

Murder as a Second Language

Joan Hess

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Claire Malloy—now a married woman of leisure—tries her hand at volunteering, but instead lands her right in the middle of another murder investigation

Longtime bookseller and single mother, Claire Malloy has recently married her long term beau and moved out of her less than opulent apartment into a sprawling, newly remodeled house. Her daughter, Caron, is making plans for college. All of which leaves Claire with something she hasn't had in quite a while: spare time.

When her attempts to learn French cooking start getting "mixed" reviews, she agrees to help Caron and her best friend Inez in fluffing up their college applications by volunteering as an ESL tutor with the Farberville Literacy Council. But her modest effort to give back quickly becomes a nightmare when she's railroaded onto the Board of Directors of the troubled nonprofit. Vandalism, accusations of embezzlement, epic budget problems, and a cacophony of heavily-accented English speakers are just the tip of the iceberg. Just as she decides that it might be best to extricate herself, Claire gets a frantic call from her husband, Deputy Chief Peter Rosen. One of the students, an older Russian woman named Ludmilla, famed for her unpleasantness, has been murdered in the offices of the Farberville Literary Council. For the first time ever, Peter actually asks Claire for her help, and Hess brings a new depth to this fan-favorite series, in *Murder as a Second Language*.

Murder as a Second Language Details

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From Reader Review Murder as a Second Language for online ebook

Laura Salas says

I used to really enjoy this series, but this was the first title I've read in a while. Claire seemed whiny and not all that likeable (gee, I wonder where Caron gets it from?). I made it about 1/2 of the way through and realized I just didn't care who the killer was. There was no tension and nothing at stake for Claire, who is apparently now just looking for things to fill her days since she's not needed at the bookstore. Very disappointed.

Kate says

A perfect example of why I don't read amateur detective novels: they always come off as busy bodies who stick their noses where they don't belong and yet people mysteriously answer their questions. Add the constant casual racism, and this one hit a big low....

Faith says

What a fun read! This is one of those where one moment, I knew "who-dun-it", the next chapter, I'd change my mind to yet a different person, next chapter, back to the 1st one...I juggled about 3 total, then when the guilty party was revealed, I thought "I knew it!" Fast read, hard to put down, and perfect for my situation. I am taking classes right now at a tech school, so I would read in between the classes. I would LOVE to read more from this author!

Barbara says

In this 19th book in the series Claire Molloy, bookstore owner and amateur sleuth, recently married Deputy Chief Peter Rosen of the Farberville Police Department. They live in a lovely home with Claire's college-bound daughter Caron. Caron and her pal Inez plan to pad their college applications by volunteering at the Farberville Literary Council (FLC), which teaches English as a second language (ESL) to immigrants. Claire, now having a manager for her bookstore, agrees to help out at the FLC as well.

There are a host of employees, volunteers, and students at the FLC - and as happens with a diverse group of people - all kinds of sparks fly. Before long the dead body of an unpleasant, bullying Polish ESL student named Ludmilla is found in the copy room of the FLC - and against the wishes of her husband Claire jumps in to investigate.

Claire's attempt to solve the crime involves questioning people involved with the FLC again and again. She talks to them on the school's premises, in restaurants, and at their homes. Claire even breaks into one employee's house when she doesn't happen to be at home. It seems like almost everyone at the FLC has

things to hide and Claire is followed and threatened as she pursues the murderer.

Unfortunately the various 'suspects' in the book are not very interesting or distinctive, the interrogations go on and on, and the story becomes tiresome. Meanwhile, who knows what the actual police are doing because they don't seem to make any progress in solving the crime.

The story is punctuated by various snarky conversations between Claire and Caron - typical mom and teen daughter stuff - which are meant to be humorous but aren't. Claire also has intermittent interactions with Peter, some romantic, some about Claire sticking her nose in police business when she shouldn't. Of course Claire eventually solves the crime but by then I didn't care much who did it. I was just glad to be finished with the book. Unless you're a hard core fan of the Claire Molloy series and want to see what the characters are up to I'd say skip this book.

You can follow my reviews at <https://reviewsbybarbsaffer.blogspot....>

Stacey says

Yeah this book is kind of racist. I started to write some examples but then thought, "Why bother?" It just is casually and unapologetically racist. And kind of half finished because it never explains why one character ends up in the hospital, apparently poisoned. Unless I missed that at some point when trying to get past the cringeworthy Chinese patois or the main character whining about how put upon she is even though she doesn't work anywhere and does anything she pleases. Her daughter's a brat too. I wonder why.

John says

I had been wondering how things would go once Claire was a lady of leisure, married to a rich, handsome husband? Answer: boringly. I pretty much had to force myself to read the second half of the book through inertia and skimming.

Jennifer says

Another fine entry with Claire, Peter, Caron and Inez and a host full of new characters in our favorite southern city, Faberville. Claire is happily married and apparently bored to tears, so much so that she takes up French cooking. When Caron and Inez volunteer at the literacy council, Claire sees an opportunity and ends up on the Board. When a Polish student is murdered, Claire is once again all in to try to solve this murder (to Peter's continuing chagrin).

Snappy dialog and red herrings all over the place make this a very pleasant read. I love how Caron is full of teenage angst and sarcasm and am sad that this series is coming to a close with the passing of Joan Hess.

Deborah says

I have enjoyed all the Claire Malloy books I've read (which is most of them, except for 2 I couldn't get from the library), and it isn't even necessarily because of the murder or whatever mystery Claire is snooping around trying to solve. I seldom figure it out so it's usually a surprise at the end anyway. But my main reason for enjoying this series is the characters: Claire and Peter, Caron and Inez, regulars like Jorgeson and Miss Parchester, and Claire's science-fiction hippie customer (sadly missing from this installment).

In this novel, Claire's attempts to master French cooking are disrupted when she ends up embroiled in the goings-on at the Farberville Literacy Council. One of these goings-on happens to be a murder, and Claire is on the case! Her teenage daughter Caron is less petulant than usual and even shows flashes of maturity, while Caron's friend Inez gets a makeover and embraces the art of dating. Besides the investigating, the humour is what keeps me entertained. And I did not figure out who the killer was well, let's face it, I didn't try that hard because I was just enjoying the experience of reading another entry in this series. :)

Larraine says

Cute, fast read although I wonder if the whole Claire Malloy franchise is getting a little stale. In this latest edition, Claire and her husband, the gorgeous Peter, and her wisecracking daughter, Caron, are living in Claire's dreamhouse - a lovely Victorian with a library, pool and more. Ah, life is good! She is no longer actively involved in the day to day runnings of her bookstore, so she's bored. She's decided to do her own version of Cooking With Julia. Alas, her family is less than enthused. When her daughter, Caron, discovers that colleges are looking for more than just grades and want to see community service as well, she and her friend, Inez, try to find something that will not take up their entire summer. Claire finds the Literacy Center. The girls get into the last training class. She looks into being a tutor herself but training is over. However, she is roped into being on the board. There are some issues like where's the money going? However, she didn't plan on there being a murder. This was a cute story, and apparently Claire Malloy is a popular character. Maybe I'm the only one who thinks the franchise is starting to weaken. There's no sexual or financial tensions like there were in previous books. A perfect life isn't very challenging.

Laura says

It was revisiting a old friend but she is not as interesting to me and story/plot line wavered towards the end !!!

Patti says

Enjoyable installment in the Claire Malloy series.

When newly married Claire gets tired of trying to master the intricacies of French haute cuisine, she decides to volunteer at her town's Literacy Council. Informed that she just missed the mandatory training program to become an ESL tutor, she is instead roped into

Steven says

Always (to my mind at least) the lesser of Joan Hess' two main protagonists, Claire Malloy loses even more of her luster in her latest outing. Maybe she just came off as more sympathetic of a character when her overbearing self-regard, unrelenting acerbity and unlikeable pushiness were lightened with the economic and romantic woes of a single mother trying to raise a teenage daughter and keep a struggling business afloat. Maybe Ms Hess has just lost her knack for giving this particular character voice. Whichever the case, Claire Malloy now seems nothing more to me than an egotistical, mean-spirited, and vengeful bully, forcing her way into a case that the police don't seem to be having too much trouble handling on their own. A case that's not really much of a case in a story that's not really much of a story. It's the usual batch of suspects (interchangeable and unmemorable and unlikeable) all up to uninteresting amounts of mischief and one of whom killed somebody, but that point seems by the end of the book to be of minor importance. There are no little grey cells at work here. Claire 'solves' the mystery by forcing her way into the homes and workplaces and faces of people who seem way too eager to spill their guts to her at the drop of a hat and with little effort on her part. Mostly, I assume, to get this bulldozer driving scold out of their lives and their living rooms. I sympathize. Then she makes a random guess as to the killer's identity and tricks them into confessing. Then lets them walk away and has the police pick them up later. How very clever of her. How thrilling to read. We don't even get any Over Indignant comic relief from Caron and Inez, whose Lucy and Ethel escapades are limited this go round to getting contact lens prescriptions and teaching immigrants to read. And about those immigrants. Another entire review could be written about the casual racism on display here. I've never seen the word 'swarthy' used so many times in a novel written outside of the '50's. And each time I saw the words "Ms Marroy" on the page my stomach soured just a bit more. I think I'm done with Claire. Let's hope Arly doesn't let us down next.

Karen Douglass says

Too much stock-in-trade for my taste. I finished it but the protagonist was unappealing. She has a fine life and is not much engaged in it. If a real character owned a bookstore, had a teenage daughter and a loving second husband, I think she would spend less time feeling useless.

Heather says

This is a terrible book. I only bought it because it was on the bargain rack at Barnes & Noble and I'm an ESL teacher for adults so I thought it would be right up my alley. Wrong!! I guess this is a series but I hadn't read any of the other books so this was my first introduction to Claire Malloy. She's one of those female characters who doesn't do anything but stick her nose where it doesn't belong and get in trouble with her handsome police officer husband who can't seem to solve the very obvious crime himself. I haven't read one of these lady who dabbles in solving crimes books in a while and I realized I prefer the ones where women are police officers or detectives and don't have to clear their actions with their husband. So that was annoying and then there was the racist depictions of all the ESL students. Of course the Japanese woman calls her Miss Marroy. It seemed like the author was trying to shed light on this population but couldn't be bothered to move beyond stereotypes. Many other things bothered me about this book but the last one I'll mention is that was written only 5 years ago but Claire Malloy acts like the internet is some mysterious thing and that was

super annoying. Do not read this book, it's not worth your time.

Karen says

Wasn't sure I was liking this one at first. Claire Malloy is feeling somewhat adrift and without purpose since her sweet new husband has moved her into the house of her dreams and hired a clerk to run her small bookstore. Her sense of boredom pervades the first third of the book until, surprise, a murder that she might have an insider's advantage at solving, gives her something of interest to dive into. By the end I was having trouble following all the various plotlines (I listened to the book on CD as I knitted), and the book had risen in my appreciation from being slightly boring back up to classic Claire Malloy nuttiness.
