



# The Haunted Season

*G.M. Malliet*

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## **The Haunted Season** G.M. Malliet

Max Tudor must contend with his new role as a father as well as a murder all too close to home in Nether Monkship in the next installment in G. M. Malliet's wildly popular series

Agatha Award-winning author G. M. Malliet has charmed mystery lovers, cozy fans, and Agatha Christie devotees everywhere with *Wicked Autumn*, *A Fatal Winter*, *Pagan Spring*, and *Demon Summer*, the critically acclaimed mysteries featuring handsome former-spy-turned-cleric Father Max Tudor. Hailed as “wittier than Louise Penny, lighter than Tana French, smarter than Deborah Crombie” (*Cleveland Plain Dealer*), Malliet is a top-notch writer whose work gets better with each book.

Something sinister is stirring at Totleigh Hall, the showcase of the English village of Nether Monkship. Usually, the Lord and Lady of the manor are absent—high tax rates, it is murmured with more than a trace of envy, force them to live on the continent for most of the year. But Lord and Lady Baaden-Boomethistle have been in residence for some weeks now, and the villagers are hoping for a return to the good old days, when the lord of the manor sprinkled benefits across the village like fairy dust. Father Max Tudor’s invitation to dinner at the Hall comes as a welcome novelty; it will be his first time meeting the famous family that once held sway in the area. But before he has time to starch his clerical collar and organize a babysitter, a sudden and suspicious death intervenes, and the handsome vicar’s talent for sorting through clues to a murder is once again called into play in this charming and clever novel.

## **The Haunted Season Details**

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## **From Reader Review The Haunted Season for online ebook**

### **Andrea Guy says**

I am totally guilty in saying I judged this book by its cover, which looks like it should be a Burton film starring Johnny Depp as Max Tudor.

I more often than not jump into series at a midway point, because my library seldom has them all. This cover grabbed my attention and so did the blurb. When it came to reading the book, I have to say that this is one of those series, you probably should start at the beginning, because I found myself feeling clueless at times.

The story was very slowly paced. The murder didn't take place until you were a third of the way into the book. It gave you enough time to get to know the key players, but it also seemed like things were taking too long, much like the solving of crime.

Max is a former MI 5 agent who is now a vicar. That alone drew me to the story, because it just didn't seem a likely scenario.

We meet the residents of Tottleigh Hall, none of which were really likable, so when Lord Baaden-Boomethistle ends up murdered in a most gruesome manner, its easy to find places to point fingers. Both of his children, Peregrine and Rosamund have cause to dislike him and so does his 2nd wife Bree. (And seriously, where did these names come from?)

Max finds the body and DCI Cotton enlists him to help talk to possible suspects. A lot is uncovered in his interviews, giving the reader plenty of people that could have done it.

Then there are the day to day activities of his parish and many of the parishioners have their eye on the vicar, even though he is married with a young child.

The ending seemed hurried and the way other things were brought into play left me rather confused.

I wanted to like this book so much more than I did.

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### **Nancy Butts says**

I am reluctant to post my review of this book, because I was so disappointed in it: and I started out loving this series with the first book, Wicked Autumn. But this book, the fifth installment in the Maxen Tudor/Nether Monkslip series, was such a mess that I almost gave it one star instead of two.

Everything about this series has always been contrived: Nether Monkslip itself is impossible, a contradiction between the peaceful paradise the author insists that it is and the nonstop succession of murders that keep happening there. [Something Max himself refers to several times in this book as a paradox: can you say "lampshading?"]

But Nether Monkslip is such a lovely and interesting place, à la Three Pines in Louise Penny's Armand Gamache series, that I continued to return to the books. It was just a place I wanted to spend time, however

much like a fairy tale it seemed.

This is the last time, however; this book feels forced, rushed, and clumsy. Why, the resolution to the murder simply appears to Max one day for reasons that are not made clear. But instead of staging a confrontation between the police and the suspects to ensnare them in an actual scene of dialogue and action, it all happens off-stage, and instead we have to sit through a couple of chapters of exposition—pure information dumps—where Max and DCI Cotton tell Awena what happened. Boring! I did think it was neat the way the resolution to this murder harked back to a murder that happened in a prior book in the series, giving it a final resolution. That was a nice touch.

In term of characterization, Awena herself is so implausibly perfect that I sometimes wonder if she is a figment of Max's imagination. [Not really, but she does seem more like a wish fulfillment fantasy than an actual woman.] Her relationship with Max is also implausibly peaceful, with no conflict whatsoever. Even their baby Owen never fusses!

And don't get me started on the head hopping: yikes.

I don't know what to make of the constant insistence on faith and belief and miracles in this book; it seemed almost deliberately evangelical, as if the author were trying to convert us rather than entertain us. Although I can buy that a former MI5 agent might turn to religion in order to cleanse himself of the guilt and bad memories of his work, that doesn't necessarily imply that he would also be so willing to believe in miracles, both Christian and neopagan. One can have faith and still be rational, and even skeptical, and that seems more like Max to me than the credulous person he becomes in this book.

I also don't know why the author suddenly decided to include references to a slew of other mystery books and movies within this book. It's like a bizarre mashup of Josephine Tey, Alfred Hitchcock, and Agatha Christie.

As for the ending, I can't comment on it without giving away a huge spoiler. But although it also linked back to a continuing subplot in the series, it struck me as ridiculous and completely unbelievable. But does it signal the end of the series, or a major shift in the next book? I don't know.

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## **Lorraine says**

It is so great to have Max Tudor back again. I thoroughly enjoyed *The Haunted Season*. The way the author brought the feeling of the season (Halloween) into the story was very clever.(No hints given, sorry!) I missed the village, the villagers, and all their gossip. Some things never change. The new characters and their setting of Totleigh Hall and its surrounding land add to atmosphere of this time of year. The author did a dynamite ob of weaving this atmosphere throughout the story. As I continue to think about *The Haunted Season*, I identify even more places, activities, and actions of certain characters with the night of October 31st. Very entertaining, a bit ghoulish, and even fun. The very last two sentences do make one wonder!!

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## **Barbara says**

I was so happy when I found a fifth Father Max book. Was convinced it would be ended after the fourth and

final season.

The story involved a ghastly death at Tottleigh Hall, an estate near the dear village of Nether Monkslip. Father Max is called in to help again. All the old characters are there but not as much detail about them as in previous Max Tudor mysteries. The investigation pulls you in but....wait....did I skip a chapter (or two). Here I near the end of the book and I no longer share the solution to the crime. I felt like I had to sit down and have Max and his policeman chum, Cotter, explain to us what happened--are we not even to hear from the guilty parties?? I felt like G.M. was told that she only had one day to make the publication date so cut it short please!

Not only was I disappointed in that (apparent ending) but a second ending was thrown in for some reason---to be explained in a future book? I truly didn't comprehend the strong final twists!

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## **Wilde Sky says**

When a Lord is killed a vicar (who used to be in MI5) investigates.

The pace for the first 60 pages was very slow, then the book picked up, but the last 80 pages were bizarre with relationships between characters coming out of nowhere plus the last couple of chapters read like a different book (I kept read reading sections to make sure I hadn't missed something).

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## **David Sayles says**

I am a G.M. Malliet fan. Her writing is clever and thoughtful. Her characters were well developed in previous books but none were developed here. This book is the worst one she has written not only of the series but of all her books. Leaps of deduction that were superhuman were inserted throughout the book but mostly at the end. They had to be put in as there wasn't much written in the story line. The book crossed over from clever mysteries written in the past to romantic mystery. At minimum, one third of the book is on either Max's love for his wife, memories of Max and his wife or his love for his child. I have both a wife and child but am really not interested in reading about others love of theirs and particularly not in my mystery books. In this book, all characters other than Max are stick people and it is impossible for the reader to care about any of them.

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## **Damaskcat says**

The local lord of the manor - Tottleigh Hall - generally spends most of his time out of the country but he and his wife and grown up children and his mother are all currently in residence. Max Tudor is about to meet them but before he can do so a murder is committed. Naturally Max becomes involved in the investigation.

In addition to the investigation he has the strange face which keeps appearing on one wall of the church however much it is painted over and plastered over. This is starting to attract rather too much attention from several quarters and it looks as though St Edwold's could become a focus for pilgrims.

These and other parish matters are all taking up Max's time and taking him away from his wife Awena and their small son Owen. This is dark and well written mystery with a totally frightening ending which had me reading faster and faster as I got to the last few pages. I do like Max as a character - he is far more than your

average amateur detective beloved of crime writers.

The village life of Nether Monkslip in this series is almost a character in its own right and as I have been reading the series I've started to see the village's residents almost as friends whenever they appear. Some of the books may seem a little slow to start with but they are all well worth reading with interesting plots, plenty of humour and some marvellous characters.

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## **Chelsey Wolford says**

Malliet delivers just what readers need in order to get ready for Halloween in the fifth book in this series: murder, mystery, intrigue, and some truly enticing characters and picturesque detail. I do not want to give too much away regarding the murder mystery, but I will say that it was one of the most memorable that I have read this year. Pay close attention as you read; Malliet will give away hints, clues, and foreshadows what is to come in her writing. Max Tudor, our main character, has returned, of course, and thrown in the mix are his new family dynamics: his wife, Awena, and their new baby, Owen. I love following a series like this and watching their lives change book after book. I believe that none of the books will ever touch the first in the series, but this one comes in a close second.

Malliet's writing style is very eloquent and sense of characterization is astounding. She can flesh out a character like no other. Max Tudor gets better and better with each book, I believe. I feel as if I learn more about him the more situations I see that Malliet puts him in. I always feel that some things just ended up being too coincidental, thus why the book only received a four cupcake rating, but this is the feeling that I am left with after reading many cozy mystery novels. Some things are just predictable and you can guess what will happen, but it does not take away the joy of getting all nestled down in a blanket and losing yourself in the story. The ending of this book left me hungry for the next; I hope I do not have to wait a whole year to read it!

\*\*\*A free copy of this book was provided to me by the publishers at Minotaur Books in exchange for my honest review\*\*\*

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## **Tony says**

My Grade = 78% C

I was prepared to give the book 4 stars (85-88%) until the last 10% of the book.

Set up: Max Tudor had been working with the British Intelligence Agency MI-5 until a "Certain Incident" - see later - caused him to become an Anglican Priest.

He has been assigned to the tiny south west hamlet of Nether Monkslip, where he became involved with murders and had been asked by the local constabulary to aid in their investigations.

This was in the first book - Autumn, followed by Winter, Spring, and Summer. I almost thought that the author ran out of seasons, but recently came across this one at Barnes and Noble.

The story was going along at a good pace until the author went bonkers in the last 10% of the book. Not only did the Protagonist/Priest/Detective Max Tudor solve the case, but also solved the mystery of a 20+ year old kidnapping of a young member of the nobility (stolen in nether Monkslip and transported to Malaga)- all that was the story of the 2nd book in the series. He also found and captured the criminal who had caused him to become a priest. And, finally. the author ends the story with a totally unnecessary tragedy that totally mystified this reader.

I almost think G. M Maillet, the author had 4 Seasons of books in her, but was really pushing it with #5. All she had to do was bring the story to a close, as she had been doing, and not made the unnecessary additions.....

I was very disappointed.

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### **Lesa says**

I'm a fan of all of G.M. Malliet's Max Tudor mysteries. It's a treat to read about an M15 agent turned vicar, living in a small English village. Even in a village, Max Tudor, like Miss Marple before him, discovers that people can kill. And, this time, Malliet, like Christie at times, has an impressive, unexpected ending. The Haunted Season may be the Agatha Award-winning author's best book yet.

Lord and Lady Baaden-Boomethistle and their family are in residence at Tottleigh Hall, and the villagers of Nether Monkslip are always interested in the comings-and-goings at the manor house. Even the vicar is impressed when he stops by the house to ask if they can use the grounds for the annual duck race. But, that's about the last pleasant scene at the manor before a terrible murder occurs. And, now, the villagers have quite a bit to talk about when it comes to the family.

Max can be forgiven for not being on top of his game. He's still fascinated with his new wife and infant son, spending as much time as he can with them. But, when DCI Cotton asks for his help with the murder investigation, he immediately agrees. He only worries a little about the bishop's thoughts on the subject of another murder case involving the vicar.

Malliet is skilled at drawing the reader into the case, as Max Tudor observes and talks with suspects. The small English villages, seem to be unexpected, but perfect, settings for murder. And, the settings, from manors to woods, are beautifully describe.

Distracted by his wife and baby, worried about a parishioner who seems a little too obsessed with him, concerned with the mysterious face on the wall in the church, Max almost misses connections in the latest case. But, Malliet doesn't miss a trick as she cleverly puts all the pieces together in her latest puzzle. The Haunted Season, with its clever killer, twisted plot, and stunning conclusion, is G.M. Malliet at her best.

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### **Mary-ann says**

#### **Confusing, often tedious**

Given how much I have enjoyed the previous books in this series, I was both disappointed and surprised by

how annoying I found this entry. One yardstick I use is how quickly the book "catches fire," compelling me to keep reading. This book never did meet that threshold, sad to say. One of the charms of the series is the way the village of Nether-Monkslip becomes almost a character itself. This time I never was able to "go down the rabbit hole" and escape into another world. Another annoyance was introducing a lively and charming new character, Destiny, at the beginning, then virtually dropping her except for a few conversations. I did manage to slog through to the end, but it was too often a chore. Very choppy as well. I don't generally post negative reviews, but I'm making exception. By far my favorite part was the gorgeous cover illustration.

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### **Jeannie and Louis Rigod says**

Well, in my estimation, this book garners an easy ten stars! I was interested in the plot from page one and the last five chapters had me gasping aloud. The clever author tied books number four with this novel and we get answers to situations. Brilliant technique. A reader's delight.

A Lord of the manor gets murdered. Very creatively. Who has done this evil deed and why? Motives are a huge part of this novel. Fr. Max Tudor's past comes to haunt him and thus the well-titled novel I just finished ties in.

Pasts haunt this tale of intrigue, human motives, and simple village life. I am being so careful with my words as this book deserves a full concentration of a reader's focus with no hints to spoil the effects of the powerful writing.

There is a large amount of descriptive details. Every word ties in with another although you might not realize it at first. This was a masterly plotted murder mystery. The sub-plots were also given incredible attention by the author.

This book makes me want to stop and begin the next volume in the series immediately. Won't you join me?

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### **Ivonne Rovira says**

I had been fearful that author G.M. Malliet would give up her mystery series featuring the kind and clever Anglican priest Max Tudor; each novel had a season in the name, so I feared there might only be four. But Malliet, whether out of pity for her millions of fans or intent, regales us with the further adventures of Tudor, a former MI-5 agent turned country vicar, in No. 5, *The Haunted Season*.

When the elusive master of Totleigh Hall, an earl with the double-barreled name of Lord Bayer Baaden-Boomethistle, is murdered, the village of Nether Monkslip buzzes with the news. Who could have wanted the old boy dead: his much younger second wife, awkward son, resentful daughter, a lustful retainer, or someone else?

How wonderful to, once again, catch up with Father Tudor, his wife Awena Owen and their new baby — not to mention the many idiosyncratic denizens of Tudor's village of Nether Monkslip. Malliet delivers yet another engrossing tale that will keep readers turning pages (or, as in my case, listening) long into the night. Only a ridiculous cloak-and-dagger side plot and a bit too much coincidence meant to imply magical



intervention keeps the novel from five-star status.

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## **Rebecca says**

Former MI-5 agent turned vicar Max Tudor is beyond happy with his new-age wife Owena (sp?) and their baby Owen. He's less happy when he discovers the gruesomely murdered body of Lord Baden-Boomthistle (sp?) in the woods, and Detective Cotton once again recruits Max to help solve the murder. All eyes are on the gorgeous, much-younger wife Brie, who unfortunately has an alibi, but there's much more going on in the wealthy family. Then Max also has to deal with his bishop, who is unhappy not only with Max's sleuthing and his non-Christian wife, but with the mysterious "face" that keeps appearing on the wall of Max's church, no matter how often it's painted over. Then there's village matron Eugenia, who has an unreasoning crush on Max. Nothing's ever simple in an English village.

I've loved the rest of this series, which is Agatha Christie on crack with lots of parodying of classic British village cozy mysteries. D+ on effort for this one, though, which really felt phoned in. Most of the major action takes place off-camera, and is later just reported back. Most of the revelations seemed in no way hinted at, and just came out of nowhere. There's nothing essentially wrong with the plot, just the telling-not-showing and the confused structure, as well as trying to blend two unrelated plots (it didn't work).

And I have to take issue with how the author presented the unfortunate Eugenia. Yes, she's slightly insane and unpleasant and I know she's a parody/stereotype, but the message I got from how she was presented at the start is that if you're no longer young and you're not attractive, then: 1. it's laughable of you to think that anyone might ever find you attractive, much less love you, and, 2. if you try to do anything to make yourself look more attractive, that's even more laughable and worthy of scorn. How stupid are you? How dare you aspire to anything more than being ugly and forgotten? Anyway, I found that offensive, obviously.

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## **Ellen says**

I like this series, but felt it took a while to get into this installment. I'm not sure if the multitude of characters required more explanation, but I was not hooked until at least half way through. The ending did leave room for another Max Tudor mystery, which I hope returns to the level of the previous mysteries.

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