



# The Fractal Murders

*Mark Cohen*

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## **The Fractal Murders** Mark Cohen

The lively first novel featuring former Marine JAG and private eye Pepper Keane. When math professor Jayne Smyers discovers that three murder victims with apparently unrelated cases were each an expert in fractal geometry, she hires Pepper to find the killer.

## **The Fractal Murders Details**

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Author : Mark Cohen

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# From Reader Review The Fractal Murders for online ebook

## Kathryn says

The premise, to the non-mathematical type, may at first sound like a groaner. Lawyer-turned-private eye Pepper Keane of Colorado accepts what seems like an unsolvable case of three murders. His client, the no-nonsense math professor Jayne Smyers, is convinced the deaths of three peers is related to their expertise in fractal geometry, which she goes on to explain in great detail. Even Pepper, it seems, is scratching his head.

Nonetheless, the action that ensues in THE FRACTAL MURDERS is guaranteed to grab the interest of any mystery lover, science-minded or otherwise. Pepper's analytical mind ticks constantly as his research takes him all over the country and unfolds a conspiracy involving much more than fractals and parallelograms.

THE FRACTAL MURDERS is a well-structured procedural supported by a strong cast of recruited apprentices (hippie neighbors, beleaguered FBI agents, and giddy teacher assistants to name a few), and injected with the right amount of humor and romance to lend a sense of realism to the story. An open ending leaves room for a welcome sequel; to leave readers with just one Pepper Keane mystery just wouldn't add up.

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## Alexis says

\*\*1/2The plot of this murder mystery is believable, without major plot holes, and you learn a (very) few things about math. But it's a P.I. story, and the first thing you need is a good - no, a great protagonist. That is, a guy who smokes like a volcano, drinks bourbon in underground bars full of mobsters and hookers, wears long coats and 30's hats, maybe falls for a femme fatale, and lives alone in a small apartment. His friends are scumbags, criminals, whores, maybe a couple of cops.

Iiiiiis that what we have here? No.

Here, we have a P.I. who only drinks Light Coke (oh for pity's sake), exercises daily (he's really fit!), falls for a teacher, wears shorts ALL the time(!), has a brother who owns a gym (remember, he's really fit), lives with his dogs, has a friend who's an astrophysicist (that's right, not a judgmental cop), and isn't even a former cop, but a former FBI agent/lawyer, smth. You, Mr Pepper Keane (yes, that is his name), are a bit of a douchebag.

On the other hand, if you're not as hardcore in your P.I. ideal image as me (SHAME on you), you may like it more.

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## Patty says

This is a great book. Pepper Keane is a former Marine, former federal prosecutor and current Private Investigator living near Boulder, Colorado.

When a local mathematics professor contacts him to look in to the deaths of three other mathematics professors, all of whom specialize in a very narrow field of mathematics called Fractal Geometry. At first glance they appear to be non-related incidents but as Pepper starts looking closer he finds some very

disturbing information.

Pepper is an interesting character, with a cast of equally interesting friends and family. Right now there is only one other book in the series and I can't wait to read it.

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### **Loy says**

I really enjoyed this book

The main character was funny

The subject matter fractal numbers was a little hard to understand but the mystery was very good

Worth the read

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### **Lucy Kelly says**

This was a great book, subtle humor and a good story.

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### **Rafaïla says**

\*If I could be more accurate I would actually put 3.5 stars (instead of 4)

It is an interesting crime novel but definitely not a "mathematical adventure", as the subtitles promises. So if you want to read it because of the mathematical part, I think you will be disappointed. If, on the other hand, you are a mystery book lover you will most likely enjoy it even if you are not a math expert (or you suck in maths).

Personally, being both a crime book and mathematics fan and having chosen the book for beach-reading during vacation I can say I have enjoyed it. It is easy to read (it actually took me only a couple of days to finish), interesting storyline and I really loved the ending. I also liked the writing style, it is light and humorous (unlike most crime books that are written in a "dark" manner) making it fun to read.

The characters are US people with American habits, which was interesting to learn about for me being non-American; they eat pancakes for breakfast, they go jogging with their dogs, and there is a looot of US product placement (the most obvious is Coca Cola light in which the main character is quite addicted) and mentioning of older US TV-shows.

Finally, I couldn't help but feel that the "mathematical part" that was promised from the title is missing. Fractals could be very well be replaced with any scientific (or not) term without making any significant influence to the storyline, so I assume they were only used to impress, because they were quite popular at the time that the book was written. Without them, it is just a common crime book with no much making it out-stand from the tons of others.

Concluding, I do recommend it as a (light) crime novel but if the reason you bought it were the "fractals" in the title you'll probably get disappointed. For the ones that liked it, I would also recommend reading "The Oxford murders" which I absolutely loved. (<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/3...>)

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### **Scott Drake says**

Quite surprisingly good. Great misdirection, nice twists and some fantastic characters. And do mean characters!!

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### **Menia says**

αρκετ?ς πληροφορ?ες για τα φρ?κταλ και τις χρ?σεις τους (κ?ποιες σειρ?ς τις "π?ρασα" στο ντο?κου ομολογ?) αλλ? γενικ? συμπαθητικ? ιστορ?α με την απαρα?τητη ρομαντικ? χροι? και τον δολοφ?νο να φανερ?νεται στην τελευτα?α σελ?δα κυριολεκτικ?.

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### **LJ says**

THE FRACTAL MURDERS (Private Investigator) – VG

Mark Cohen – 1st book

Mysterious Press, 2004 – Hardcover

Math professor Jayne Smyers asserts that the probability of three other professors, experts in fractal geometry, must be related, despite what the FBI says. So she hires investigator Pepper Keane, a former Marine JAG and prosecuting attorney, to look for the link, and the killer.

\*\*\* Pepper is intelligent and fully dimensional, a man still on the search for who he is. There are wonderful relationships between him and his family and friends, and well as some good humor. I even learned something about fractal geometry and philosophy along with way without it miring the plot. There's not a lot of suspense, but it's the characters that drive the story and the killer is a complete surprise. I also enjoyed the inclusion of small towns and cities settings; Nederland and Boulder, Colorado; Lincoln, Nebraska and Walla Walla, Washington. I really enjoyed this book and will be interested to see where the series goes from here.

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### **Janet Berkman says**

I wasn't expecting that much from this self-published novel (that subsequently got picked up by a publishing company), but it was quite good. A murder mystery set in Colorado, it's got interesting characters and an intriguing mathematical component. I've added Cohen's second book Bluetick Revenge to my to-read pile.

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### **Paul Weiss says**

**Chaos and comedy combine in a great story!**

**The Fractal Murders** is nothing if not unique! Here's a first novel based on a completely fascinating premise that presents interesting, realistic and superbly developed characters; that develops a heart-warming romantic relationship complete with all the bumps, bruises and detours of reality; that avoids prurient sex and violence as completely unnecessary to the advancement of a well-written novel; and does it all with well crafted narrative and descriptive writing as well as positively hilarious dialogue! The fixings are so good that a main dish plot becomes almost secondary but I can tell you that Cohen has done a fine job with that as well! What a treat for a debut novel!

Pepper Keane, a former JAG prosecutor, is hired by University of Colorado mathematics Jane Smyers to investigate the almost simultaneous deaths of three of her professional colleagues - two by murder and one by apparent suicide - people who seem to have had nothing more in common than front-running world class expertise in the rather arcane field of fractal geometry. Smyers's mathematical background convinces her that the probability of the three deaths being unrelated is vanishingly small and some long-standing bad blood between Keane and FBI Special Agent Polk, who conducted the now closed investigation, raises Keane's eyebrows and prompts him into letting himself become involved in re-opening the case.

Pepper Keane is a lovable, laughable character that Cohen has endowed with an anally obsessive nature and a serious overdose of existential angst that he indulges by attempting to plow through some of Heidegger's heaviest writings. Cohen obviously loves a good pun and I nearly fell off my chair laughing when he set up this positively outrageous example. Keane's brother, nicknamed "Two Toe" as a result of a war wound, muses aloud about where they are as he and Pepper drive out of Kansas. Suggesting that he had been waiting a long, long time to say it, Pepper responded *"Two Toe, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore"*! Ouch! Between you and me, I think it's much more likely that Cohen waited a long time to shoehorn that pre-conceived pun into a novel and I've got no doubt at all that he nicknamed his character Two Toe for the sole purpose of sticking that single line into the novel. It sure gets my unqualified approval! Cohen's sparkling wit shines throughout the novel with a veritable cornucopia of knee-slapping one liners.

As for the mathematics - Mandelbrot and Benoit sets, chaos, fractional dimensions, random walks, discussions of business applications such as fundamental versus technical analysis, weather prediction and crop markets - the basic concepts are presented in a lucid, simple and non-threatening fashion. And, frankly, since the mathematics aren't critical to the plot, the novel can be read and enjoyed even for those who haven't the remotest interest in such ideas!

Readers looking for a refreshingly different approach to a mystery hooked up to a healthy dose of humour should be well pleased with Cohen's first efforts. I'm certainly looking forward to more of his work.

Paul Weiss

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### **Christine says**

Murder plagues the community of fractal geometers. Uninspiring. I thought the sleuth, "Pepper Keane," was a jerk and the story lacked suspense. I finished it last week and I don't remember who dun it! Admittedly that's the type of detail I wouldn't remember but still.

The saving graces were the elements of fractal geometry and philosophy, which set this book apart from the literally thousands of uninspiring murder-mysteries out there. On a scale from "Ugh" to "Wow!," it gets an "Eh."

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### **Michael crage says**

This was a very good book, well written easy to read and the math was even good. When I found that this was Mark Cohen's first book, I was very much impressed. He did not write like a newbie. By the way, if you are afraid of math, don't let that scare you away from the book. The only reason math is involved is that three people who work in the same esoteric field of math were murdered in different states and a fourth mathematician of the same field is the only one who believes they are connected. If you like well-written mysteries, I urge you to read this one.

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### **Sharon Mensing says**

First in the Pepper Keane series. I enjoyed the math connection, and the main characters were well developed. I finished it wanting more about the love interest. The writing style was a little annoying, but suited the main character. It was told in first person, and Keane's voice was clear. Short "sentences" missing nouns abounded. I could envision a sort of gruff guy talking like that – but what's with the name? There was a last minute twist regarding the murderer, but it made sense.

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### **Carlin says**

The writing was not bad, but I cannot be bothered to read anymore by this author. I disliked the protagonist and I was annoyed by the casual sexism (I don't need to know the breast size of every female in the book).

He spends far too much time detailing his workouts--he went for a run, great;he went to the basement to pump iron, fine, but I do not need to hear it in detail each time.

The Mathematics is straightforward and interesting but not really important to the plot.

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