



Foul Play at Four

Ann Purser

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New in the series that's "a must for British cozy fans" (*Booklist*). Lois Meade has worked through all the days of the week, turning up clues and scrubbing up messes and murderers in the village of Long Farnden. But sleuthing is rarely a spotless endeavor...

A series of robberies have begun to plague Long Farnden, and Lois's own daughter, Josie, is shaken when a thief makes off with a hundred pounds from the till in her grocery shop. But before her policeman fiancé can crack the case, someone cracks Lois's husband on the head when he interrupts a burglary in progress. Now Lois-and the besotted Inspector Cowgill-must determine who's cleaning out Long Farnden, and clean up after an increasingly violent crime spree...

Foul Play at Four Details

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From Reader Review Foul Play at Four for online ebook

Larraine says

I've always enjoyed Ann Purser's working class heroine, Lois Meade. In the early books, Lois started out as a cleaning lady living in a working class home. As the books evolved, her loving husband has won the lottery which enables them to buy a lovely old home and set up a cleaning business names "New Brooms."

Now Lois has several local women working for her. They also set up their daughter, Josie, as the storekeeper in their small town. Josie is engaged to a local policeman whose uncle, Inspector Cowgill, happens to be in love with Lois - although at a distance. Lois has a talent for "ferretin'" out the truth, and Cowgill recognizes her talents although he constantly worries about her safety.

In this book, a series of small burglaries hit home in a very personal way. First Josie loses 100lbs, a sum she can ill afford to lose, when her back is turned. Then Derrick, Lois' husband, is attacked when he tries to stop another burglary. That's when Lois decides she needs to take things into her own hands.

This book left me oddly unsatisfied. There wasn't much in the way of suspense, something that has been exhibited in Purser's past books. There was no real mystery. Could it be that this series has run its course? I hope not. Perhaps Purser was just under pressure to get another Lois Meade book out in a certain period of time. The book was a fun read, but didn't match the past books in the series.

Beth Roberts says

I agree with what previous reviewer, Donna, had to say. There really was no mystery here, as we know from the beginning we are after erstwhile thieves, Gerald and Clive Mowlem. She was correct in her assessment that after this many installments in a series, it does become like a visit with old friends.

I love the British village cozy, and this one does not disappoint in that regard. The last several books, however, have left me with a growing inclination towards the more minor players in the stories rather than Lois Meade, the main character herself. Lois is continually described as quite attractive (though middle-aged), adroitly capable of handling her business and family, but she is becoming increasingly grumpy and snappish towards the family, her mother and husband, in particular.

The other thing that is becoming quite tedious is Detective Inspector Cowgill's soppy infatuation with "his" Lois. This is a long-married woman, afterall, and I find it difficult that Cowgill (a man described as quite distinguished in his field as well as considerably older), would take to suddenly singing old love songs on a professional call to Lois from his office, no less. Apparently, everyone from his secretary and underlings to all of Lois' family are aware of his feelings. It just doesn't ring true and is actually quite embarrassing for a character I liked quite a bit in earlier books. Hoping the author somehow wraps up that storyline and quickly. Also hoping for a bit of a return to earlier Lois Meade mysteries, with a bit more suspense. All in all, an enjoyable entry to a long-standing series, but by far not its best.

Lalla says

I thoroughly enjoyed this Lois Meade adventure. The characters have all become well-known friends and I like the way the author combines the changes that occur in societies and families with the plot. I would not classify this as a mystery, but more as a crime adventure and bringing justice to those who do not respect the law. There is more focus in this story on a few characters and not so much on Lois's business. I am already looking forward to the next one. If you don't read this series in order you are missing out on the excellent character development in this series.

Colleen says

My first book by this author! Enjoyed the characters!

Stephanie says

Admittedly I jumped in on this series in book #4, not the beginning, so that may have some bearing on my three star review. This book was good, nothing very spectacular about it. It wasn't really a mystery, there wasn't much to figure out. It was a quick read though, not unenjoyable. I don't know that I will read any more of this series though.

Sandie says

Ann Purser's FOUL PLAY AT FOUR is one of those British cozies you set aside to read on a rainy (or snowy) day. Just brew yourself a cup of tea, snuggle up and get ready for a visit to the village of Long Farnden. A composite of Jessica Fletcher and Miss Marple, protagonist Lois Meade is the owner of a cleaning company and amateur sleuth who investigates "from a distance" and is never really put in any truly dangerous situations (unless you classify fending off the advances of an amorous Police Inspector named Cowgill as dangerous).

The town itself is populated by a cast of characters whose age, gender, temperament background, relationships and moral values are the true foundation of the story, with theft, assault and un-premeditated murder being present but underplayed. Even Ms. Purser's villains, while coming across as a bit threatening are, in reality, just "bad boys" who are not all that villainous.

Think of this book as the flip side of authors like Michael Connelly, James Patterson or even Agatha Christie. You're not going to get a headache from taxing your powers of deduction but this amusing bit of fluff will make the dreary afternoon just fly by.

Evelyn Harvill says

This series just keeps getting better!

Yeva says

This series is so good, but I think it's very interesting that most of the bad guys usually kidnap their victims and stop short of killing them. Happily, it seems as though Ms. Purser has never seen our Law and Order or Criminal Minds. I'm thankful. I love that these books focus on solving the crime and not on all things grizzly and gore. Not that I don't love a good murder mystery, but I like how Ms. Purser brings in some heart to her characters--friends and foes. Foul Play at Four engages the reader with even more encounters of Dot and Mrs. T-J, and in doing so makes the action even more fun.

Kathy says

Another excellent entry into the wonderful cozy series by Ann Purser. I love these mysteries featuring our sleuth Lois Meade and her family and of course the smitten detective Inspector Cowgill. If you have followed this series from the beginning then you have followed Lois and her family through the very entertaining years. Josie is preparing to marry Cowgill's nephew in this latest outing.

Ann Purser has captured the essence of a English village perfectly. I just love to escape to Long Farnden with Lois and her family. And of course all the characters who work for New Brooms. Dot Nimmo one of the most colorful is featured in this outing. There are big changes afoot in the village in this novel....big changes at the Hall and with herself (if you've been following the series this doesn't sound odd to you).

There are robberies, bad guys and characters galore. Another fabulous cozy from Ann Purser, perfect to escape to a wonderful English village on a blustery afternoon.

Josephine (Jo) says

Another good read from Ann Purser. The Lois Mead books are about a family who are very ordinary, Lois and her husband won the lottery and bought a nice old house in the village of Long Farnden close to their old home, Lois' mum lives with them and helps in the house and her daughter Josie runs the village shop. Lois runs a cleaning business called New Brooms and has a side-line in what her husband calls "ferretin'" helping Inspector Cowgill (who has a soft spot for Lois which she always squashes) to solve crimes in the surrounding villages.

In this story there have been a series of thefts in Long Farnden and that is enough to arouse curiosity in Lois but then it gets personal when her daughter's shop is targeted by the thieves. Lois sets out to find the perpetrators, this leads her into the inevitable scrapes that usually accompany Lois' ferretin' and she has another adventure risking life and limb to bring the criminals to justice.

I particularly love the setting for the books as I live in the area where they are set, I recognise the local sayings and in this book the Meads take a trip and have to go on the A1 they take the exit at The Ram Jam pub which is our exit onto the motorway, we live about eight miles away, this all makes me feel so at home with the stories.

chrisa says

I enjoyed this book in the series. I found the book to be just the meandering kind of read I was in the mood for and not a straightforward cozy at all.

Wanda says

Good story. Bad editing. I found a couple of inconsistencies and a few grammatical and spelling errors, ex., desert instead of dessert. Things of this sort really bother me.

Caroline Ingvaldsen says

The eleventh Lois Meade mystery features the intrepid proprietor of the New Brooms cleaning agency once again "ferreting" out crime at home and on the Yorkshire moors.

Margaret says

Good book in a good series. What do you do when you run out of days of the week? Start going through numbers.

Lois is an endearing if brusque blue-collar protagonist.

Donna says

There is no mystery here--this is more a cat and mouse type book. As is often the case with mystery series that reach a certain age, the attraction to the Lois Meade books at this point is a visit with old friends in a familiar, charming location, not any whodunnit aspect. That doesn't make this a bad book by any means, just not much of a "mystery".
