



## Uncommon Clay

*Margaret Maron*

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In the red clay country of Seagrove, North Carolina, Judge Deborah Knott oversees the distribution of property in the bitter divorce between two members of the Nordan clan, a dynasty of skilled potters long cursed by suicide and scandal. After a gruesome act of violence suddenly strikes the homestead, Judge Knott must stop a killer who will stop at nothing to continue a dark history of family secrets, old sins, and new blood. (July)

## Uncommon Clay Details

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Author : Margaret Maron

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## From Reader Review Uncommon Clay for online ebook

### Sandra says

This one kept me guessing until the very end...a really good mystery by a new favorite author. This book was about family and passing their legacies down the family tree....in this case, its pottery made from the red clay of North Carolina through generations of potters. Jealousy, secrets, and Judge Deborah Knott becomes involved more than she wants too. This is number 8 of the series.

From Amazon:

In the red clay country of Seagrove, North Carolina, Judge Deborah Knott oversees the distribution of property in the bitter divorce between two members of the Nordan clan, a dynasty of skilled potters long cursed by suicide and scandal. After a gruesome act of violence suddenly strikes the homestead, Judge Knott must stop a killer who will stop at nothing to continue a dark history of family secrets, old sins, and new blood.

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### Linda Selbach says

My favorite so far of her books. I've noticed too many times in series they get worse not better. This is a nice surprise and I'm ready to read the next one!

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### Joyce Lagow says

8th in the Judge Deborah Knott series set in North Carolina.[return][return]Deborah s off again, sitting in for another judge, this time in the heart of the potting country in the piedmont area of North Carolina. It s more of a flight from the pain of breaking up with Kidd Chapin after she discovers, in a very funny scene, that Kidd has gotten back together again with his ex-wife.[return][return]Once in Seagrove, she finds that judicial life doesn t change much; she s there primarily to hear two property settlement cases, one of which involves a couple who are potters, whose breakup is acrimonious. In an attempt to settle the division of a valuable collection of early pottery, Deborah asks the couple to start the property division at the pottery itself. The husband doesn t show mostly because he has been murdered in one of his own kilns.[return][return]This is an excellent story that highlights the potting crafts industry, one of the relatively few cottage industries left in the US. Maron does a much better job than in *Killer Market* of intertwining the murder plot with a fascinating look at a particular industry; *Killer Market* seemed to be not much more than a vehicle for promoting the furniture industry and its half-yearly sales in High Point, N.C. This book illustrates the practicality of potters, who balance tradition with innovation and the need to make a living. It s quite a contrast with the furniture industry, with its high-tech robotic machines that duplicate dents, wormholes and other oddities of antique furniture in order to produce identical copies that are valued in their own right. In the potting trade, innovations are gas-fired or electric kilns. Maron also does an excellent job, through characters in the plot, of exposing the snobbishness of academics and other who rail at the loss of the more traditional ways of firing. As she has one potter saying, Don t see the horse and buggy you came in on . [return][return]The plot is a good if straightforward one, using as a story element the dangers of the heavy metals, especially lead, that used to be used in glazes for foodware until the adverse health effects were realized.[return][return]As usual, her writing style is perfectly suited to her characters and area. She does not wear out Deborah, who continues

to evolve as a character and for whom Maron provides diverse situations to keep interest high.[return][return]Another fine installment in an excellent series. Highly recommended.

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### **Jean says**

In book eight of the series, Judge Knott is a visiting Judge to a neighboring county. She is overseeing a divorce trial of two famous local potters who have been married for twenty-five years. The case is very complicated; then, James, the husband, is murdered.

Maron has her usual down home wit and humor in the “who-done it” story. Maron did a great deal of research about the world of potting and clays to write this story. The author’s portrayal of human relationships raises the novel above the usual fare in the genre.

Maron writes a great mystery, her books are fun to read plus I always learn something new about a North Carolina industry. Last time it was about the furniture industry, this time pottery. I read this as an audiobook downloaded from Audible. C. J. Critt does an excellent job narrating this series.

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### **Wanda says**

Deborah Knott is a district court judge in the state of North Carolina. She has been assigned to hear a case for the dissolution of property in a complicated and uncivil(to say the least) divorce case. However, as usual, she becomes involved in so much more. She almost settled the problems of the case which involves having both parties agree to meet and confirm the final division of a large and valuable collection of pottery. When she arrives at the scene she finds that the husband has been murdered by being burnt alive in one of his pottery kilns. Ugh! As usual, Deborah keeps becoming involved in the solution and identification of the murderer. Just another day in the life of Judge Deborah Knott--add to that the interactions with her large family of eleven brothers, sister-in-laws, nieces and nephews and the messy break-up with her latest boyfriend and you have another entertaining story.

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### **Patty says**

Judge Deborah Knott is assigned to do some judicial work in another jurisdiction when their judge suffers a slight stroke. The first case is a divorce settlement of a local potter, the second a divorce case of attorneys. The pottery and the people involved gets very complicated very quickly and Deborah is quickly up to her neck in dead bodies, multiple suspects and no idea who is actually trying to kill people.

This is such a good series, the people seem so real and so \*true\* that you can't help like them, or hate them or have some sort of reaction to them. Just feeling indifferent isn't possible.

I'm looking forward to the next book in the series, and hope that Ms. Maron keeps right on writing about Deborah and her wacky extended family, not to mention the wacky cases that involve Deborah.

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### **Steve says**

This is one of my favorites of the entire series. I enjoyed all the material about making pottery and I didn't come close to anticipating the solution to the mystery. Also, I appreciate that Deborah's family is not as central here as they are in many of the other books in this series; they are fine, well-written characters, but they do tend to overwhelm the mysteries.

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### **Leanne says**

I like Margaret Maron's books - particularly since I live in Raleigh, and even though her heroine, Deborah Knott, lives in a fictional NC county, she spends lots of her time in Raleigh, and around the state, and I can 'relate'. I just recently listened to this book on tape (I highly recommend listening to books!). It was an interesting mystery, set in Seagrove, among the Seagrove potters - several deaths (one of them clearly a murder; the others mysterious, but not quite clear cut murders) occur in one family of potters. Since Judge Knott is in the area as a circuit court judge, she of course gets involved! The mystery had me guessing until close to the end - I was 'close' with my guesses, but not quite on the mark!

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### **Wendy says**

Love this series! This one highlights the pottery industries of Asheboro, NC. I live in the same area as Judge Deborah Knott and still learn something new about our state with each book in the series. The series is authentic to our part of the state and always enjoy the familiar places and attitudes. These stories always include a light mystery but not much intrigue. The Judge is funny, sarcastic, witty and on occasion a bit catty. She is very identifiable.

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### **Erin says**

Great mystery plot in this one! The two possible killers laid out at the beginning were so over-obvious as to be clear red-herrings, but I didn't quite figure out who it might be until the very end. And I found all the details about this history of pottery in North Carolina really interesting. Also, since I'm in the middle of the Sigrid Herald novels as well, I loved the quick shout-out to Oscar Nauman's character from that series :)

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### **Barbara says**

I have decided that any heroine in a mystery that does act stupidly and keep sticking her nose in everyone's business, where it doesn't belong automatically should get four (4) stars. I given too many stupid cozy heroine's three (3) stars, that it not fair to the heroines who act rationally, intelligently and cautiously.

Judge Deborah Knott does that in this book. While she's involved, her reasons for the most part are understandable and sometimes connected with her job, when she insert herself in the murders involving an old, historic pottery family in North Carolina. I did become suspicious at one point of the person who eventually was revealed to be the murderer, but it did take me a while. It was the process of elimination for the most part - who else could it have been? It was complicated but a very satisfying read.

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### **Richard Brand says**

Been on this Deborah Knott kick for a while now. Up to number 8. It ought not to surprise anyone that mystery writers have a certain formula they use and they just change the circumstances. It was fun to realize that Agatha Christie had a mystery about a movie star who I think lost a baby because a fan came to see her when the fan had the measles. This story seems to have built on that kind of plot. The pottery industry of NC is the background for this tell and there are three different kinds of bizarre murders in the pottery area. This did not have a lot of Deborah's family involved but her family knew a lot of the people from high school who were involved. It also brought an end to Deborah's courtship with her game warden on the coast in a humorous way for the read although perhaps not funny to Deborah when it happened.

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### **Wendy Pittman says**

This was my first in this series. At the beginning it statutes out slow and I was not sure I would continue but it picked up after several chapters. I try to support NC authors as much as possible

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### **Gwen Veazey says**

Great protagonist, Judge Deborah Knott the bootlegger's daughter, and a cool mystery set in Seagrove, NC, with a murder or two related to the pottery business.

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### **Larry Bassett says**

A murder mystery without a murder is a pretty dull book. At least *Uncommon Clay* for the first 65 pages was not too exciting. But my adrenalin perked up by page 80, ebbed away and then roared back at the very end. Amazing what a body and some action can do to chase off boredom!

This is the first Margaret Maron book I have read. Tired of macho males, I was looking for female protagonists in mysteries and came across Deborah Knott. The fact that books in this series have current social issue content was a major draw for me. Regrettably, the draw for this particular book was pottery, not really a social issue except by a pretty big stretch.

Judge Deborah Knott, a district court judge in "Colleton County," North Carolina. Deborah is in her late 30s, the youngest child and only daughter of an elderly ex-bootlegger who also has 11 sons. As a district court judge, she ranges all over the state ...

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Maron says, "The mystery novel is the peg upon which I hang my love and concerns for North Carolina as the state transitions from agriculture to high tech, from a largely rural countryside to one increasingly under assault by housing developments and chain stores" and her books have looked at problems of race, migrant labor, politics, and unstructured growth."

...

Margaret Maron is the author of twenty-six novels and two collections of short stories. Winner of several major American awards for mysteries (Edgar, Agatha, Anthony, Macavity), her works are on the reading lists of various courses in contemporary Southern literature and have been translated into 16 languages. She has served as president of Sisters in Crime, the American Crime Writers League, and Mystery Writers of America.

A native Tar Heel, she still lives on her family's century farm a few miles southeast of Raleigh, the setting for *Bootlegger's Daughter*, which is numbered among the 100 Favorite Mysteries of the Century as selected by the Independent Mystery Booksellers Association. In 2004, she received the Sir Walter Raleigh Award for best North Carolina novel of the year. In 2008, she was honored with the North Carolina Award for Literature.

Source; <http://margaretmaron.com/media.html#bio>

This is the eighth book in the Judge Deborah Knott series. As of 2011 there are seventeen books in the series with more on the way. Do I want to look up additional books in the series after this midpoint introduction?

Judging from my experience with this single book, it seems that Judge Knott is single but, as she quotes one of her eleven brothers, "You can't catch a fish if you ain't got a line in the water." She starts this book by ending a relationship and immediately putting her line back in the pond. Just a few steps removed from the cozy mystery, she is on the lookout, maybe even a bit on the prowl, but not hopping from bed to bed. She works as a substitute judge throughout North Carolina so covers a lot of different parts of the state. This book is set in the red clay Seagrove Pottery area of NC near Raleigh and pottery making is the milieu.

Cozy material? "*Takes more than a squirt of jism up someone else's wife to make a person my grandson,*" *he thought resentfully.* Not quite, I'd say, based on my limited experience. But some frequent Cozy readers could certainly disagree. Check out <http://www.cozy-mystery.com/Definitio...> and make up your own mind.

Perry Mason? Maybe not but there was the confrontation at the end where the killer tells the entire who-done-it where our heroine (and the reader, of course) can hear it. Murder mystery solved. Did you guess who it was? I didn't.

I did enjoy *Uncommon Clay* enough to give it three stars but not enough, given all the books I have to read, to check out another Margaret Maron title. Except maybe if she did one about tobacco - but I think she skips that killer.

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