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Joyce Lavene , Jim Lavene

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It's another busy fall day for Peggy. A quick café lecture on African violets is followed by a minor bike accident involving a good-looking Saturn driver. Upon returning to her shop, Peggy discovers one of the wealthiest men in town--and one of the biggest philanderers--sprawled face down across one of her seasonal displays, apparently beaten to death with a garden shovel.

When the cops pin the murder on a local homeless man, Peggy must rake through evidence and dig up secrets to root out the real killer.

Pretty Poison Details

Date : Published May 3rd 2005 by Berkley Prime Crime (first published 2005)

ISBN : 9780425202999

Author : Joyce Lavene , Jim Lavene

Format : Mass Market Paperback 267 pages

Genre : Mystery, Cozy Mystery

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From Reader Review Pretty Poison for online ebook

Karen Hollins-Stallman says

Pretty Poison - Peggy Lee Garden, Bk 1

Author: Joyce Lavene, Jim Lavene

I have read several of their books and enjoyed them all. In this series It's another busy fall day for Peggy. A quick cafe lecture on African violets is followed by a minor bike accident involving a good-looking Saturn driver. Upon returning to her shop, Peggy discovers one of the wealthiest men in town--and one of the biggest philanderers--sprawled face down across one of her seasonal displays, apparently beaten to death with a garden shovel.

When the cops pin the murder on a local homeless man, Peggy must sift through evidence and dig up secrets to root out the real killer.

And then there's an enormous Great Dane who seems determined to adopt her and Peggy doesn't even like dogs. Good thing that Saturn driver is also a veterinarian.

I read this book 13 years ago, started it again and it all came falling back. I highly recommend

Andrea Guy says

If this book is any indication of what the rest of this series will be like, I'm in. Peggy Lee is a 52 year old widow, who runs a garden shop. She has a "real" life. She has a son on the force, like her late husband, who she is having issues with. Paul is a jerk. She met a man, Steve, who is 7 years younger than her, who she is starting to have some romantic feelings for, oh and then there's the Great Dane that has moved in. All that and a murder in her shop and a friend asking her about a certain type of poison.

Now you would think things would move at a faster pace in the story, considering that there is a lot happening, but it doesn't. This could bother some readers, but not me. The pacing felt natural to me. I liked that there was more than one mystery involved in this story and that they were tied together

The big mystery aside from who killed Mark Warner in her shop, is who is Nightflyer, the computer chess player that is likely stalking Peggy. This is one of the reasons I will keep reading the series. I want to know who this person is.

Like all cozies heroine is super spunky and a whole lot hard headed. In the case of Nightflyer, if there was someone who was stalking you, wouldn't you report it to the authorities? Especially since this person knows a lot about you and the murders?

But it wouldn't be a cozy mystery if the characters didn't act that way!

I liked Peggy Lee. She is loyal, loving and flawed, just like any human and the secondary characters are great as well, especially Steve, the vet/love interest. It will be interesting to see how their relationship develops in the series and how her son deals with it.

Linda says

Interesting book. There was a lot of information about different flowers and I liked the poisoning aspect. The characters were likeable and the mystery was good and kept me guessing.

Nuala Raftery says

Peggy Lee is a botanist who finds a murdered man in her gardening shop. As usual in this type of fiction, she sets

out to solve the case. The characters are well wrought, the setting interesting but some of the situations are ridiculous. However, the story would still be a good read if the writing weren't so bad. The writers have never heard of the pluperfect tense with the result that one spends an inordinate amount of time trying to decipher the sequence of events. This lack of grammar results in the immortal sentence "...the dead woman was working in the Bank of America"! Are books no longer edited? I am reading the second in the series and have had to abandon it. It's a pity because I think with proof reading and proper editing the books could be quite good.

Tari says

I had started this book at the beginning of the month then real life took over and since I dubbed today as a reading treat day, I was able to finish it. It was the book for discussion over a week ago at an online book club.

I had read one other book by the Lavenes and really enjoyed it so I knew when the club picked this book that I would like it as well. Peggy is a great character and I loved her friendship with her deceased detective-husband's old partner, Al. Al was very protective of her as he knew that John would be if he was still around. It was really awesome how this story showed that a woman in her 50s can still find a man to date even if he is a little younger than she is. I'm anxious to keep reading the series to see how things turn out between her and her veterinarian friend, Steve.

The mystery itself was really good tying two killings together that involved plant poisoning. I had an idea eventually who did it and why, but it was fun and intriguing to see how they went about finding out. There were still some red herrings tossed in that made me doubt myself a couple of times. All in all, I'm happy for Peggy that she's got a relationship now and that she and her police officer son have a better rapport as well. It was comical in some places when Peggy would talk someone into doing something and they were sneaking around doing it--I could picture this happening in a TV mystery.

Jennifer says

This was pretty typical for the genre. I was entertained and enjoyed the development of the characters. Sam is my favorite. I cannot stand Paul. I am not really a gardener so this was informative as well as entertaining.

I was not surprised that the housekeeper was the killer. I did think that the unveiling was a little rushed. The book seemed to flow really well, until the discovery of the cellar, then it was kind of sloppy. Otherwise, I enjoyed it. I will read more from this series, and I will probably read more from these authors as well.

Michelle says

Cozy mysteries really can be hit or miss for me. This one had some high points, but when you find the quirky affectations of the main character particularly annoying, it doesn't bode well for the series.

Peggy Lee is a quirky gal with spirit. She's got a green thumb, and she owns a garden shop. She's widowed, still misses her cop husband, wears a purple cape (I wish I were kidding) and rides her bike everywhere because she is environmentally conscious. She's even converting her old Rolls Royce to hydrogen. Plus she teaches at the university. She does it all in her fabulous 50s.

The plot is thin...dead body in her shop overnight. Poison. Flowers. A sexy vet next door who is a (gasp) younger man and he's definitely interested in Peggy. A cast of characters in her shop who are nearly as annoying as she is. And an awesome, awesome dog. Honestly, I'm going to read book 2 because of the dog and the vet.

2.5 stars, and I just can't bring myself to round up. Sorry, Peggy, but you are trying way too hard to be quirky for me. Dial it back and you might get the third star in book 2.

Heather L says

A pretty good mystery, I would probably pick up the second in the series if I happened across it.

RebeccaS says

This is a new series and author for me and at first I just couldn't get into the story. I don't know if it was because I didn't really know the characters well before WHAM a murder occurs and everything gets crazy. I thought maybe the writing was too scattered and jumped around too much for me. But as I've read on I enjoyed it more and more and got very interested in the story. Who the heck was the culprit? There seemed lots of suspects, but no realistic ones at the time. There was also a couple more mysterious elements (view spoiler). I also got very frustrated with Paul, Peggy's son. What was with his attitude and his sudden over-protectiveness. I think it started to get explained, but hopefully will be explored more in future books. Also, can I please visit Peggy's house and store. They both sound lovely and this book makes me really want to visit Charlotte NC some day. The progression of the investigation went very fast and had some truly over-the-top events that occurred (view spoiler) At the end (view spoiler)

Georgiann Hennelly says

This is a clever murder/ mystery story. Peggy Lee is a police officers widow a gardener and a sleuth. She

owns a flower shop in Charlotte. One day when she enters her shop she finds a man face down in one of her attractive wicker baskets of Anemone bulbs. It was part of an Autumn display she'd created along with a scarecrow and pumpkins. She calls the police and to her relief the Det who comes is her deceased husband's partner. When they turn over the body they discover it's Mark Warner one of the wealthiest men in Charlotte. And he was hit with a shovel. Was it jealousy or something else. Peggy is determined to find the killer!

Sheri says

Pretty Poison (Joyce & Jim Lavine)

Murder/mystery. Peggy Lee, a police officer's widow, is a gardener and junior sleuth. She owns a flower shop in Downtown Charlotte. She enters her shop one day and finds a dead man, apparently murdered with a shovel to his head. The victim is a wealthy prominent married man with many mistresses. The suspect list is high. With the help of her son Paul, a police officer she finds that things are not as they appear and anyone is suspect, and everyone has motive. Twists turns, and surprises, Pretty Poison will have you guessing until the end. Also included gardening tips, and info on flowers/plants. Fast paced enjoyable read.

Amy says

Peggy Lee is a widow and now owns The Potting Shed which is a local garden shop as well as a college Professor.

One morning when arriving in her shop Peggy finds the body of Mark Warner. How did he get in her shop and why is he dead? Murder or accident?

Peggy Lee starts digging around in places that could put her in danger to find the truth.

A good story and great information on plants.

Jennifer says

It is a new series for me. I found it a easy read once i got into it.

Kellene says

This is a new series to me, and I'm not sure how I feel about this book. The fact that it is set in Charlotte, and I connected with many of the locations helped a lot. The characters were a mixed bag for me with connections. Some of them I really liked, some of them I really didn't. Peggy and Steve were two that I took to immediately, and could see myself having lunch with. And I adore Shakespeare... such a typical Dane. The son grew on me, once he got over being an over-protective butt-head. However, the mystery itself was a bit far-fetched for me, and some of the situation Peggy found or put herself in were beyond the ridiculous toward the sublime. I hate reading something and thinking "what kind of idiot would even do such a thing?", but it happened frequently in this book. And as a resolution, let's just pull something totally out of left field to tie it all up. Then there's the whole Nightflyer business... I'm not ruling out another read in this series, but it's definitely not at the top of my list.

Lynn Demsky says

I enjoyed it this cozy --- was comfortable, fun and entertaining especially liked how she got stuck with Shakespeare her great Dane dog! And, he helps to make the story very human!
