



All the Pretty Hearses

Mary Daheim

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“Daheim writes with wit, wisdom, and a big heart.”
Carolyn Hart

Cormac McCarthy has nothing on Mary Daheim—whose fabulous Bed-and-Breakfast mysteries win hands down when it comes to outrageous zaniness. In *All the Pretty Hearses*, Daheim, “the reigning queen of the cozies” (*Portland Oregonian*), embroils Hillside Manor hostess Judith McMonigle Flynn in a lethal case of insurance fraud and mystery meat gone bad, in the twenty-sixth installment of the hilarious, *New York Times* bestselling cozy mystery series that remains as fresh and funny as the very first.

All the Pretty Hearses Details

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From Reader Review All the Pretty Hearses for online ebook

Darlene Ferland says

Another great read as always! Thank you Ms. Daheim! It is nice to visit with Judith and Renie and their crazy, mixed-up lives. The latest mystery has Judith's Bed & Breakfast, Hillside Manor, filled with an extended family who are there because of an auction at her Church. Joe, Judith's husband, is an ex-cop but his latest private eye job lands him in jail. Things are not what they seem. . . The twists and turns leave you holding on tight 'til the end. Can't wait for the next one. . . Anyone who loves a fun-filled mystery begin with Mary Daheim's first book in the series 'Just Desserts.'

Tanya says

Can't say I would seek out these characters and indulge in other books of the series. The rudeness of most of the characters and the horse plot were off putting and it didn't contribute to the feeling of a "cozy" mystery deposited the bed and bred last settings. Even the protagonist's husband could not be counted on to be honest. I somewhat enjoyed her mom, but definitely not her cousin. Characters really make up his book though there are also several plot lines, and it just felt overdone for me and I was glad to finally reach the end, not for the resolution and conclusion but because I could check this one off as completed and begin something else

Mayda says

If you've ever had a notion that running a Bed & Breakfast might be fun, this book will change your mind! Judith Flynn donates an overnight stay at her B & B to a fundraiser, much to her eventual regret. It seems like nothing goes right for this poor lady! She must deal with an exceedingly cranky mother, demanding guests, sneaky reporters, know-it-all cousins, a horse that shows up in her garage then disappears, and a husband who gets arrested for murder. Well, maybe he was just framed. It's a little hard to follow all that action at times, because people aren't who they pretend to be, don't do what they say they do, and then some of them turn up dead. You have to admire Judith's pluck for even getting out of bed. Any sane person would just pull the covers over her head! An entertaining if somewhat convoluted cozy. I received this book free from goodreads First Reads.

Debi Nolan says

I was disappointed in this entry in the bed and breakfast series. There were too many trails and none of them seemed to go anywhere. I hope the next one is better representation of Ms. Daheim's talent.

David Caldwell says

I won a copy on Goodreads Firstreads. This is the 26th entry in the series.

Judith owns a bed and breakfast. During a slow period, she agrees to give away a free night as part of a fundraiser. The winners are the Paine family. They live up to their names. Her husband is being held by the police as a murder suspect, maybe. Disappearing guests are just part of the problems that cause Judith to use all of her deductive reasoning.

I read several other reviews and noticed something. If they have read previous volumes in the series, they give it 4 or 5 stars. If they haven't read any other volumes, they rate it 2 stars usually. I haven't read any other entries in the series and gave it 2 stars. So I am holding to the trend. Here is my reasoning.

I did not really like the main character or her group of friends and family. Her mother and cousin were extremely rude. Most of them seemed to get very angry over the smallest things. Finally, I found it unbelievable that a husband would rather have his wife think he was arrested for murder than to tell her he was working with the police. Of the many guests and people that wander through this story, most were either rude, disagreeable, or both. Their actions often made no sense. It is hard to like a story if you don't care about any of the characters.

There was also the question of the mystery. For most of the story, it wasn't even clear what the mystery was supposed to be. Even when the answer was given, the mystery seemed heavy on circumstance and coincidences. I would label it was a weak mystery.

So, if you are a fan, you will probably like it. If you aren't a fan already, this probably won't make you one.

Jane says

Another example of a book I snatched off the library's New Releases rack without knowing anything about the author or the series. I liked pieces of it, but the things I disliked outweighed them.

The book (and series) has a small core of 'regulars' introduced fairly early and the setting - a B&B - allows for the introduction of variety of characters/stories/subplot, for good and bad. The story has a number of non-paying, demanding guests and a murder that may or may not be related to the protagonist or the B&B.

I enjoyed the dialog, although at times it devolved into Abbott and Costello's "Who's on first?" Judith's (the protagonist's) cousin Renie wasn't particularly helpful and was incredibly rude; from references within this story about past stories, it seems this behavior was somewhat out of character. Unfortunately Renie is not the only rude, sniping person - the protagonist's Mother and several guests share the same trait - it was offputting and took away from the story.

I enjoyed the twists until they become overwhelming. People move in and out of the B&B; people aren't who they seem; neighbors are helpful and yet wildly quirky; the protagonist flirts with a news reporter while her husband (the love of her life) is detained by police ... and that's just a touch of the overload.

Because I enjoyed her dialog and hints of other books (without having to retell those stories to have this story make sense) I may read another of her books to see if this one is uncharacteristic.

Carole says

Hillside Manor, Judith McMonigle Flynn's bed-and-breakfast, is about to be descended upon by a most unpleasant family who have many, many special requests and are thoroughly disagreeable to their hostess and to each other. And to make matters worse they are not even paying customers; their mother won the auction at the local parish school fundraiser for an overnight stay at the B & B for her grown children who had not ever been able to tolerate each other and now was no different.

Shortly before their arrival Judith's husband had been picked up as a supposed person of interest in a murder case, and she cannot get any information about his status by the police.

Judith's feisty, disagreeable mother makes life miserable for Judith. A rich couple asks to stay overnight because they're having trouble with their heating and end up stiffing Judith by climbing out their window the next morning without paying her and then badmouthing her to their friends for not waiting on them like they would have in a five-star hotel. Three women with the same name appear at the inn over a short period of time. Two guests unexpectedly bring a horse with them and expect her to house him in the only place she has--her garage.

All the while Judith is trying to find out what is happening with her husband and to solve the murder he's involved in.

I thoroughly enjoyed this book, and it's not the first in the series that I've read.

Susan Webb says

This book had its funny moments, but it also had a lot going on and it was hard to keep up with it all. Still a good read but not up to many of the previous FASTO's caliber.

Suspense Magazine says

January is slow for the Bed and Breakfast Judy and her husband Joe own. The in-law suite behind the B&B is home to Judy's mom who is a character all her own. Joe is working a P.I. case, and then is arrested on suspicion of murder.

Though the season is slow, there are still guests that need tending to, including guests from a fundraiser donation Judy made. A strange mix of people, all with different issues and stories make up the guest list.

Judy is kept busy with all her guests and their peculiar requests and needs. She is getting absolutely nowhere with answers about her husband's case, even from trusted sources. How will everything come together and can Judy solve the mystery before her husband goes down for murder?

A nice cozy mystery with an interesting mix of characters, each with their own agenda.

Reviewed by Ashley Dawn, author of "Shadows of Pain" for Suspense Magazine

Susan says

Bed and breakfast operator Judith Flynn is horrified when her husband Joe, retired cop and private investigator, is suspected of being a murderer. Unable to get answers even from Joe's ex-partner, who is involved in the investigation, Judith is distracted by the strange behavior of several of her bed and breakfast customers, especially the irritating Paine family, which has arrived at the B&B courtesy of a donation by Judith to a holiday charity auction. More pieces get added to the puzzle, and one begins to wonder if Daheim can put them all into a coherent whole. She does, but it's a near thing, making this one of the best in the recent entries in this long-running series.

Jennifer says

I might have liked it better if I'd read previous books, but I didn't know and this sounded interesting. Instead I found it to be a very slow book. I just never really got into the book. There were so many characters that I sometimes lost track of who they were and how everyone was connected. I was disappointed in the ending. I didn't see it coming (which is good in a mystery) but while I understood the reasons I still felt kind of lost about it. I felt like maybe I missed something that would have made it more understandable. Reading this reminded me of deciding to start watching a long running soap opera, you don't know the back stories and history so you feel lost and don't know why characters are doing the things they do.

Julie Barrett says

All the Pretty Hearses

Judith has donated for the auction a night with dinner at her bed and breakfast. A murder happens and she hopes to find clues to find the culprit.

Another mystery with food making children sick is another of her things keeping her plate piled high. And her husband Joe is involved with a murder scene that lands him in jail...lots of names and careers appear in conversations that make some parts of the book confusing.

Amazing how it all comes together, wow!

I received this book from National Library Service for my BARD (Braille Audio Reading Device).

Drebbles says

Winter is generally a slow time at Judith McGonigle Flynn's Bed and Breakfast which is why she can donate an overnight stay at Hillside Manor for a fundraiser. Unfortunately, the family that wins lives up to their last name - they truly are a Paine. But Judith has other more serious problems - her husband Joe is considered a murder suspect. Judith, with the help of her cousin Renie and newspaper reporter Addison Kirby, tries to clear Joe's name. Judith is no stranger to solving mysteries but this may turn out to be her most complicated case ever.

"All the Pretty Hearses" is a somewhat uneven entry in Mary Daheim's Bed and Breakfast cozy mystery series. The book gets off to a great start with several intriguing plot lines: Joe is suspected of murder; Judith has a mysterious guest who isn't who she says she is; school kids get sick from their school lunch; and the various comings and goings of the Bed and Breakfast guests. All of this was quite good and I got so caught up in the goings on that it took me a while to realize how implausible some of the plots were. The series always has been a bit over the top but Judith's reaction (or should I say non-reaction?) to events revolving around a horse were totally unbelievable (actually the appearance of the horse was way over the top even for this series). Judith, in fact, needed a serious backbone in this book - since when would she allow guests to leave without paying? The Joe plot line was quite good even if it didn't quite hold up in the end. The entire book seems to rely a bit too much on coincidences, including the appearance of Addison Kirby. The book is intricately plotted - too intricately in fact. There are enough plot lines to fill several books.

"All the Pretty Hearses" is far from perfect but I still enjoyed yet another visit to Hillside Manor.

Debbie says

Another Great one ! I love her books !

Reggie Billingsworth says

Mary Daheim's modus operandi relies on a cast of quirky characters to obscure weak plot configuration, despite the half decent story ideas. It's as if she envisions her mystery fiction as a TV sitcom. Maybe that explains the fan base raised on decades of wise-cracking family members, eccentric neighbours and wacky friends.

In "Pretty Hearses" the opening scene grabber features a kitchen door being battered down amidst the shrieks of the B&B owner's cousin and then...no explanation for the histrionics. The lack of any follow through creates a reader distrust by page 4. Such a feeling of entrapment predicts Daheim's crude recipe: poorly executed plots and weak denouements, smothered by a huge cast of irrelevant thousands.

She has so many fans though. I persisted. After dipping into three of her books, I had become wary. Sure enough, at page 9 in "Pretty Hearses", curiosity stopped me. I went back to count over 40, (yes forty) characters named in a thick and complex goo of really shallow and pointlessly unpleasant people smeared across the pages like cheaply seasoned sauce on the leftovers of her previous titles. Some might be impressed with the apparent complexity. I suspect the silliest sort of mystery fiction's obfuscation. So why the amateur's common tactic from one so popular?

It seems Daheim appeals to a cosy readership that thrives on all this grim minutia. Daheim's penchant to include every person she every created, (whether suitable to plot development or not) means en masse they pass as a shallow flurry of paper dolls across this strangely crowded B&B stage shouting their quips in a desperate bid for a three dimensional persona. Meanwhile the plot barely trickles along as an afterthought.

And what's with Judith's famously fragile 'replacement hip'? What kind of crap plastic part did they install in this woman? Oh wait, she not only irrationally inhabits a three story house filled with stairs, she also lives in a society without decent public health care. As a tension device though, it's all pretty lame. (purposeful pun)

Finally after a trio of tries, I couldn't care less about this weird crew. The B&B premise just beggars any logical belief. What business so reliant on good will and a safe reputation, could survive such a body count, never mind the bizarre plot lines and epic cast lists? By chapter 4, my head hurt and I called it quits.

I don't get it. I don't want it. Obviously Daheim has her fans....and they are welcome to her.
