



Thyme of Death

Susan Wittig Albert

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Susan Wittig Albert's novels featuring ex-lawyer and herb-shop proprietor China Bayles have won acclaim for their rich characterization and witty, suspenseful stories of crime and passion in small-town Texas. Now, when China's friend Jo dies of an apparent suicide, China looks behind the quaint facade of Pecan Springs. Though she finds a lot of friendly faces, China is sure that one of them hides the heart of a killer.

Thyme of Death Details

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From Reader Review Thyme of Death for online ebook

MJ says

Former Texas Lawyer turned herb shop owner China Bayles is not having a good week. It started out ok but it went straight downhill. First her good friend Jo Gilbert dies and it looks like suicide. But China and her friend Ruby don't buy it. Yea Jo was sick but she was a fighter and would not have given up. Then during the one night that week she might get to spend some good quality time with Mike McQuaid, Roz Kotner returns to town and wants to stay in China's guest cottage. After that someone breaks into Jo's house. Then 2 more bodies are found. Definitely a bad week. But what is really going on in this quite little Texas town and what does it have to do with Jo's death???

Lydia was right I really enjoyed this book. China Bayles is officially one of my favorite amateur detectives. China is a fun slightly complicated and flawed character that is a joy to read. Throw in her freespirted, newage best friend and a cute ex-cop turned professor and you're in for a good time.

Chrystal says

This is my first read of Susan Wittig Albert. I enjoyed her writing style a lot; it is very quick and fun. I liked how vivid her settings were and how unique the characters were. It made me want to visit the fictional town of Pecan Springs, TX. The story is a lot of fun, even when it is at the climax. I did figure out who-dunnit earlier than I expected, but I still think the suspense is very well-done. But, there were more than 4 f-words, 2 sexual encounters and a lesbian affair - - these are NOT my cup of tea to read about, so it really brought down my rating. I may browse one more of her books to see if this is a pattern or some unnecessary occurrence in this book.

Danielle says

This is first in the China Bayles series. I absolutely loved it. I couldn't put it down until I finished. Easy reading but lots of fun from beginning to end.

Vickie says

Super start to this cozy series. Love learning something new as I read. Nice thing is this is more than a 'cozy' cozy. No fuzzy little tugs of the heart. This is real life. Good and bad and in between.

Lisa Vegan says

Oh, I should have listened to my friend Terri and started reading these in 1992 when this first one was

published! There are now 16 books in the series so far and I guess I aim to read them all, plus any more that Susan Wittig Albert writes.

I found a couple of weird claims. 1. barbiturates referred to as over the counter sleeping pills (this taking place in the U.S. circa 1992), and 2. a road that's referred to as 80 miles long that stretches 60 miles to the south and 35 miles to the north. But I quibble.

I really enjoyed this mystery book; the main protagonist's voice reminded me somewhat of Sue Grafton's Kinsey Millhone, and that's a compliment from me. I'm particularly hoping to learn more about herbs in the other books in this series. The main character owns a herb business and grows herbs in her garden.

Susan says

I liked this book, very easy to read and kept my interest. However, saying that, I found that if I put it down, I wasn't very anxious to pick it up again, but once I did, I enjoyed reading it.

The beginning of the book felt a bit dated with reference to the fashions of the time and some of the slang, plus it seemed like all the people in town had worn something green at one time or other in the book! The author pulled a few unfair punches toward the end of the book by giving information that only China knew and shared with the reader only when she was explaining how she figured who the killer was. The climax of the book presented a really huge, unbelievable coincidence and had me saying to myself -- really????

I may or may not read further books in this series.

Lisa (Harmonybites) says

This is the first book in a series featuring China Bayles, our first person narrator, who quit her high-powered job as a criminal defense attorney to become the owner of a herbal store in small-town Pecan Springs, Texas. Next door is one of her best friends, Ruby, who owns a New Age store. Their friend, Jo, is found dead an apparent suicide but things aren't as they seem, and soon there are several suspects for her murder.

The style was smooth enough, but not distinctive, nor was there enough wit, humor or charm to distinguish this book. I'll give it points for keeping me turning the pages and keeping me guessing. Nevertheless, I won't be picking up another book in the series. This just didn't have anything that makes me feel I'll remember this months later--the characters and setting were too generic, too stereotyped, the lines of good and bad too off the shelf liberal/progressive (rich developer = evil; environmentalist/feminist = good), and the legal and herbal angles weren't absorbing enough to make me feel I had a peek into a different world.

So, good enough if you've picked this up to divert for a few hours--for me, not enough to invest more time in this world.

heather-lee says

Early nineties feminism...yowch guys. I sort of missed this era, since I was very young as it happened and we didn't exactly address it as such in college (too recent I suppose), but if this book encapsulates a common view of nineties feminists then I can see why feminists and feminism got such a bad name in there with so many people. Selfish bitches: getting divorces! doing what they want! being secret lesbians! wearing stirrup pants! using men for sex! withholding evidence! cussing! hating their mothers! hating their fathers! hating the dead weight of children keeping them down!

The mystery was ok I guess. The way it describes this cultural moment is nothing short of painful however.

Jonathan says

I don't know how many times I've checked this book out from my local library, but until this week I'd never read it. I'm sorry to say that I was missing out! I enjoyed this mystery enough to look for the second book.

I liked China, she was a strong, intelligent character, but yet I didn't "click" with her character, I don't know what it was but I just couldn't seem to relate with her at all. At times she was also arrogant. However, I immediately clicked with the rest of the characters, from Ruby to Meredith, to Mike.

The mystery was excellent, it was really the highlight of this story. It not only had a well-thought-out ending but it had enough clues and fake clues to throw me for a loop. I really enjoyed it. The setting was also excellent, I loved the herb shop and China's home in it, it was all very well described and I could picture it easily.

This was a decent book that I enjoyed, however it was on the line between cozy and non-cozy to me, a few scenes didn't follow the "cozy-mystery" definition of very little sex and/or blood and gore. Not that the book was bad in any way, but I just expected it to be a little bit different.

Overall a very good book with a few small things I didn't like. I'll be looking for the next one soon.

Eileen Lynx says

I was hoping for a more interesting story.

Kristen says

These mysteries by Susan Wittig Albert are very personable who dunits. The main character, China Bayles is a no nonsense snoop. Each book centers around some herb and includes recipes for cooking, medicinal use, and beauty.

Christine (KizzieReads) says

It was okay. Nothing spectacular, but not boring either. China is a former lawyer who now runs an herb shop. Her friend has died of a suicide, but no one believes that. Then stuff and people begin spiralling after that. I found China to be a flat character. Not really an emotional person at all. With everything that is happening, her character seems to be on an even keel with no variation at all. She was a bit stiff and it just seemed to kill the excitement of the story. The side characters had more emotions and reactions than she did. I'm hoping in the next books, she grows and becomes more of a full character.

Karen Syed says

Well, I finally did it. I jumped into yet another series of books that everyone said would have me hooked before I finished book one. Guess what? They were right.

I spent a couple of weeks (keep in mind I get to read a chapter every couple of days) reading THYME OF DEATH, the first in the China Bayles mystery series written by Susan Wittig Albert. China is a really neat character, a little bit of fun wrapped up in a serious package.

The story comes together in a nice little homespun package of quirky characters and murderous double-dealing. What I like best about this book is that Ms. Wittig has a flair for the dramatic and this makes the story all the more fun to read.

With dead bodies popping up like weeds in a cleverly designed garden, Susan Wittig Albert's THYME OF DEATH is a breath of fresh air that is the beginning of what I can only assume is a mysterious bouquet of death and delight. I will be working my way through each one.

Debbie says

This series of books are about an herbalist that has interesting adventures based in the Austin area. Lots of great information about herbs and recipes with herbs in them.

Lori Henrich says

Pecan Springs, Texas is a nice place to live. At least China Bayles thinks so. Coming from a former lawyer that is high praise. After leaving the law she became a resident of Pecan Springs and the owner of Thyme and Seasons. Everything is going along pretty well until a good friend is found dead of an apparent suicide. Ruby, who shares the other half of the shop, is adamant that Jo would never kill herself and she is going to investigate whether China believes her or not.

China goes about her business, but begins to believe that Ruby might be right.

I really enjoyed this first installment of the China Bayles series. It was well written and the characters are well developed. Looking forward what other adventures arise in Pecan Springs, Texas.
