



The Merchant of Menace

Jill Churchill

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It's beginning to look a lot like murder 'Tis the season to jolly and suburban mom Jane Jeffry's in a mad scramble to finish her cookie baking and household chores before her teenage kids arrive home. Also expected are two moms-both the late husband's mother *and* the disapproving mater of Det. Mel VanDyne, Jane's significant other. The kitchen is a disaster zone, the dog has decorated the house with hair, and the earsplitting racket coming from the neighbors tacky, music-making Christmas display is driving Jane crazy. Now she has to get the green icing out of her hair and be ready to host her post-caroling dinner party.

One thing Jane isn't ready for is a surprise visit from a muckraking TV "action reporter," disguised as Santa Claus. The nasty old St. Nick is out to wrap a happy holiday caroling into a package marked "scandal," but before he has a chance to color the event with yellow journalism, his red-suited body slides off the neighbor's roof to land, silenced forever, on the horns of a plastic reindeer. It looks like Santa's mishap is no accident and, with the help of her friend Shelley, Jane finds plenty of suspects. The phony Santa has an ex-wife and a female assistant who both hate him, and plenty of nice people ruined by tales of naughtiness. Now Jane has to find the Grinch who thought murder was a way to save Christmas before the holiday turns into the unhappiest day of the year.

The Merchant of Menace Details

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Ann says

Jane Jeffreys can't say no and finds herself committed to hosting two Christmas parties. On top of that, Mel asks her if his mother, who has never met Jane, can stay with her when she visits. A local TV "scandal monger" reporter wants to do his broadcast from her living room but is found dead in a neighbors yard. Jane and her friend Shelley get busy finding out who the guilty party is because they know the neighbors and can get clues faster than the police. Not the best in the series but still good.

Dharia Scarab says

Since I don't normally write reviews unless I have something specific to say, here's the break down of how I rate my books...

1 star... This book was bad, so bad I may have given up and skipped to the end. I will avoid this author like the plague in the future.

2 stars... This book was not very good, and I won't be reading any more from the author.

3 stars... This book was ok, but I won't go out of my way to read more, But if I find another book by the author for under a dollar I'd pick it up.

4 stars... I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be on the look out to pick up more from the series/author.

5 stars... I loved this book! It has earned a permanent home in my collection and I'll be picking up the rest of the series and other books from the author ASAP.

Pam Bales says

Jane Jeffry has an interesting life for a seemingly regular housewife. Murders keep happening around her and she and her friends, including significant other Dr. Mel VanDyne must find the solution. A good cozy read. This is Book 10.

Debra says

Light, light, light. Just what I was looking for after the last title I read. I would probably read another Jane Jeffry mystery if it came my way, but I wouldn't go looking for one.

Still, it was a pleasant read for a hot, smoky, August weekend.

Kyrie says

A muck-raking reporter disguised as Santa Claus bites the dust at Jane's Christmas party. She's also meeting Mel's mother and trying to impress her - great. There's just so much potential for disaster, and while murder isn't funny, Churchill makes me grin over it.

Sonja says

Another great whodunnit!

Carol says

I love this series of Jane Jeffry mysteries. They are quick reads and have quirky plots. And this one didn't disappoint. Jane and her neighbor are in the midst of preparing for 2 big Christmas parties Jane is having when things start to fall apart. Their new neighbor puts up the house decorations from HELL and then the town's scandal monger newsman gets invited to Jane's party and everyone is on edge and when he is found dead on the prong of an garish reindeer no one knows whether to feel bad or glad. But how did he get dead, only Jane can figure that out!

Kathy Collins says

I enjoy reading this book. It was a quick read and in the genre of a cozy mystery. The main character was a likeable homemaker and single mother with the typical busy schedule that a family brings. The story was at Christmas so even more hectic. When the murder occurs you can relate to Jane, the main character and enjoy her curiosity that brings her into the solving of the murder. A fun book.

Catherine says

A cozy mystery. The main character was a little whiny about so much to do and then told herself she was awesome, but noisy. The neighbors held my interest but didn't lead me to solve the murder till the end. I guess that is a sign of a good mystery.

Val says

A Jane Jeffry mystery. Christmas is here and Jane is trying to do the impossible. Once again a body turns up and as it is the body of a very unpopular "action reporter" suspects abound.

A couple of twists not expected - enjoyed.

Irish Gal says

I was looking for another author like Ann George, but couldn't get attached to these characters. I may try another Jill Churchill but will probably avoid this particular series. Seemed to go beyond "character development" and just have too much fluff/filler that had nothing to do with the actual mystery, which was a little weak in itself.

Marsha Nelson says

What a fun mystery wrapped up in Christmas merriment. This is a perfect holiday read as it caused me to laugh out loud at some of the exploits of Jane and Shelley. I have to read some more of their adventures soon.

Marty says

Jane Jeffry is the widowed mother of a son in college and a son and daughter in high school. She is fortunate enough to be able to remain a "stay at home mom." Jane is head of the neighborhood cookie exchange plus is hosting a neighborhood Christmas dinner AND the instigator of a neighborhood caroling session. Plus her (ex) mother-in-law is coming for a visit and to top things off her boyfriend (a police detective) has just told her that not only is his mother coming for a visit but the heat in his house has broken down and can his mom stay with Jane for a day or two? ... Jane seems to be surviving until a busybody neighbor informs Jane that the local scandle-mongering TV reporter is going to interview her in the middle of the Caroling party. Jane has had it and tells the neighbor that she simply won't allow that reporter on her property... but of course he and his crew turn up anyway And he winds up dead. Just your everyday Christmas happenings...

George says

#10 in the Jane Jeffry mystery series. In this mystery, Jane and her friend Natalie become involved with the murder of a mean spirited investigative TV reporter. The story is set a few days before Christmas with Jane hosting two back-to-back neighborhood activities as well as dealing with both her mother-in-law and her boyfriend's mother. In the midst of all this, the despised journalist is murdered while covering one of the events Jane is hosting.

Jeanie Jackson says

Cozy read, but with an amateur detective who has sense. She actually figured out the mystery rather than tripping over the murder like so many cozy mysteries.

During the lead up to Christmas, Jane is almost overloaded preparing for neighborhood and family celebrations when she discovers that someone has invited the local TV muckraker to one of the gatherings at her house. Knowing that if he can't find something bad to report, he will smear someone just for the ratings she refuse to have him in her home. When he shows up at the last minute, she is afraid to refuse him entrance, but his "preview" of the night's report warns that things are going to be as bad as everyone fears. That is until someone takes action leaving one less muckraker on the block.

Now as holiday activities continue, Jane and her friend and neighbor, Shelby, have to keep and eye open in case someone in the neighborhood has developed a taste for murder.

I think I would like a little more development of her boyfriend and detective, Mel, but overall good characters. Interesting plot. I am ready to read more.
