



Margaret Maron Presents Malice Domestic

Margaret Maron (Contributor) , Nevada Barr (Contributor) , Janet Laurence (Contributor) , Miriam Grace Monfredo (Contributor) , Carol Anne O'Marie (Contributor) , Abigail Padgett (Contributor) , Douglas Dennis (Contributor) , Amanda Cross (Contributor) , more... Mary Daheim (Contributor) , Jonathan Gash (Contributor) , Edward D. Hoch (Contributor) , Susan Holtzer (Contributor) , H.R.F. Keating (Contributor) , Susan Kenney (Contributor) , Alanna Knight (Contributor) ...less

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A Screenwriter Scorned plots a chilling revenge suitable for celluloid. . . . A four-footed sleuth takes on the perplexing case of the missing Christmas goose. . . . A widow who narrowly escapes death has a surprise in store for her would-be slayer. . . . A cheating quartet of married lovers plans the perfect crime. . . . From the ingenious minds of today's most fiendishly clever mystery writers -- including Simon Brett, Carolyn Hart, Peter Lovesey, Margaret Maron, Anne Perry, and Nancy Pickard -- comes an unparalleled collection of original traditional mystery stories so good it's criminal

Margaret Maron Presents Malice Domestic Details

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From Reader Review Margaret Maron Presents *Malice Domestic* for online ebook

Kate says

Adequate representation of adequate mysteries.

Jenn says

For once, I read all of the short stories in this book. I usually end up skipping around and not reading everything, but these were all enjoyable, even if not that memorable.

Jamie says

WARNING: If you're planning on picking this book up, ignore the Goodreads summary. The contributors are all right, but I don't know where they pulled that summary/blurb from because none of those stories are in this book.

I was watching the *Deadly Women* documentary about Stella Lipczynska and was going to leave a comment referencing Sister Carol Anne O'Marie's story, *Defender of the Faith*, but when I checked my reviews to find the title I discovered I still hadn't gotten to that *Malice Domestic* yet! Well, there's only one thing for it.

April names her latest piece of digital art *Venus Rising* (by Nevada Barr) but swears that something is wrong with the final product. The pictures in the collage are all a little bit off, and the whole thing looks ill. Starting to obsess over the picture, it seems to change every time April opens the file. Little things around her house start to look like someone's been inside moving things around. The newspapers warn of a killer on the loose and as her sanity falls apart the killer gets closer and closer to his next victim. *Venus Rising* is a stalker story, and one so creepy that I wish I'd skipped it. There was nothing 'cozy' about it; it was genuinely disturbing, and especially April's comment to the police at the end which shows just how far into madness she's slipped. If you like creepy stalker stories you'll probably enjoy it, but I personally hated it.

Amanda Cross's story of *My Dinner with Aunt Kate* is her series character, Kate Fansler, indulging her niece in a little storytelling and a free meal. She looks back on one of her first cases, a woman in the early days of computer technology who uses her position as a bank's on-staff programmer to steal a million dollars and disappear. The story was interesting and enjoyable, and Kate was what I wish Miss Marple were. She knows her abilities and doesn't shy from taking credit or admitting her failures, and she injects so much personal information that it sounded like an actual person having a real life conversation. But there wasn't much involvement with the plot; everything she talks about happened a long time earlier and was being told as a case study. That said, I'm sure I would have been much more impressed with it had it been padded out into a novel(la).

A pair of cousins realize they haven't seen their neighbor's wife in months, and women have been entering the family home and never seen leaving. Are the two on the trail of a murderer or is their evidence *Just So*

Much Garbage? Mary Daheim's story is a lighthearted distraction with two charming main characters who were sadly trying to push an entire series of backstory down our throats. As in the previous story, a little background can enrich a plot, but these two were exposition fairies.

A secret is unearthed about the grave of the real Jack the Ripper, and a crime writer finds himself willing to do anything to get his hands on that secret and make sure he's the only one who knows it. *Jack and Jill, R. I. P.* by Jonathan Gash starts off as a light investigative story, but veers off in a different direction closer to the end that leaves you wanting to see just how far events are going to go. It could easily have become a full book, and it's a shame that we're only left with a short story that takes such a long time to set up the conflict. By the time you really start to enjoy it, the story is over.

A woman in WWII-era London suspects someone of blowing up buildings under cover of the real explosions by the V-2 rockets. She hires a private investigator to look into what she expects to be a murderous real estate scam. Edward D. Hoch's story started off interesting, but before I knew it we were hit with a twist that threw me spiraling off guard. The ending was a bit weak, but only because Hoch finished on an 'assemble the suspects' scene right after the twist so the action came to a halt. On the whole, a very enjoyable story and one I'd like to see inspire a series.

The Golden Rounds have gone missing from a rich man's coin collection upon his death. The suspect is obvious: his lazy, gold-digging nephew is the only one with the opportunity. The motive: over a hundred thousand dollars when the coins can be safely sold. The problem: the hiding spot. Told from a squirrel's perspective, Susan Holtzer's story is fun and charming, if a little annoying at times when the squirrel gets distracted. The hiding place, when it's found, is particularly clever.

It's *Just Only One Little Mystery-Pistery* pushed off onto Inspector Ghote, where a rich British woman's Indian companion is smothered. All signs point to the old woman having killed her for the insurance money, and she's not helping her case by pushing the blame on a mystery local, but H. R. F. Keating's beleaguered inspector is planning to make this circumstantial case air-tight. This was one of the only strong stories in the book, even if the case-cracking clue is pitifully obvious despite the inspector's trouble spotting it. I don't understand the reasoning behind the baby talk, though. Trouble-bubble? Mystery-pistery? Look me in the eye and tell me grown adults actually talk like that to each other in India.

A fishy story is recounted about a accident and a wealthy heiress who happened to get away in the nick of time. There are too many coincidences involved, and the clue to reopening this closed case might be in the video of *Aunt Agatha Leaving* (by Susan Kenny). One of the better stories, the deaths of an entire family and the destruction of their island mansion gets dragged back up by the curious niece of an old friend of the dead family. It was very enjoyable, the solution was clever, and I enjoyed reading about the characters. Happily it's another case of a short story using characters from an established series.

A woman in the Scottish Lowlands starts seeing visions of the Clearances in *The Deadly Glen*. Her young neighbor is terribly worried, and one frantic phone call brings both women's worlds crashing down. Alanna Knight's story is one of culpability by silence. A murder is retold using the frame story of the young neighbor returning to the scene years later with her oblivious husband on a chance visit. While the frame story is ominous and you can understand why she wouldn't have tried coming forward (she's not exactly an unbiased witness and there's no way there's evidence left behind), the main story isn't especially interesting and just left me feeling unsettled.

Time Share selling is a cutthroat business, and one that ends in tragedy for an ambitious ladies man. Janet Laurence's story of a complicated love life was entertaining, and had a great solution. It was also one of the

longer stories in the book so it takes the time to endear us to the characters.

In *Buffalo Gals, Won't You Come Out Tonight* by Miriam Grace Monfredo, an inspector banished to Lake Erie is tasked with identifying a drowned man, and has to put in considerable extra effort to keep his superior officer from handing the corpse and his possessions to the murderer. An adorable story with an incompetent cop and an animal sidekick (an abnormally huge Canada goose adopts the inspector and accidentally helps solve the case). It even manages to pull off one of my least favorite plot devices (unless I'm mistaken I think it's the first one that's done this). I won't spoil which one, but if you've read enough of my reviews you'll probably notice one I complain about *a lot*.

Oh boy, the one I've been waiting for! Miss Lillian Hassett is the parish's *Defender of the Faith*, and though times are changing she'll make sure the traditional standards are kept one way or another. Written by Sister Carol Anne O'Marie, the story is entertaining and leaves you waiting with anticipation to find out what happens next. Lillian's a deeply religious parish housekeeper at odds with the modern Catholic church, and, much as I mentioned in the introduction, keeps her priests in line with the same method and thought process used by Stella Lipczynska, but with considerably more success.

Seeing her daughter on stage is *Just Stunning* for veteran newswoman Vivian McCall, even if it's just to accept her Warden of the Year award at a correctional officers convention. But the excitement turns out to be too much for one man, whom Vivian finds dead in the exhibition hall. I'm sorry to say that the solution was obvious (the murder weapon was made blatant early on and the only four named characters in the story are Vivian, her daughter, the victim, and the murderer) and Abigail Padgett and Douglas Dennis's lead character was an asshole. She's blasé and the picture of sophistication, but every time her daughter tries to start a serious conversation with her she blows her off mid-sentence and abandons her to go find something frivolous to do elsewhere.

THE VERDICT?

(I still haven't figured out a system for the stars to rate short story compilations.)

There're a couple of stories in *Malice Domestic 8* that are worth reading if you can find a copy, but most don't affect me as more than a way to pass the time. There are even two that managed to creep me out and I'm still bothered by them (I watch a lot of murder documentaries so it takes some very good writing to disturb me). On the whole it's pretty mediocre. You might want to check for this installment at the library instead of buying it.
