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Mary Anne Kelly

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Searching for her birth mother, an Irish girl comes to Long Island and stumbles upon a terrible secret

One of the first things Claire Breslinsky loved about Johnny was that he never even glanced at her sister. Carmela had always been the glamorous one, but Johnny only had eyes for Claire—the frazzled, world-traveling photographer who solved mysteries in her spare time. Only when their marriage fell apart did Claire learn that Johnny avoided Carmela because they’d had a clandestine fling in high school. When Carmela discovered she was pregnant, she fled to Ireland, where she left her daughter to be raised by her eccentric spinster aunts. Now Johnny is gone forever—but Claire’s niece is coming home.

Jenny Rose Cashin arrives from Ireland to take a job as an au pair in a fading Long Island resort town, hoping to reconnect with her long-lost mother. But something evil lurks in the quiet beachside residences of Sea Cliff. There is a killer on the grounds of this strange art colony, and Jenny Rose will need all the help she can get from her aunt Claire to uncover the truth—and stay alive.

Twillyweed Details

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From Reader Review Twillyweed for online ebook

Julie says

Twillyweed by Mary Anne Kelly is a 2015 Mysterious Press Publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

I confess I am unfamiliar with this series and so was not aware there were four other installments in the Claire Breslinsky Mystery series. Even so, I had no real indication this was not a stand alone as the author quickly got me up to speed on the events that have led us all to this juncture in Claire's life.

Claire is now divorced, with grown children, struggling with her photography career, and to top off her recent string of bad luck, she finds out her current lover has a big secret, and her niece, Jenny Rose, whom she only recently discovered even existed, is coming to America from Ireland, and her sister wants Claire to meet up with her on her behalf.

Jenny Rose has come to America to make contact with her birth mother and takes a job as an Au Pair, caring for young Wendall, a boy she quickly becomes attached to. Meeting her Auntie Claire, put the two women together amongst the same group of people, and they develop a quirky, but nice and solid relationship. However, a theft is soon discovered, which leads to a murder, and once again, Claire is in the big middle of the whole messy affair.

The one thing that kept screaming out to me as I read this story was that it felt dated, as though it had been released back in the 1990's, but was being reissued in digital format. However, I could not find any previous editions of the book anywhere, so I tried to ascertain if the story was historical and deliberately set in this time frame. But, I couldn't find any indication of that either. But, there are glaring signals and huge hints that this story is not set in present day.

If you know that going in, you will be mentally prepared for attitudes and beliefs we no longer practice, and the unusual lack of or mentioning of modern technology, except on a very rare occasion. However, this is not exactly a bad thing, in that the atmosphere was weirdly charming, even quaint.

This is a whodunit mystery, but it's also a family saga of sorts. The mystery part gets off to a very slow start, and it's not until over half way in that we see any action from that element. However, once the ball got rolling the guessing game picked up speed and I never would have guessed who the culprit was.

I liked Claire's character, her tenacity and honesty, and at times even her self deprecation. Jenny Rose was wisecracking, with an attitude typical of her age, but could come off sounding disrespectful on occasion, but she grew on me as the story progressed. However, both women wind up finding some peace and harmony in their lives, which was good to see.

The book was a little off the beaten path and is certainly a unique spin on the typical amateur sleuth trope. If I ever can manage to find the time I would love to go back and read the previous books in the series, and I will certainly read any future releases too.

I think mystery lovers who like the amateur sleuth trope or cozy mysteries, will enjoy this one. It's a

character driven story with a mild romantic undertone, the violence and language are tame, so most everyone could enjoy this one.

4 stars

Lauri Rottmayer says

This was a very interesting book and there was a lot going on.

Although it initially seemed that the focus was on Jenny Kate trying to connect with her mother, who had given her up for adoption, it became so much more. I loved the characters in this book. I love how they interacted with each other.

As the book went on with more twists and turns, I grew to love it more. Loved this book! :-)

Gay says

An unusual book. Told from two POVs—that of Jenny Rose Cashin, newly arrived from Ireland to be a caregiver for young Wendell; and Claire Breslinsky, who happens to be her aunt. Jenny Rose has never met her mother, Carmela, who had her when she was 15. The family arranged for the baby to be raised by two Irish aunts. Mother and daughter come together on Long Island at Sea Cliff, a small community where everyone is related. Claire takes the job of cleaning a large old house—the Big White for Morgan, whose mother has just died in it. When Claire hears how she died—an overdose of medication, she is suspicious. She is not a sleuth but does piece things together.

When someone is murdered in the house where Jenny Rose works, she pairs with Claire to find out who the murderer is. They don't believe the easy answer—that it was the women's ex-husband. They make a list of suspects, then set a trap as the MacGuffin in the story might be a cache of jewels owned by Morgan's mother.

The two voices are distinct. Jenny Rose has a wonderful relationship with Wendell, a difficult boy. Beautifully written. Definitely recommended. Mysterious Press.

CL says

This was my first book by this author and I will read more books with Claire Breslinsky as the mystery solving sleuth. This book was like a mix of times from a bygone era and present day as lived in a Long Island seaside town. The characters were intriguing and felt like people you would know. When Claire's niece, Jenny Rose, comes to town after being raised by 2 spinster aunts in Ireland to work as an au pair so she can try to connect with her birth mother she lands into the middle of a mystery that may threaten the lives of those she has come to consider her family. Claire has just suffered a drastic change to her life and when she discovers that her fiancé is gay she gets the opportunity to move into a cottage near Jenny Rose. As the two become closer they try to solve the mystery and along the way they both discover a life for themselves that was more than either could ever have dreamed of. I would like to thank the publisher and Net Galley for

the chance to read this ARC.

Fictionophile says

Filled to the brim with interesting, at times eccentric, at times suspicious, characters, lovable animals, and with a beautiful seaside setting, “Twillyweed” will attract anyone who loves a good old-fashioned ‘whodunit’. With elements of suspense, humor, mystery and romance this is a novel which has something for everyone.

My complete review can be found on my blog: Fictionophile

Maggie says

I wasn’t quite sure what to make of this book at first. It seemed to be a family saga although I was expecting a mystery. However the characters were very engaging and the descriptions of people and places were very captivating. Eventually however, a murder occurred as well as other convoluted events which made the story even more interesting.

Looking at the cover and the bits at the end it appears that this is not the first mystery involving the narrator of part of this boo. I think I need to investigate further as she was an entertaining character who didn’t take herself too seriously!

Thanks to Netgallery for giving me the chance to read and review this book, a four star book for me.

Brenda Schneider says

Enjoyed the book. Liked the characters. I won this book through goodreads.

Maggie says

A Way with Words

I really enjoyed this book. The author has a way with words. Her descriptions of Sea Cliff make you want to move there tomorrow. This could take place in 1930 except for the modern conveniences. The mystery is secondary to the characters, which I like. Mary Anne Kelly could be writing literary fiction but she chose the mystery field. I will have to read her other books.

elsa says

Fun and light reading ~ a mystery romance ~ had I known I wouldn't have read it. But it was fun and

everyone wins in the end!

Rina says

The beginning was a little slow but it's not a long book so it moved along. And by midway I was hooked. Of course, I didn't really guess the culprit in a timely fashion but must admit I had my suspicions; it's always the most non-obvious person! Want to see what other think when the read it.

Cats of Ulthar March of Shoggoths says

REVIEW: TWILLYWEED by Mary Anne Kelly

TWILLYWEED is a lyrical and poetic novel holding at its core mysteries--of the past, of the present. The sleepy art colony on Long Island is home not only to reclusive and eccentric artists, but also harbors a killer. Into this mix arrives a young Irish-born lass in search of her roots, taking work in the enclave so she can search out her birth mother, who when pregnant left Long Island for Ireland, depositing her newborn with the mother's aunts. Such a past and such a present can surely only lead to trouble.

Ian Wood says

This is the complete review as it appears at my blog dedicated to reading, writing (no 'rithmatic!), movies, & TV. Blog reviews often contain links which are not reproduced here, nor will updates or modifications to the blog review be replicated here. Graphic and children's reviews on the blog typically feature two or three images from the book's interior, which are not reproduced here.

Note that I don't really do stars. To me a book is either worth reading or it isn't. I can't rate it three-fifths worth reading! The only reason I've relented and started putting stars up there is to credit the good ones, which were being unfairly uncredited. So, all you'll ever see from me is a five-star or a one-star (since no stars isn't a rating, unfortunately).

WARNING: Unhidden spoilers may be in this review!

This novel highlights the serious problem of choosing to write in first person PoV. The author is confined to reporting only what their primary character sees and hears. They cannot move from that perspective, which severely restricts and limits the story. It's also an appallingly arrogant PoV: everything is "I" - what I did, what I saw, what I felt - who cares about anyone else?! It's the most obnoxious form of writing and few writers can carry it without inflicting pain upon their readers. This novel makes it worse by bouncing back and forth between PoVs so much that the reader risks whiplash.

The author of Twillyweed acknowledges that this is a real problem by beginning this novel in third person before making an uncomfortably clunky shift to first person: primary antagonist Claire Breslinksy's PoV. It did not make for good reading. The novel also has a prologue which turned me off. Prologues are antique and I always skip them. I have never read a novel yet where skipping the prologue put me at a disadvantage, which is testimony to how pointless prologues (and introductions, prefaces, etc., etc.) truly are.

The story here is that in seeking her birth mother, an Irish girl travels to Long Island and "stumbles upon a terrible secret"! Jenny Rose Cashin is Claire Breslinsky's niece - the illegitimate offspring of Claire's sister Carmela and Claire's ex-husband Johnny. Jenny says, "Oh Gee, I'm sorry"? I haven't lived in Ireland - visited only briefly once, but I felt this was more of an Americanism - Oh gee! - than something which the Irish person would say, but maybe I'm wrong on that score. I would think they'd be more likely to say, "Oh Jeese!", but it's no big deal.

I've read none of the Claire Breslinsky stories to this point (assuming there are others), so I'm meeting her afresh, and I wasn't impressed. She first appeared as a truly whiny woman bemoaning her fate. She had gotten rid of her husband Johnny, who she now whined was failing to support their sons who are in college. Yes he's morally at fault, but not legally since both boys are now over eighteen and an insurance payout paid for the boys' college tuition anyway. Claire has gotten herself involved with a fireman now, sporting the unlikely name of Enoch, who seems at first blush to be rather condescending towards Claire who seems at second blush to invite condescension.

Jenny is consistently referred to as Jenny Rose which I found annoying in short order. There were also some odd words used in the text. Once example used to indicate, presumably, that she opened a package is: "She kipped it open..." which makes no sense unless there's an alternate meaning (in Irish usage) of a word which means taking a nap! (p15). The author ought to be aware that not everyone will get colloquialisms.

At the end of a section on page 16, right before the story returns to Claire's first person PoV, there's a weird section that's italicized and appears to be told from the PoV of an acquaintance of Jenny's (always referred to as Jenny Rose!) named Wendell. It comes out of nowhere and makes no sense. Then we're back to Claire's 1PoV. I think this section might have been intended to represent thoughts of the killer, but it came after an italicized sentence which was Jenny's thought, and there was only a line break between the two, so initially and confusingly, it appeared to be a continuation of the thoughts she had begun. It was not well done, and this seemed to be a pattern in this novel.

It was at this point that I really started to feel like I didn't honestly want to read any more of this. Jenny was completely boring to me. There was nothing going on with her except her own idle thoughts and the random impressions she had of her surroundings as she arrived at the house where she would be staying and started to get settled in. It wasn't interesting at all.

Claire's next section was simply more whining. She gets a call from Carmela, but rather than let us in on what this evidently important call was all about, she breaks the fourth wall and talks to the reader about some incident from the past, which really tripped up any momentum the story might have garnered for itself with this evidently urgent phone call. I was not thrilled by yet another digression.

I made it through ten percent of this book, but I couldn't stand to keep going. I mean who says, "...sit down and attend to your brunch"? Seriously? Maybe a hundred years ago people spoke like that. Maybe that's what Enoch will turn out to be - a time-traveler from the past. He has the name for it. Actually he turns out to be something Claire didn't expect: it looks like he misled her and now there's yet another thing in her sorry life to bemoan.

For a book which includes as part of its blurb: "Jenny Rose Cashin arrives from Ireland to take a job as an au pair in a fading Long Island resort town, hoping to reconnect with her long-lost mother. But something evil lurks in the quiet beachside residences of Sea Cliff. There is a killer on the grounds of this strange art colony, and Jenny Rose will need all the help she can get from her aunt Claire to uncover the truth--and to stay alive." there was nothing happening. Nothing at all. No dead bodies or even hints of them. No hint of a killer

except for the afore-mentioned misplaced and obscure italicized segment consisting of three paragraphs or so, and even that was so obscure that it was hard to tell what the heck it meant. Certainly Claire and Jenny are going to have to save the day because as you know, this is a private dick story, so the police are, of course, utterly useless.

The book came off more as a pretentious and artsy memoir than ever it did a thriller or a mystery. It was simply depressing to read, and offered nothing to interest me. None of the characters garnered my support or empathy. I didn't like any of them, and I cannot recommend this based on what I read. I know I didn't read much of this, but life is far too short to continue to plow on through a book that has failed you in every way when there are so many other books out there, taunting me with their siren calls.

Maria Beltrami says

E tutti vissero felici e contenti. Twillyweed, dal nome della dimora avita di una famiglia americana di origini irlandesi, è uno di quei giallettini carini nel quali la solita signora di mezza età ma ancora piacente si ritrova a risolvere il mistero dopo aver interpretato tutto al contrario. Quindi la ricchissima famiglia che ha assunto sua nipote è in realtà una banda di poveracci che vivono praticamente della carità e del senso di colpa di chi, in un incidente, ha reso invalido il fratello maggiore; quello che lei pensa essere un riparatore di barche è un ricchissimo ereditiero; l'affascinante mangiauomini è una lesbica, ma, soprattutto, chi è assente non è necessariamente andato via.

Solo il piccolo di casa, un bambino di quattro anni con un occhio malandato, vede le cose con chiarezza, e solo quando lui deciderà di agire, costringendo gli altri a seguirlo per salvarlo, le cose andranno finalmente a posto.

Il romanzo è scritto piuttosto bene e i personaggi sono interessanti. Troppi cliché e troppe divagazioni per i miei gusti.

Ringrazio Open Road Integrated Media e Netgalley per avermi fornito una copia gratuita in cambio di una recensione onesta.

And they lived happily ever after. Twillyweed, named after the ancestral home of an American family of Irish descent, is one of those cute mystery in which the usual middle-aged but still attractive woman finds herself to solve the mystery after understanding everything just the opposite. So the rich family who hired her niece is actually a band of poor devils, living pretty much of the charity and the guilt of those who, in an accident, disabled the older brother; what she thought to be a repairer of boats is a rich heiress; the fascinating man-eater is a lesbian, but, above all, who is absent is not necessarily gone away.

Only the younger of the house, a four year old child with a battered eye, sees things clearly, and only when he decides to take action, forcing the others to follow him to save him, things will be finally in place.

The novel is quite well written and the characters are interesting. Too many clichés and too many digressions for my taste.

Thank Open Road Integrated Media and Netgalley for giving me a free copy in exchange for an honest review.
