. Once again I am more convinced than ever that this series must be read in order and in particular you should read "Poison" before reading the Christmas novella "A Diamond and Doran Christmas". I read that one last year in my Xmas reading project and now I realize how much more I would have liked it and understood Arthur's actions if I had read "Poison" before it. I will definitely read the rest of this series in order. Now here is a quote from this book that really stood out for me -

“The clerk adjusted the glasses that had slipped to the end of his thin nose.
“Shaver, Rook and Dodge.”

(Almost as good as “Dewey, Cheatum and Howe”) !!!!

A Match Made for Murder (Lane Winslow #7) by Iona Wishaw

Date Read: 20200501

My rating: 3 stars

This is another fine read in one of my favourite series in the historical mystery sub-genre that to some degree I find myself enjoying more and more. I usually am not too happy with a book when the author takes the MCs away from their normal settings but I think Ms Wishaw did a quite clever and somewhat unique bit of writing by keeping Ames in BC on his own cases while Lane and Darling are off in Arizona on their “honeymoon”. All through the book I kept wondering how it could be possible that the two cases could be connected in any way but after plenty of twists, lots of action in both locations and some great detecting by Lane, Darling and Sergeant Martinez in Tucson and Ames and Constable Terrell in BC both cases have solid endings and the connection, while not strong, is realistic and believable. Constable Terrell is a great character and a fine addition to the Nelson Police and with Sergeant Martinez allows Ms Wishaw to weave some unfortunately still quite current social commentary on racism into the narrative. Now I have one blatant editing error that I can not accept in any book and that is in this quote from Chapter Twenty Eight

“Amy was leaning forward, looking at the options. As Tina started to turn up toward the church, Amy saw the steeple. “No. Damn! Go this way!” Tina pulled the wheel sharply to straighten the car and go where she was directed. She felt her heart freeze. This road was barely wide enough for one vehicle—rutted, winding, and icy, it climbed steadily uphill. Worse, she had no idea where it would take them. Perhaps to some isolated place where Tina could carry out whatever plan she had.”

This of course should read “ *where ‘AMY’ could carry out*” Personally I can find no excuse for this type of a name mix up.

The next minor problem I have is in this quote *"instead of the usual dust now cast up a fine rain of mud from the tyres of the vehicles ahead"*. This is 1947 in BC and Arizona and 7 books into this series and vehicles now have "Hoods and Trunks" rather than "Bonnets and Boots" and they bloody well should, by now, have "Tires" rather than "Tyres". This appears a few other times in this book as well. Overall a good read that I recommend but I still maintain this series must be read in order.

Sweets and a Stabbing (The Pink Cupcake Mysteries #1) by Harper Lin

Date Read: 20200427

My rating: 3 stars

I needed a short light read to fill one evening after I finished a serious mystery and I had the latest new release by a favourite author pre-ordered for delivery the next day and I'm glad to say this novella turned out to be just what I wanted. Ms Lin has turned out to be a much better writer than I first thought and has been able to pack quite a lot of pretty solid character development of some strong and likeable characters with Meg and Adam being realistic teenagers, a cute theme, an OK but fairly straightforward plot and a good ending into such a short book. Lila is a great sidekick for Amalia who is a strong and likeable character except I wish she'd just grow a pair and tell that overbearing, self-centred and conniving ex, John, to get lost and stop trying to control her life. I could probably rate this higher than a 3 star but when I read the first of a series and decide to read the next one I like to leave room to see how the characters, settings and plots etc. grow. This is a very well edited and proofread book and is one more example of that being possible in a self-published eBook. I do have a personal nit picky problem with the following quote from Chapter 14 - *"Go with your gut," Lila said, her face serious. "Is your gut telling you to bring me with you?"* This is the very controversial "Bring / Take" problem that is currently occurring along with others like the "Amount / Number" thing in much writing and in the above quote I, personally, think this should read *"Go with your gut," Lila said, her face serious. "Is your gut telling you to TAKE me with you?"* Not only do I think take is more grammatically correct I think the sentence reads smoother with take instead of bring. Anyhow a good read and I'll read more of this series when I need another light read.

Murder On Main St (The Milton Mysteries Book 3) by Ron Base

Date Read: 20200426

My rating: 3 star

While I liked this story and found it a quite enjoyable read with the usual likeable and also unlikeable returning characters plus some equally likeable and not so likeable new ones I don't think this was quite as good as book 2 "The Mill Pond". I really can't put a definite reason on why that is so because this book has a good mystery, lots of much more realistic and not so "Wonder Womanly" investigation by Jean, enough action and a fairly solid and satisfactory ending especially for Otis but it just didn't have the "WOW" factor for me that I had from book 2. Mr Base still seems to have his apparent dislike for politicians, developers and somewhat for some local police forces but I thought it was realistic and legitimate to introduce the local mobsters and the Hamilton gang boss in this story. I did find a couple of proofreading errors the first of which is a name mix up which I can not accept and will often cause me to downrate a book. The following quote is from Chapter 2

"Knowing how Jack liked to grandstand, it might not be any more complicated than he killed himself,"

Jean's uncle's name is "JOCK" Whitlock not "JACK"

Now in the following two quotes it's pretty easy to see the disparity and I'm not quite sure whether "sister" or "daughter" is correct but I don't think it could be both.

Chapter 13 -

"My name is Tamara Bal, Ms. Whitlock. I am the assistant to Acting Mayor Amar Bal."

"You have the same last name as the acting mayor," Jean noted.

"Yes, that is true. I am Mr. Bal's sister as well as his assistant."

Chapter 47 -

"Well, I admire your tenacity if nothing else, Peter. But tell me, why did you try to extort the mayor by giving his daughter ten thousand dollars?"

Anyway this was more than an OK read and I'll read the next in the series.

A Family Matter (A Max Dexter Mystery Book 3) by Chris Laing

Date Read: 20200424

My rating: 4 stars

Among of my favourite reading genres are historical mysteries, mysteries by Canadian authors especially if set in Canada and mysteries with humour and this series completely fills everyone of those criteria. This is the third book in this series that I have read and from a story POV it isn't necessary to read them in order but I highly recommend that you should to fully get to know the recurring characters like Max and Izzy and Frank for instance. The setting in Hamilton Ontario in the late 1940s is fabulous and although you don't have to be too familiar with Hamilton to like the story it sure adds to the enjoyment when you can recognize the places as they are today and imagine the way they were in 1947. Then add a pretty good murder mystery and investigation with a satisfactory ending plus a bit of romance and we sure have a really fine read. Oh yeah, the Hamilton mobsters sure don't turn out to be too brilliant but they sure can be quite brutal. Currently there's one more book in the series which I won't wait too long before reading and I sure hope Mr Laing can come up with some more great adventures for Max and Iz! And now I'm going to date myself and add a few quotes from the book along with my comments.

"A colourful poster near the entrance read: THIS FRIDAY NITE ONLY: Dance to the rhythmic stylings of CBC Radio Star, Bert Niosi and his Trio."

Between 1954 and 1957 groups of students, including me, from Ryerson Institute of Technology used to take their lunch bags and cartons of milk and walk through Gorries car sales lot to the CBC studio on McGill St in Toronto where we became the balcony studio audience for the CBC Radio programme "The Happy Gang". Both Bert Niosi and his brother Joe played on The Happy Gang!

"It was already 0830 as I slurped down my Grape-Nuts Flakes --"

Post Grape-Nuts Flakes were my favourite breakfast cereal and I never could understand why they were discontinued. Post Grape-Nuts were a bit too crunchy for me

"Reserve now for Gala New Year's Eve in the new Rainbow Room Dancing to Chris Lovett's Orchestra. Party Favours and Midnight Buffet. Only \$6 per couple"

How much a couple now for a New Years Eve dance and Midnight Buffet ????

"From his inside coat pocket he removed a mickey of Corby's Little Touch."

Corby's Little Touch was the cheapest and shortest aged whisky distilled by Corby's Distillery in Corbyville (Near Belleville) Ontario. It truly was "Rot-Gut".

Can't remember for sure but it couldn't have cost much more than a Buck for a mickey then.

And here's a different take that I really like on last minute Christmas shopping!

"It made me wonder why some folks waited until the last minute to do their Christmas shopping. It was inconvenient for the rest of us."

An Affair to Dismember (Matchmaker Mystery #1) by Elise Sax

Date Read: 20200422

My rating: 3 star

I have finally found a cozy mystery that actually lives up to it's descriptions in the synopsis and cover blurbs and various reviews. This book was really as humourous as advertised and I giggled and chuckled and almost fell out of my chair laughing on just about every page. I couldn't pick a top favourite character but it's almost a dead heat between Gladie and Grandma Zelda who is a real hoot. I'm usually not a huge fan of a lot of romance in mysteries I read and especially not love triangles but this one is so well done that it didn't detract from my enjoyment except for all the times I had to stop reading to wipe the tears from my eyes from laughing so hard. Then buried in here is a pretty good murder mystery with lot's of suspects with suspected motives and a bit of a twist and a fairly satisfying ending although I'm usually not too pleased with the perp getting killed off in some "accident" instead of landing behind bars. A few loose ends, especially with the love triangle, obviously leading in to the next book in the series and I already have acquired the next 3 and I'll read book 2 when I need a funny and light wind down after reading a serious mystery.

Cappuccinos, Cupcakes, and a Corpse (Cape Bay Cafe Mystery #1) by Harper Lin

Date Read: 20200420

My rating: 3 stars

I've read a few other books by Harper Lin because I like to read mysteries by Canadian authors but I have had rather mixed feelings about the ones I've read. However that may just be that the particular ones I read were not quite the type

of crime fiction I prefer or maybe not just the best examples of Ms Lin's writing. However with this book I can quite understand the many good reviews her books get and I think I may have found another Canadian author of Cozy mysteries to add to my Cozy mystery reading list. That will have to wait until I read at least the next in this series but I can assure you that I fully intend to do so when I need another light fluffy read to wind down after reading a dark, gritty and violent serious crime novel. This book is by no means without some faults such as an ending with the culprit kind of being rung in very late in the story even though he appeared regularly but without many clues pointing toward him but I enjoyed the read enough to overlook some things. Anyway an overall fun read and I'll sure read more in this series and since I have acquired the first book of some of Ms Lin's other series as freebies I may try them too.

The Crepes of Wrath (Pancake House Mystery #1) by Sarah Fox

Date Read: 20200418

My rating: 3 star

I'm always looking for new, or at least new to me, Canadian authors writing crime fiction so I was quite happy to stumble across Sarah Fox. Canada is actually blessed with an abundance of fabulous authors writing crime fiction with settings in Canada and all over the world and a few years ago I actually completed a reading project by reading a crime novel by a Canadian author set in every province and territory of Canada and, of course, I found some that I liked more than others. However the one crime genre in which very few Canadian authors write is Cozy Mysteries and after you get past the old classics like Charlotte MacLeod and contemporaries like Hilary MacLeod, Rickie Blair, Eva Gates and Valerie Tate the pickings get pretty slim so I was more than excited to find Sarah Fox and I'm very glad to be able to say that she has not disappointed me in any way. This book has most of the required elements of a cozy with fairly well developed characters both likeable like Marley, Brett and Evan and the whole gang at the Flipside or the not so likeable like Daryl and Ida etc. A pretty good storyline. a quirky small town setting and a solid and satisfactory ending with Marley making not only the decision that I expect everyone wanted but doing it in a morally and ethically correct way. I thought that this book was a bit grittier than most cozies and the only thing missing that I, personally, like in a cozy is a bit of humour because even Flapjack, despite the name, didn't really get into any funny situations. This book is probably worth

more than 3 stars but when I read the first of a series I kind of like to leave room for the characters and settings etc to grow in the following books and I already have and will read the next in this series.

What She Found by Emerald O'Brien

Date Read: 20200227

My rating: 4 star

I usually take breaks from my Arthur Ellis entries reading project to read the latest releases by favourite authors and Emerald O'Brien is rapidly joining that quite select group. This book is a lot different than the books in Ms O'Brien's series of which I have read all and, of course, enjoyed some more than others. I think with this book Ms O'Brien has shown that she is indeed a very skilled suspense writer with the ability of very few others, such as Rick Mofina, to write almost every scene leaving you with the foreboding feeling that something horrendous is about to happen and forcing you to read just one more chapter. Which is why I read a 260 page novel in less than 2 evenings with lots of time to start the next on my TBR before bedtime! Talk about twists? This story has twists upon the twists and despite many guesses as to the culprit I was dead wrong and didn't know who until the reveal. Lots of the great descriptive writing and the well developed characterizations that are usual in an Emerald O'Brien novel and a solid and satisfactory ending all adding up to a very enjoyable read. And with friends like those who needs enemies? Anyone who follows my reviews will know that I am awfully stingy with 5 star ratings but this book came awfully close to that.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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 therefore 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