



A Holly, Jolly Murder

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THE GIFT THAT GIVES ON GIVING...

With Farberville's college on holiday break, Claire Malloy's bookstore is quiet . . . deadly quiet. Breaking the silence is a little old lady looking for volumes on pagan rituals, applied magick, and Celtic mysticism. Claire is intrigued and—miffed that her lover, Farberville police Lieutenant Peter Rosen, says she's in a rut—happily accepts an invitation to welcome the winter solstice at dawn.

HOMICIDE FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Showing up at the Sacred Grove, Claire expects wild chanting or even nude dancing. Instead she ends up sitting on a stump watching the Arch Druid clean her bifocals. Then winter arrives and so does a dead man. Someone has shot the wealthy benefactor of Farberville's neo-pagans. Now Claire is mixing some snooping with her Christmas shopping. But instead of wrapping up the case, she finds out 'tis the season for ho-ho-homicide . . . and she may be the next victim.

A Holly, Jolly Murder Details

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Author : Joan Hess

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Lesley Looper says

I expected this book to have more of a Christmas theme, but the Christmas holiday seemed to be more in the way of the story (especially when it came to Caron's mall job fiasco). Instead, Claire gets entangled in some Druid drama that doesn't quite fit with the title or book cover. *sigh*

Beth says

While poking fun at organized pagans, Hess shows a surprising appreciation for all the various forms and an understanding of some of the political/religious differences between druids, wiccans, etc. Made me think she might have done some personal research--perhaps at my alma mater, where the druids were revived in the late 60s!

Marilyn says

I haven't read anything by Hess is quite awhile, but I remember liking the Malloy series. I simply could not get through this book and on about page 47, I wondered why I was reading it. Malloy, who is smart enough to help solve murders, was portrayed by her actions as witless and her supposedly clever thoughts were mundane. I was looking forward to a little cozy for the holidays, but I was disappointed instead.

Lynn Demsky says

This was really a slow moving boring book - usually I really enjoy the Claire book store owner books but, just took me months to read ---- I could care less about the witches, druids or Wiccans religion etc and just kept wading along -- Santa was a drunk, there was no holly jolly anything in this story. The last maybe third of the book was worth reading maybe.

Pamela McLaren says

There's nothing lonelier than a bookstore near a college campus when school is out of session but that has never stopped Claire Malloy from being visited by several weird and assorted characters, especially in this holiday driven book where in a moment of trying to find some excitement, Claire decides to join the local Druids and Wiggans as they celebrate the winter solstice. As usual, it doesn't go off without a hitch: one of their flock doesn't show up and when they check on him, he is dead.

Everyone has their statement to make only very soon it is apparent that not a one is telling the truth. And if that is not enough, Clare's daughter gets in trouble during a holiday job at the mall and her boyfriend is out of town ... with his ex and his wife.

Makes for a fun cozy frolic and a quick read.

Michelle says

Let me start by saying that I'm not a huge fan of cozy mysteries. I bought this book while at a bar/bookstore after having too many glasses of wine. Clearly my judgement was affected. However because I owned it and it fit the category of a book challenge I'm doing, I decided to read it. This book has so many problems. As other reviews pointed out, the cover leads you to believe it will be a Christmas-themed mystery but the only things Christmassy about it are the title and the fact that it takes place around Christmas time. Okay, I can forgive that. What I can't forgive is that the main character did things that made no sense. She even called it out in the book asking herself several times, "Why am I doing this?" Yeah, Claire, why? No person with any kind of common sense would have acted the way she did. She basically said and did things to move the plot along but because they didn't make sense, I had a hard time getting into the story. The other characters did this as well by randomly going into a monologue about some backstory that has nothing to do with what's going (looking at you, Malthea). And the side plot with Claire's daughter was just annoying. I thought about not finishing the book about halfway through but persevered for the sake of my book challenge. I will not be reading anymore Joan Hess books.

Susan says

Bookstore owner Claire Malloy finds her holiday season clouded by local pagans, who involve her in their disputes and in a murder case.

The Badger says

The Claire Malloy series is a step above a Cozy, mainly because you actually LIKE the characters. Claire is the single mother of Caron, a teenaged daughter who's at the age of speaking in ALL CAPS. Claire is also the proprietor of a bookstore (which she doesn't seem to spend much time in, on account of solving murders and trying to calm Caron down to at least italics). Peter is Claire's detective boyfriend whom she's lucky to have, otherwise she'd spend the majority of her time in a holding cell for interfering with crime scenes.

If you're looking for a mystery series where you actually LIKE the characters (I love Christie, but spent much of my extracurricular time plotting the death of the sanctimonious bitch Ms. Marple), start on the Claire Malloy series. Likewise, if you're wondering whether to have children, pay close attention to Caron. I work with kids and can assure you that all teen girls go through the "I HATE YOU--I NEED A RIDE TO THE MALL" phase. Unless you're saving for boarding school, pay attention.

Dharia Scarab says

Still not my favorite series, but not bad either.

Since I don't normally write reviews unless I have something specific to say, here's the break down of how I rate my books...

1 star... This book was bad, so bad I may have given up and skipped to the end. I will avoid this author like the plague in the future.

2 stars... This book was not very good, and I won't be reading any more from the author.

3 stars... This book was ok, but I won't go out of my way to read more. But if I find another book by the author for under a dollar I'd pick it up.

4 stars... I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be on the look out to pick up more from the series/author.

5 stars... I loved this book! It has earned a permanent home in my collection and I'll be picking up the rest of the series and other books from the author ASAP.

Gabby says

Very disappointing addition to the Claire Malloy series. **A Holly, Jolly Murder** has been tagged as a "Holiday Themed" book. Only by stretching the imagination to its very outer limits would I categorize it that way. Merely because Hess mentions Christmas or Santa Claus now and then doesn't make this book anywhere near being about the holidays. It's about Druids and Satan-Worship and Wiccans... if that dredges up sweet memories of Christmases past for some readers, fine. It certainly did not do that for me.

But it isn't just the lack of material that supposedly defines this book as a holiday mystery. It's also that the whole story from beginning to end is terribly contrived. What humor there is, and that's sparse, is forced. What used to pass for Hess' wit comes across in this book as artificial and affected. I've read other Claire Malloy books. I've seen how good Hess can be when she's at the top of her game. This book simply doesn't have even a remnant of that creativity. It's like Hess wrote this one because someone was threatening to pry off her fingernails slowly and painstakingly, so she wrote *anything* to avoid being unable to wear nail polish for a while.

The plot to this mess concerns a group of people with mixed spiritual beliefs. Some are Druids, some Wiccans, and some Satanic followers. One of the group is murdered, and for no reason that makes any sense whatsoever, Claire Malloy gets involved in the trials and tribulations of the members left alive.

Meanwhile, Claire's daughter, Caron, is involved in some trouble of her own. This turns out to be a minor, somewhat annoying, distraction from the real mess of the book which is who killed the victim. Getting deeper and deeper into that part of the story only serves to muddle the plot further, and if I weren't absolutely anal about having to finish books I start to read, I'd have hurled this one at my favorite spot on the wall and forgot about it.

Word to the Wise: Skip this one and find something far more interesting and better constructed to read than **A Holly, Jolly Murder**... like maybe your cereal box.

Emily Cullen says

Accused of being in a rut, bookseller Claire Malloy accepts an invitation to attend a winter solstice ceremony, but instead of a celebration, one of the members of the Sacred Grove is found dead. This was my final Christmas cozy mystery of the season and I was disappointed. I have read the "Claire Malloy" mystery series years ago but did not feel at all compelled to pick it up again. Joan Hess writes the Arly Hanks, Maggody cozy mystery series too and I find that much funnier with more detailed characters.

Dale says

Hess, Joan: A HOLLY, JOLLY MURDER, A Claire Malloy Mystery (#12): neither any of the characters, nor the plot could hold my interest—dropped after 100+-pages; on my GoodReads “To Read” list; not sure where I heard about it but it was added to my list in mid-Mar. '14, so guessing it was NYTimes review; published 1997 hardback via Madison Co. Public Library, 265 pgs.; attempted May 2014

Jean says

CT

chrissa says

This is the first Joan Hess book I have read, and I really enjoyed the book. I found the plot interesting, and did not have a definite idea about who had committed the crime until very near to the end. I enjoyed the subplot with Claire's daughter too. I am looking forward to reading more Joan Hess books in this series.

Also, unlike other reviewers I found the Christmas theme very important to the plot of the book. The main character discusses Christmas on practically every page. If you are looking for a good murder mystery set at Christmas, I would recommend this one!

Sheila says

I thought this story' is boring. Not much about Christmas. The plot was weird and weak. I liked the character Clare. She was interesting and straight forward. Her daughter on the other hand was very snotty. Which is very un becoming for a young girl. I learnt nothing about the Druids and Wiccans. I'm glad that I finally finished the book.
