



Condemned to Repeat

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For anyone other than Randy Craig, a contract to do archival research and web development for Alberta's famed Rutherford House should have been a quiet gig. But when she discovers an unsolved mystery linked to Rutherford House in the Alberta Archives and the bodies begin to pile up, Randy can't help but wonder if her modern-day troubles are linked to the intrigues of the past. (Also available as an e-book for Kindle readers.)

Condemned to Repeat Details

Date : Published June 15th 2013 by Ravenstone (first published May 15th 2013)

ISBN : 9780888014153

Author : Janice MacDonald

Format : Paperback 395 pages

Genre : Cultural, Canada, Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Fiction

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From Reader Review Condemned to Repeat for online ebook

Leslie says

LOVED IT! This was by far the best of the series, which means it can only get better from here. I loved the history lesson told through the story. It was a great story, I was totally immersed.

Johanne says

Oooh, oooh, oooh - I had so much fun reading a grown up "Nancy Drew-like" mystery novel which takes place where I live. I loved that I knew all the locations and roads that were mentioned and that places like my all-time favourite bake shop, Duchess, were the backdrop to some great sleuthing. It was easy to connect with amateur sleuth Randy Craig and her quirky ways.

I am a new fan and will definitely be reading all of the Randy Craig mysteries written by local author Janice McDonald. Thanks for writing the Edmonton version of my favourite sleuth!

Annette says

There were a couple of little issues I had with the book, mostly the comment about "Me Tarzan, you Jane" part. It seemed like a feminist comment just popped in there for no reason. I don't think Steve was going first because he was a man but because he was a trained professional. I also found the reason behind the murders to be a little weak. You would think that the "assistant" would have had a better grasp on the reasoning if he was going to do something so horrible.

Plus in the beginning I liked the Canadian references but some of them seemed to be repeated - OK we get that kids in Alberta have to have costumes that work with snow suits, not need to drill it in. But overall, I enjoyed the book and would consider reading more of the series.

Barry Hammond says

Maybe I just like reading all the references to Edmonton landmarks but I really enjoy these Randy Craig mysteries. My favorite was probably "Hang Down Your Head" because of the use of the Folk Festival and Folkways Alive! settings but this one rates right up there, too. This one features Rutherford House, Fort Edmonton, and The Provincial Archives. Even though Randy, herself, can be annoying because she never sees what's coming her way, she does convey the idea that murder is abhorrent, alien, and mostly unreal to ordinary, law-abiding people, which, I suppose, is a good thing. I also think her policeman boyfriend, Steve, is a more accurate portrayal of an ordinary cop than most novelists depict. All in all an enjoyable series. - BH.

Jana Denardo says

I'm always iffy on amateur detectives but I enjoy the ones where they are connected to a professional detective (because it never makes sense to me in the ones where the amateur is alone against a hostile police force). Randy straddles those two tropes and it works.

I liked Randy a lot, an academic researcher who is drawn into the history of the Rutherford house and the person willing to kill to keep its secrets. I love books where the setting comes to life and I felt like I got to know Edmonton Canada in this.

I'm looking forward to others in this series.

Kelsey says

An enjoyable mystery with a practical protagonist--Randy--who thinks to do things that it seems characters in other mystery series don't. (Like, Randy, on remembering what could be an important detail in the case, dashes off a quick email to her policeman boyfriend, instead of just NOT DOING ANYTHING, which tends to drive me crazy in other books!) CONDEMNED TO REPEAT is set very firmly in Edmonton, and as a former Edmontonian, it was fun to read about the neighbourhoods, shops, and buildings I knew so well. Lots of Alberta history threaded throughout, as well.

Paula Kirman says

I'm not a mystery fan, but I loved how this was set in Edmonton with a strong plot and female lead character.

Randy Williams says

This is another fun (and funny) Edmonton mystery with reluctant sleuth Miranda "Randy" Craig, still kicking around the fringes of academe and finding herself lured into a web of dark secrets at Alberta historical sites. She goes to Rutherford House, Fort Edmonton, the Ukrainian Village, old St. Stephen's College, the Provincial Archives and many other real sites in an attempt to sort out clues from the past before the body count gets too high.

The last book in this series, *Hang Down Your Head*, had a murder at Edmonton FolkFest and was a big best-seller here in the city. I think this new one is destined for more of the same success. Highly recommended!

Kelly Macfarlane says

A good murder mystery / academic(esque) novel, set in Edmonton, "academic(esque)" because it features not a tenure-track prof but rather someone on the edges of Academia. It was especially fun to see Edmonton, and Rutherford House and Strathcona, featured so prominently. I'm looking forward to finding the earlier

novels featuring Randy Craig, and will keep an eye out for future novels as well.

Lou Allin says

Edmonton's Literary Ambassador

Bone-chilling cold, isolation, that's Edmonton for most people. But Janice MacDonald finds the sunshine in her established amateur-sleuth series starring Randy Craig, an English major and itinerant researcher in tough economic times. *Condemned to Repeat* is the latest entry.

This time web maven Randy is contracted to the iconic 1912 Rutherford House to develop an interactive on-line website to draw tourist attention to the noble brick house, steeped in history and documented by Mrs. Rutherford's considerable diaries. The Friends of Rutherford House manage the lovely building, home to the first Premier and site of many events and a popular restaurant. On the tours docents ensure that visitors stay behind the velvet ropes, says Randy: "Everything in the house is an artifact...I sure didn't want to go down in history as the girl who broke Alexander Rutherford's chair." The great man's imprint upon the city endures in the thriving university he founded, another haunt of Randy's.

A gala, candlelit mystery-dinner theatre hosted by a talented magician at the stately home starts with more than a bang when just before dessert and coffee are served, an employee is found dead upstairs, and it's not the "fake body." This locked-room mystery has sixty guests and six actors on board, a nightmare for the police. But with all the commotion of the presentation, who was out of place? Back stairs and window exits complicate the timeline for movement, scheduled or unscheduled.

Among puzzled others, Randy can't understand why anyone would wish harm to a young woman with no apparent enemies when there are plenty of characters with nasty dispositions in the cutthroat and game-playing world of grants for historic sites. With her cop boyfriend on her side, but not in charge of the case, Randy sifts through possibilities.

It's easy to like Randy. She's hard-working, talented, and prone to very human traits like sleeping in and procrastination. Faced with hostility, she manages to bite her tongue during presentations and walk a politic line. And like many women, she's dithering about moving in with Steve, a paragon of organization and neatness, who serves her tea, toast and marmalade and keeps apple strudel in the fridge for breakfast. But is she really comfortable in this perfect condo? "Then I thought about my toaster full of crumbs and my lowly dishpan and ratty bedroom slippers....I needed to be home."

Needless to say, the killer is far from finished, and each new assault raises more problems. The crimes must be connected, but how? Where did that magician go? What about the crabby board member? Is Randy's boss also a suspect? What will the helpful archivist say when he discovers that a diary has gone missing after Randy's research? The upstairs-downstairs theme in the Rutherford family history speaks volumes for the social mores of the times.

Randy shepherds the reader through many of the highlights of this complex city, its history short but rich. Whether delving into the Ukrainian background, celebrating the Spooktacular Hallowe'en at the Fort Edmonton complex, cider and pumpkin muffins at the farmhouse, bobbing for apples, tagging zombies, or hearing screams from the old Jasper House Hotel, Randy makes the perfect tour guide. Fascinated, I actually went to the Rutherford House website to see some of this Edwardian prairie world. This book walks a delicate tightrope between fact and fiction, not an easy feat.

Locals love the series, and those who know little about the great province of Alberta have a treat in store.

Cornerofmadness says

I won this in a Goodreads giveaway (which did not alter my review) and I was very excited because while I've been reading mysteries for thirty odd years, I don't get to see many set in Canada. Unfortunately for me, this is book number five in the series but when I put my name in to win, I figured most mystery series make it easy for you to catch up on the back story. I wasn't wrong. I never once felt lost.

Randy Craig is a historical researcher, sometimes lecturer (though not this time) and is working for the Rutherford House in Edmonton (It's a real place. I suspect most of the places in the book are real). She's working on making an interactive web site to draw in more people. Randy is enjoying the research, concentrating more on Mrs. Rutherford rather than her famous husband. However, her work doesn't have the approval of everyone. Greta Larsen, an elderly board member for one, wants to put a stop to it and to most of the things Randy's boss, Marni, are doing (i.e. events for the public). She would have the historic house be an unapproachable shrine and the public kept from it.

As the book opens, Marni has had her way and they're doing a magic and mystery dinner theatre night but something goes very wrong and a young waitress, Jossi, is murdered in an upstairs bathroom. Randy is worried that her boyfriend, Steve's boss will be furious about her tangential involvement in yet another murder. Steve is a detective and his boss the captain, who apparently has a history of being anti-Randy. In this MacDonald has combined my favorite and least favorite things in an amateur detective mystery. They only work for me if the amateur has a friendly association with the police (husband, lover, relative) and it doesn't work for me at all if it's antagonistic and/or the police are idiots. In this one, Steve's boss never makes an appearance.

Trying to put the death behind her, along with the nagging worries that it could have been her, Randy keeps working on the website, in spite of the threat of losing the job thanks to Greta. Even Mrs. Rutherford had mysteries of her own. However, Randy keeps getting drawn back into the mystery as others with ties to the house are killed and her own apartment isn't just robbed, it's trashed to the point she has to replace nearly everything she owns. Randy realizes she needs to get to the bottom of this before she's the next to go.

I enjoyed this very much. It was fun to try and parse some of the Canadian slang I've never heard. Randy and Steve are a fun couple, though their relationship was a tad flat but that could be me not having seen the first four books so I didn't take it into consideration as I reviewed this. I liked Randy a lot. I identified with her heavily. I love historical sites, I teach at a university, heck I even ate the Mizithra pasta at Old Spaghetti Factory (when I was introduced to them on Vancouver Island) for the same reason (they bill it as what the ancient Greeks might have eaten, even though I know it's really not). I even had my own version of the Rutherford House and a Greta Larsen (though in my case, Greta won). I enjoyed this as I said while it's hard to go back and read the mysteries that came before it, I might. I will definitely be getting the next in the series though.
