



# The Twelve Clues of Christmas

*Rhys Bowen*

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**She may be thirty-fifth in line for the throne, but Lady Georgiana Rannoch cannot wait to ring in the New Year—before a Christmas killer wrings another neck...**

On the first day of Christmas, my true love gave to me—well, actually, *my* true love, Darcy O'Mara, is spending a *feliz navidad* tramping around South America. Meanwhile Mummy is holed up in a tiny village called Tiddleton-under-Lovey with that droll Noel Coward! And I'm snowed in at Castle Rannoch with my bumbling brother, Binky, and sourpuss sister-in-law, Fig.

So it's a miracle when I contrive to land a position as hostess to a posh holiday party in Tiddleton. The village is like something out of *A Christmas Carol*! But no sooner have I arrived than a neighborhood nuisance, a fellow named Freddie, falls out of a tree dead. On my second day, another so-called accident results in a death – and there's yet another on my third. Perhaps a recent prison break could have something to do with it...that, or a long-standing witch's curse. But after Darcy shows up beneath the mistletoe, anything could be possible in this wicked wonderland.

**Includes an English Christmas companion, full of holiday recipes, games, and more!**

## The Twelve Clues of Christmas Details

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# From Reader Review *The Twelve Clues of Christmas* for online ebook

## Carolyn says

Despite the high body count in this cosy mystery, it is a perfect Christmas read. Set in the 1930s, penniless Lady Georgiana Rannoch finds herself holed up in her brother's castle in Scotland facing a bleak Christmas with her penny pinching sister in law and her boring family. Finding herself a job helping to hostess a large house party in Devon, she happily escapes to the quaint village of Tiddleton-under-Lovey. All is going well with the guests enjoying traditional Christmas fare and activities except that villagers keep dying in a series of unrelated accidents. Ever the amateur sleuth, Georgie tries to puzzle out the connection between the deaths as the local police seem to be getting nowhere.

This was a lot of fun. Mixed in with the mystery are some strange local village Christmas customs, odd people like simple Willum and Wild Sal, carolling, parlor games, some romance and all manner of food and drink to help you get in the mood for the season (recipes are included in an appendix). Although it is the sixth book in the series, it is self contained and lends itself to reading on it's own.

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## Pamela Shropshire says

Well! This is definitely the best of the series so far. Very clever mystery along with all the trappings of an old-fashioned English country Christmas - what more could an Anglophile cozy mystery fan ask for?

At the beginning, Georgie is at Castle Rannoch with Fig, who has recently given birth to a daughter. Fig is clearly suffering from what we now call post-partum depression and Georgie is at her wit's end. Then Fig's overbearing mother shows up, and Georgie overhears the two of them complaining about Georgie sponging off Binky and that she should be married to someone suitable by now. When Fig announces that her sister's family will be arriving for Christmas, Georgie knows she must escape.

She answers an advertisement in *The Lady* ; a Lady Howse-Gorzley is looking for a hostess' assistant for a county house party in Devon. As it turns out Lady H-G is thrilled to have royalty at her party. And coincidentally, Georgie's mother is also in the same Devon village with Noel Coward who is writing a play for her. Georgie suggests that her mother hires Mrs. Huggins, and invite Granddad as well. So when Darcy appears, it seems that Georgie is set for the perfect Christmas with everyone she loves.

But people keep dying in the village, one per day. All seem to be accidents - a known prankster accidentally shoots himself, a man falls into a stream and drowns as he is walking home from the pub, an old lady is killed by a faulty gas heater.

It was somewhere around the fifth or sixth crime that I caught on to the pattern. I have to admit I did not figure out who the murderer was. As I said, it was quite cleverly done.

And for Darcy fans, there are some romantic interludes with him and Georgie. I confess I loved just about everything about this installment - it was great fun! 4 stars.

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## **Lori McD says**

If you're not familiar with the Twelve Days of Christmas (the song and the tradition), I suggest you bone up a bit before reading this cozy little mystery....

Admittedly, I didn't quite "get" this story until I did. Which is a sad thing for me to admit. But then the obvious clues fell into place.

Once again, Her Royal Spyness, Georgie, finds herself in the middle of a murder mystery. This time, it's the mystery of a serial killer intent upon using the Twelve Days of Christmas as the inspiration. But why this little town? And why these people? What does it all mean?

Trying to escape the drudgery of her penny-pinching sister-in-law and the awful, bone cold of their Scottish ancestral castle, Georgie answers an add to be a Social Hostess to a small house party over the Christmas holiday. Turns out the party is to be held in the same little town that her actress gad-about mother is going to be in, sharing a quaint cottage with none other than Noel Coward. Ostensibly, the two are working on a new play with a starring role for her mother, who says she's leaving her latest - a German financier. Georgie even manages to get her grandfather (mother's father) into the role of butler for her mother, to give his bronchitis a break from the cold and soot of London.

So when Georgie lands the job, she's delighted. She gets to spend the holidays close to her family and play hostess to a delightful group of house guests...??? Turns out that the British family is facing the same awful taxes that most titled families are; so to keep their home, they've decided to host a lavish British Christmas for paying guests, many of whom are American.

But is there a murderer among them?

And Georgie can't believe her luck when Darcy turns up; he's cousins with the family! But how can she pursue romance with Darcy? He's penniless and his title is Irish. Being 30-something in line for the British crown, Georgie simply can't keep her heart and her family happy. Or can she?

Darcy is more than handy as the bodies pile up. And together, Darcy and Georgie make quite the team, tracking down the culprit.

Fun book - worth the wait! Hoping for the next book soon!

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## **kari says**

This would be a fun book to read around the holidays, but it works to read anytime.

I really liked the mystery in this one and didn't figure it out. There were several lovely red herrings to think is it this person, is it that person.

The romance between Georgie and Darcy makes some progress, but these aren't romance novels so if you're looking for that, you'd need to look elsewhere. The romance, although central to what Georgie wants for her life, isn't central to the story. Still, it's nicely done.

I really liked all the details of what a traditional English Christmas would include. There are some recipes and descriptions included in the back of the book in case you'd like to make your own wassail or pudding. Great read. Fun.

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### **Anmiryam says**

What a treat. Perfect for Christmas season listening -- Bowen's series about an impecunious noble woman, her suitor, the dashing Darcy O'Mara, her cockney grandfather, actress mother and bumbling maid is charming, with warmly portrayed characters that are good company even if they are all familiar types. The narrator, Katherine Kellgren is fabulous -- I can't imagine she's ever bad -- and the plotting of this installment is much tighter than the first volume. I enjoyed it so well I will go back to the intervening episodes, although I am pretty sure I can fill in the blanks without actually reading or listening to the books. Great for long winter walks.

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### **Ali says**

As I came to the end of the last week at school – I was so exhausted I needed something undemanding and cosy to read – I had been planning to read Agatha Christie's Hercule Poirot's Christmas. However I had bought The Twelve clues of Christmas on something of a whim from ebay a couple of weeks ago – and so decided to give it a try instead. I have to admit when I saw it was published by Berkley Prime Crime I had groaned slightly – because although I have read a few rather pleasant little cosy (sorry I refuse to use the z) mysteries from them I sort of see them all as a bit samey. There is absolutely no doubt that although this story (and presumably the rest of series) is set in 1930's England among the aristocracy – the novel was written for an American cosy market. That isn't to denigrate it at all – it is actually really rather good – one or two inappropriate Americanisms (despite the author being British) which jarred slightly – but overall lovely festive cosy reading. This is the kind of book that is just right for curling up with, with a cup of hot chocolate and a blanket. It is unashamed cosy reading – and just what I needed.

Lady Georgiana Rannoch is thirty fifth in line to the throne – a cousin to the king. Unfortunately her title comes with no money – her family is impoverished, and she is fated to spend Christmas with her bumbling brother Binky and his sour wife Fig in the freezing family castle in Scotland. Unwanted by her sister-in-law – and banned from using the London house due to the cost it would incur – Georgie is not looking forward to the season at all. Georgie's mother – an actress – who once shocked society by leaving her husband and embarking on a series of affairs – is holing up in a small Devon village with Noel Coward to work on a new play.

When Georgie spots an advertisement for a lady of impeccable background to assist with the running of a Christmas house party in the very same village where her mother will be she sees it as her one chance to escape a dreary, freezing Christmas with people who don't really want her around anyway. Accepted by Lady Hawse-Gorzley, Georgie is soon on her way to Devon, where she meets up with her mother, and grandfather (an ex-metropolitan policeman) who are staying in the village.

“What in God's name is all this weeping and wailing?” Noel Coward appeared in the doorway, wearing a striped silk dressing gown, with a long cigarette holder between his fingers and a pained expression on his handsome face. “I thought I chose this place for peace and quiet.”

“There’s been a tragedy, Noel. Rosie’s uncle fell off a bridge last night and drowned.”

“Ah the transience of life.” Noel gave a dramatic sigh. “Frightfully sorry to hear about your uncle, Rosie dear, but could you grieve more quietly do you think? The muse was doing splendidly until a few minutes ago, when she fluttered out of the window and simply vanished,”

“Do you want me to go and look for it for you, sir? Rosie asked “some kind of pet bird is it?”

Up at Gorzley Hall, Lady Hawse-Gorzley takes to Georgie right away. As they wait for the mixed bag of guests to arrive for a proper old fashioned English Christmas, Georgie learns that there has been a tragic accident at the neighbouring property resulting in a man’s death. This is the first in a series of bizarre deaths – which all at first appear to be accidents. However Georgie and her grandfather – soon start to wonder if they are really accidents at all. The local police inspector – a fairly bumbling old soul – even takes to consulting Georgie’s granddad as he tries to unravel the truth behind the deaths – which some local villagers are even putting down to a centuries old curse. When Darcy O’Mara, the man Georgie is in love with turns up at the hall, she is delighted – and draws him into the baffling mystery.

This is all perfect cosy mystery fare – a country house, countryside deep in snow, a collection of charming characters (a mixture of village odd bods, toffs and cockneys ) and some baffling deaths – no gruesome descriptions of horridness though which I appreciate . The plot is pretty good – and I only began to work things out right at the very end. Yes there are some improbabilities – but so what? It actually doesn’t matter – I thoroughly enjoyed this festive mystery – and I would happily read more of this series. Incidentally this is the sixth of the series – and I don’t think it matters what order you read them in – but presumably the earlier books would fully explore Georgie’s peculiar family background.

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### **Suzy says**

A delightful find! Her Royal Spyness mysteries have been recommended to me but this was the first that I have read, part of my 2015 holiday reading marathon. Seemingly unrelated murders are occurring daily in a small English town, Tiddleton-under-Lovey, where a diverse lot of people have gathered for the Christmas holidays. Penniless Lady Victoria Georgiana "Georgie" Charlotte Eugenie (Her Royal Spyness) is coincidentally on the scene, having been hired as a social director by the local landed gentry for their Christmas festivities. As the murders pile up, she works hard to put the clues together to prove to the local constabulary that these seeming accidental deaths are actually a series of related murders. When she isn't focused on the murders, she is busy in her role as social director and is swooning and swept up in her romance with Darcy O'Mara, also penniless and unfortunately a Catholic. Ah, horrors, her one true love is of a religion forbidden to a lady in direct lineage to the throne. Will she solve the murders? Will she marry Darcy? Tune in to The Twelve Clues of Christmas to find out.

As the author says of this mystery series: "It's lighter, sexier, funnier, wicked satire." Agreed! I will seek out more from Her Royal Spyness.

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### **Jan "don't blame me, I also voted for Hillary" says**

Absolutely delightful! A traditional English Christmas in the countryside is depicted by Rhys Bowen in this

installment of her Lady Georgiana mysteries. Set in the English countryside, Georgie has fled the cold austerity of Castle Rannoch in Scotland to assist a lady with her ten day holiday house party. Of course, crime rears its ugly head and Georgie promptly jumps in to help solve the case.

I really enjoyed the holiday traditions: mine pies, crackers, yule log, caroling, plum pudding, games such as sardines and catch a stick and inside fireworks. Sparks fly between George and Darcy, also!

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## Hannah says

Oh my, what can I say about *The Twelve Clues of Christmas* without sounding like a complete and utter fangirl? Rhys Bowen has really outdid herself this time – this is the perfect Christmas book for mystery aficionados and longtime fans of the Royal Spyness series will have a great deal to be happy about with the developments in this latest installment. In two words: More Darcy!

After the fun, fashion and flirting of *Naughty in Nice* and Georgie's numerous adventures abroad, we return to England for a good old classic English village murder mystery when Georgie answers an ad in a newspaper to play social hostess at the Christmas party of Lady Hawse-Gorzley in the village of Tiddleton-under-Lovey. A house party composed of a spoilt American family, a countess, two very different couples, a nouveau riche family looking to move into upper-class society and a lecherous middle-aged bachelor, all stuck in a quaint village with its fair share of wild women, stern clergymen and queer old ladies – what could go wrong? It's back to the basics, and sometimes the basics are the best. The change-up from the assignments for the Queen or poverty-induced overseas travel of previous books is a delight, introducing a story that is almost Agatha Christie or Ngaio Marsh-esque in its setup, but effortlessly combined with the light-hearted fun and social antics that are the hallmark of the Royal Spyness books.

The murder mystery was truly front-and-center in *The Twelve Clues of Christmas*, and I loved this redirection in focus. Despite having enjoyed the social considerations of the previous few books, I must admit I felt that the mystery was increasingly taking the backseat to the fun and games and the mystery fan in me winced a little. Well, there is certainly no cause for complaint here! This was everything I wanted in a cozy mystery – full of suspense, suspicious goings-on and unexpected developments. The high body count certainly helped; a body per Christmas day undoubtedly ramps up the tension and keeps the mystery firmly in focus. The only issue I had was with the pacing of these murders versus the number of clues being revealed, whether to the characters or to the audience. It was quite a time before there was even enough circumstantial "evidence" for Georgie's suspicions of foul-play to be confirmed, and this had two adverse effects. (view spoiler) On the upside, the cause for the murders is really quite clever and guessing the identity of the murderer kept me occupied until the end.

Fittingly, Georgie's nearest and dearest are around to take part in the festivities – her Granddad, flighty mother and her loving Darcy – and we meet a number of new characters in the house party that will hopefully provide Georgie with friendly and stalwart supporters in the future. Lord knows she'll need some, considering her destitute state and Fig's increasing hostility. And Darcy fans, rejoice! He was almost a non-entity in *Naughty in Nice*, but it was quite the opposite here. The wait was worth it, because Darcy really stepped up to the plate in this book; I had previously doubted the depth of his affection for Georgie and his ability to maintain his loyalty and interest, but now I doubt no longer. I have never been so happy to be proven wrong! By golly is Rhys Bowen proving that she's too good a writer to draw things out, preferring to introduce positive developments rather than allow things to stagnate.

Really, *The Twelve Clues of Christmas* is such a little bundle of perfection that I feel like rolling back under my electric blanket with a hot cup of cocoa and rereading this all over again. It is now firmly cemented as my favourite of the series thus far. I know this sounds like a cliché, but I cannot wait to see what Book 7 will bring. Perhaps, fingers crossed, a meeting with Daddy O'Mara?

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### **Deborah says**

Clearly I am in the minority with regard to this book. I have really been enjoying this series and I looked forward to this latest entry eagerly. I had it on reserve at the library while it was still listed as "on-order". I was disappointed though and I think it is the weakest entry to date.

I will leave the plot summary to the others . . . and move on.

One of the things I like about this series is that it is "cosy". I will grant you that "cosy" and "murder" together would seem to be a little contradictory but those of us who like cosy mysteries manage. That said, 12 murders is a little over the top. I just couldn't get past 12 murders as "cosy".

In addition, Georgie witnesses several deaths which occur in a particularly gruesome way and that went way beyond my idea of cosy also.

I always enjoy Georgie, her mother and her grandfather. It was good to see all of them. I also liked the premise that got Georgie to the house party and her role there.

(view spoiler)

So I will continue to read this series, but I'm hopeful that the next installment will be back up to par. It is a great premise and Georgie is one of my favorite heroines!

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### **Jonathan says**

Please, do yourself a favor, run to your library or your bookstore or borrow the first book in this series from a friend and read it, you will NOT regret it. In yet another amazing installment Georgie finds herself playing hostess to a group of people from various backgrounds in a small village named Tiddleton. However, the first day she's there someone dies, and the second day another villager dies, and the third day, too. Soon people are scared for their lives wondering who could be next. But were all of these simply accidents or were they more? Georgie is determined to find out.

Most of the normal, wonderful characters appeared, Georgie, Claire, Darcy, Queenie, Mrs. Huggins, and Georgie's grandfather, and we are introduced to many new characters. Georgie and Darcy's relationship takes a turn in this book and we see a lot more of him and even learn more about him. Queenie is ever hilarious with the best intentions and Georgie's grandfather is, as always, kind and helpful.

The mystery in this book really shined. It completely blew me away once I recognized the pattern, and I must say that I did recognize the pattern before Georgie did, but that was the absolutely only negative part of the book. The reason for the killings was also different and unique, and it made a wonderful and different mystery that I'd read again.

Overall an amazing book, the mystery, the characters, the setting, it was all stellar. *The Twelve Clues of Christmas* deserves 5/5 stars!

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## **Brett says**

Pure escapist fun of the best kind, this book does a beautiful job of channeling vintage Agatha Christie. The "Her Royal Spyness" series is my favorite of Bowen's, because of the way she captures the feel of Christie, only with tongue held firmly in cheek. The mystery is always a good one, but there's plenty of room for humor, too.

This one is obviously set at Christmastime, & captures that perennial favorite of Golden Era mystery settings, the country house party with a house full of potentially suspicious guests. Bowen really outdoes herself describing the traditions of British Christmases past - I think just reading the book caused me to gain weight, what with all the mince pies, sausage rolls, & various roasts.

Lady Georgiana Rannoch is still trying to keep body & soul together while hiding the fact of her impecuniousness from the world. In an effort to avoid having to spend Christmas at Rannoch Castle with her sister-in-law's family making her much less than welcome, she answers an advertisement from a lady in Devon looking for a "lady of impeccable background" to help with social activities at a large Christmas house party. Initially doing it to make some money & be sure to get some good meals around the holiday, Georgie starts to enjoy herself - until the mysterious accidents start to happen. Soon, she's sure that these can't all be simply tragic coincidences, & that something way more sinister is going on. Luckily, she has both her amour, Darcy, & her beloved retired-policeman grandfather in the area to help her try to figure out just what is going on in this sleepy little village. I'll read these entertaining books as long as Bowen keeps writing them.

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## **Marcie says**

Balderdash! I wish I had discovered this book at the library a month ago, mid-December. It's perfectly charming -- a Christmas-themed parlor mystery! Set in a quaint, Dickensian English village during a fascinating time (1930s, when royals were still "royal" but dirt-poor after investing in American stock). The hostess of the holiday vacay has offered a traditional English Christmas celebration for a FEE (loved all the details of the darling practices), but the bodies just keep dropping! I say, one each day.

I would have spent my own holiday adopting the speech patterns of our intrepid, royal-girl narrator, exclaiming "Oh, bugger!" while unraveling the mystery of tangled Christmas tree lights and "Away from there, you nosy parker!" to those snooping for clues to their presents. I would have had to give everyone in my family a stupid British nickname like Bunty or Binky or Fig.

There is a weird mistake in logic on page 266 -- but, who cares?! There's recipes and game descriptions in the back to recreate your own traditional English Christmas!

Sometimes, I just want to read something girly and silly, and this was really fun. I just found an online Jolly Well Spoken Translator, lol. Crikey! You just jiggle in your phrase, and Bob's your uncle!

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## **Leslie says**

Surprisingly good mystery which kept me guessing despite the clue of the title! It has been a while since I have read any of this series and I found this one was less silly than I had remembered.

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## **Kathy Davie says**

Sixth in the Her Royal Spyness historical mystery series revolving around Lady Georgiana and a country house Christmas in 1933 in Tiddleton-under-Lovey.

### **My Take**

I do enjoy the setting Bowen has created for this series. It's a treat to read about a noble family that has fallen on hard times and the straits to which they're reduced...ooh, that sounds kind of nasty. It's not that I enjoy their "poverty" so much as it's a change from the usual billionaire romances. And it gives us an inside look at the upper class with their mores and expectations. And how they cope with their change in circumstances.

This story had everything going for it to be at least a "4" with its dash of Agatha Christie-ishness, but Bowen has stuck in too many silly clichés for my taste as well as a number of flopping threads that didn't add up. It's just not as funny as previous stories. The colonel's excuse still doesn't explain his lack of knowledge or seat. Oh. They can't find Mr. Barclay even though Georgie knows he'll be giving them a concert at the church. What? Was Bowen in such a hurry that she couldn't take the time to remember what she wrote? If Queenie's so sorry about barging in, why didn't she just sneak out without getting loud and obnoxious about it the night before?

Its saving grace is Georgie's romancing with Darcy. Although, even here, Bowen is falling back on cliché with Georgie's whining on about his being Catholic. Duhhh.

Bowen has a lovely cast of characters whom I mostly enjoy: Georgie does whine a bit about her poverty, but it's very reasonable and she is a very realistic lass; Binky cracks me up with his obtuseness (I look forward to Podge growing up just to see how his parents affect him); Fig and her family are, ohmigod, whackos; Mummy has her own intriguing lifestyle; not knowing what Darcy does keeps me cracking that book as well as to see if Georgie has figured out what's what yet; and, then there's Granddad, a rock in this stream of craziness.

On the negative side, Queenie makes me nuts; she's so amazingly incompetent. I don't understand Georgie's mother. She has all this money and she does nothing for her daughter. I just don't get it. I don't get Newcombe in this, either. It's pretty rare for a cop to accept Georgie's help and he does so too easily in this story.

Turns out, a number of Lady Hawse-Gorzley's guests have their own sob stories while several others may be getting hitched.

For all Georgie's whining on about solving the case, she doesn't really do much. Even I could think of a number of things to check on!

### **The Story**

The coming Christmas promises to be absolutely miserable with Georgie trapped in Scotland at the freezing cold Castle Rannoch, especially now that Lady Wormwood has shown up. At least until Mummy calls up to announce her celebrating Christmas in England; seems Max has to spend Christmas with his family and this isn't the time to tell his prim and proper family about his bit on the side. It starts Georgie thinking, reading, and inquiring about a position.

An ad in the *The Lady* has Georgie hoping and praying. A prayer that's answered with Georgie and Queenie off in a rush. Seems Lady Hawse-Gorzley has guests to whom she's promised an olde fashioned English Christmas. It's a bit of a tug between the old-fashioned and the Yanks' complaining that it's not like home.

The food, the parlor games, the caroling and snowball fights, the hunt, the costume ball, and the very human Lovey Chase.

*The lovely part of this house party is that it is very self-contained with no great emphasis on material things. They provide their own fun and games with some interaction with the village.*

Of course, murder for Christmas does add an unexpected thrill. Then there are the prison escapees. The sultanas in the pudding??

### **The Characters**

**Lady Georgiana Rannoch**, the daughter of the late Duke of Rannoch and sister to the present duke, is thirty-fifth in line to the throne (Queen Victoria was her great-grandmother). **Queenie** is her absolutely hopeless maid. **Claire Daniels** is Georgie's mother, aka The Bolter, a former actress, who is currently involved with **Max Von Strohheim**, a German industrialist; her father, **Albert Spinks**, is a retired Cockney policeman and Georgie adores him. **Mrs. Huggins** is granddad's next-door neighbor (Queenie is her great-niece), and she's got her eye on him. (They played butler and cook for Georgie in *A Royal Pain* and will be playing the same roles in this story.) **Noel Coward** is one of Claire's friends and she's spending Christmas writing a play with him.

**Binky** is the Duke of Glen Garry and Rannoch. **Fig**, a.k.a., Hilda, is his bad-tempered duchess. Hector, a.k.a., **Podge**, is the son and heir and a little sister has arrived, **Adelaide Gertrude Hermione Maude Rannoch**. **Lady Wormwood** is Fig's mother, and she's worse than Fig! Matilda, a.k.a., **Ducky**, is Fig's sister, her husband **Foggy**, and their daughter **Maude** are coming to Scotland for Christmas (we first met them in *Naughty in Nice* ). *Even better reasons to be anywhere but Scotland!*

**Darcy O'Mara**, is an Irish peer's heir and, Georgie speculates, a spy who has to make his own way. AND he's Catholic! Turns out Lady Hawse-Gorzley is his aunt. The Crash of 1929 has forced a number of noble families to sell off, out, or hunker down. Darcy's father has sold off the family estate and the stables and now lives in a house on his former property.

*The Party at Gorzley Hall in Tiddleton-under-Lovey, Devonshire*

**Lady [Camilla] Hawse-Gorzley** needs someone of rank to help her host her paying-in Christmas party; she's also a magistrate. **Sir Oswald** is her down-to-earth husband. **Monty** is the son and heir. Hortense, a.k.a., **Bunty**, is their daughter who's in love with Darcy. **Dickson** is the butler.

**Freddie Partridge** is an obnoxious neighbor always playing pranks. **Ted Grover** is the local mechanic. **Willum** is the village idiot. **Wild Sal** is their local nutjob; she's said to be a descendant of the witch they burned, the one who laid the Lovey Curse. There are three spinster Ffrench-finches: **Miss Effie**, who rules the younger two. **Miss Prendergast** moved to the village some five years ago, and she's a bit of a busybody. **Gladys Tripp** is a telephone switchboard operator in the nearby market town of Newton Abbott. **Mr. Skaggs** is the butcher delivering the geese. **Mr. Klein** runs a jewelry shop where Georgie finds some last-minute gifts.

**Badger** is one of Monty's friends from Oxford. **Colonel Reginald and Mrs. Rathbone** plan to enjoy an English Christmas on their leave from India. **Mr. and Mrs. Upthorpe** are coming with their daughter **Ethel**;

he's in trade. The ugly Americans: **Mr. Clyde and Mrs. Wexler** with their children **Cherie** and **Junior**. The **dowager Countess Albury**. Locals include navy **Captain and Mrs. Sechrest**, **Johnnie Protheroe** is a letch, **Major Wesley-Parker** is the local master of hounds, and **Mr. Barclay** is the very fussy organist.

**Detective Inspector Harry Newcombe** is on his own investigating the murders and tracking down the escapees; he's not very competent. One of the escaped convicts is **Robert Robbins**, a music hall entertainer put away for murder and swindling. His wife, **Trixie Robbins**, is said to have drowned herself.

**King George and Queen Mary** are Lady Georgie's relatives.

### **The Cover**

The cover has a chilly promise with the snow-covered landscape viewed through the tall, arched window in front of which a tuxedo-clad Darcy is having a cup of punch while Georgie is clad in a backless lilac chiffon with her own cup of cheer. Just under the white and silver picot-edged ribbon showcasing the title and the series is a punch bowl trimmed with holly.

The title is the clue and there are *The Twelve Clues of Christmas* to help you count down.

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