



# The Twelve Deaths Of Christmas

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## **The Twelve Deaths Of Christmas** Marian Babson

*Maude Daneson's* rooming house is festive, the perfect setting for an old-fashioned Christmas. But someone has been very bad. Each killing in London is more senseless than the one before and the killer is far closer than they know.

## **The Twelve Deaths Of Christmas Details**

Date : Published November 1996 by St Martins Mass Market Paper (first published 1979)

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Author : Marian Babson

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## Julia says

I didn't really expect much, but at least a bit more than what I got. I realise a murder mystery might not be the best way to bring me some festive cheer, but it wasn't very engaging either. The story was a bit festive, and there was a lot of talk of a traditional British Christmas with all the trimmings, but also grinch-like characters can find something in the cynic plot.

What I liked was the sudden opening from the killer's POV and the intermitting chapters every so often from that person's view without ever giving away their identity. Those chapters gave some hints as to who the murderer could be, but I had the feeling that I couldn't really guess since the potential characters weren't introduced properly. Their characterisations were rather superficial, so I didn't have the feeling that I got to know them and I didn't really care about them.

Also the reason and motivations for the killer were a bit disappointing and the ending rather abrupt and anticlimactic.

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## Diane says

Excellent, suspenseful whodunnit! It's always nice to discover a new author (for me at least). I wish I had read this in December, but I wasn't too late.

A deranged killer is on the loose in London, striking down anyone who gets them angry - noisy children, a solicitor, a newsagent, a salesgirl - and it does not take much to get them angry. The novel switches back and forth between the killer's first-person narrative, and a third-person narrative of the investigating detectives and the residents of a boarding house. It soon becomes obvious that the killer is one of the residents of the boarding house, but which one? The story becomes more and more suspenseful as the killer slowly loses what little control they have and people continue to die.

"But, first, there will be the turkey.  
And, waiting beside the turkey, the carving knife.  
The long, sharp, glittering knife..."

This mystery was a nice surprise. The writing is excellent and the characterizations are well done. I really cared for the characters and didn't want any harm to come to them, even the killer. The murderer is a sad, sick figure and I could not help but feel sorry for them, even after all that they had done.

The effect of the murders on the victims' families is also touched on in a few cases. For example, a female shopper is murdered because the killer was annoyed by the fishing pole she carried. The fishing pole had a special connotation for the victim's husband and young son. The killer is totally oblivious to such concerns. These people were annoying, so they deserved to die.

(Note: There was an amusing typo on page 175 when a character is referred to as a "financee" (fiancee). It sounds like they're financing something, rather than being simply engaged.)

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## **Ralph says**

It's a documented fact that the number of suicides peak at Christmastime, and, as veteran mystery writer Marian Babson points out in this nifty whodunit, it's not a bad time for murder either. "The Twelve Deaths of Christmas" is part psychological thriller, part police procedural, and part cozy mystery. Accordingly, there are three points of view presented. The cozy comes to us in the form of a rooming house, home to a wide spectrum of late-1970s London characterizations -- maiden ladies, retired military officer of the Great War, visiting Canadian cousin, Jew trying to get along with Christmas traditions, student who is just this side of a yob, and so forth. The minutiae of their lives is tedious in the extreme, and their eccentricities grating, but the very banality of their lives adds to the mounting tension in the novel because we know early on that one of them is a murderer. The police procedural portion of the book is played out by the two hapless, yet highly efficient, investigators who have been assigned the hopeless task of finding a serial killer who apparently has no motives, no established methods of killing, no victimology, and who leaves no viable clues. The psychology of the tale is illustrated through first-person accounts of the crimes by the murderer, detailing motivations, the reasons for choosing the victims, and the explanations for why they were killed by the methods used. If you think that will help you figure out the identity of the murderer before Babson decides to reveal it, you will be as disappointed and baffled as the police. Clues are definitely given, many of them quite telling, but you could certainly feed more than five thousand with the red herrings left behind by the loquacious killer. This is a self-contained cozy police procedural psychological mystery, with a well-realized London setting, and well-defined characterizations. I am accustomed to great stories from Marian Babson, and, once again, I was not disappointed.

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## **Lorraine says**

3.5 Stars a fun Christmas mystery.

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## **Brenda H says**

This was an interesting story. Early on, I thought I had it all figured out...by the middle, I (again!) had it all figured out but with a different suspect (lol)...and at the end, I found out who the real killer was (neither of my suspects btw).

The writing style was interesting and definitely added to the mystery. Most of the story was told 3rd person except for the 1st person thoughts/actions of the killer allowing you to see what was driving the murder spree.

I highly recommend if you need a quick, engaging read.

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## **Tamera says**

This is good little mystery. It's a little troubling too.

This book is written in from three points of view: 1) Third-person, omniscient of two members of a boarding house; 2) Third-person, omniscient following two of the detectives, and; 3) First-person narrative of the killer. It is this latter view that can be unsettling. It can unsettle the reader because at times you sympathize with the killers motives.

There are many things in the story that lock it in it's time, but still a good read.

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## **Lisa Kucharski says**

Chapters alternate between the killer than a lodging house, and finally the police who are “investigating” but are so far from finding the killer that they have to be invited to dinner to catch ‘em.

Story-wise relied heavily on cliché characters and simplistic melodrama. So if you’re looking for a “mystery” look elsewhere.

If you’re a fan of this author you can probably ignore my review but if you’re a mystery fan that wants a mystery and someone investigating really - go elsewhere.

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## **Selah Pike says**

The setting reminded me a lot of Hickory Dickory Death. This one kept me guessing, but the final reveal wasn't explained very well.

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## **Christi says**

A really good mystery. I did guess the motive of the murderer but not the identity.  
The author did an excellent job of throwing suspicions all around the boarding house.

I'm finding I really enjoy these Christmas mysteries that were written pre-2000 when the crimes couldn't be solved by checking some video and running a computer check.

I very much enjoyed the audiobook narration as well.

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## **Kate says**

Babson’s narrative is sometimes dry, but in the end I found that to be part of this story’s charm. While the characters aren’t terribly stacked with extensive backstories or even that much depth, possibly because the

book is short (less than 200 pages), they all do their part to pull the story along. Characters go about their occasionally mundane Christmas preparations, completely clueless to the danger heading their way. The mystery isn't the most complex, but it did keep me guessing. Just don't pick this up expecting the intricate plotting of Christie. Still, there's something about Babson's Christmas tale that pulls you in—maybe it's the way the killer is slowly swallowed by holiday induced mania. I spent a cozy afternoon curled up with this older mystery; *The Twelve Deaths of Christmas* is a pleasant distraction from wrapping gifts and baking holiday treats.

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### **George Reed says**

Poor attempt at a Christie type mystery. The characters were living in the 70's, but acted like it was still the 40's or earlier. Also, did not think the identity of the killer was justified by the text.

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### **Rich says**

Residents of a local boarding house are preparing for the Christmas celebrations, not realising that one of their number is the killer terrorising London.

A nice surprise this. Babson keeps it moving along and this is nowhere as cosy as it might seem. The killings are violent and nasty. They also highlight social anxiety regarding race and youth. Hard to know if this was intentional, but it does make this book published in the early 1980's feel more relevant than might be expected. Some pathos is generated as the residents come together in preparation for the festivities little realising how much danger they are in.

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### **Bettie? says**

**It was a gratuitous insult on his part to introduce the subject of Broadmoor into what had hitherto been a perfectly amicable conversation.**

See that cover - isn't that a pictorial rendition of Bates Motel?:

I wasn't fond of that ending though - it was a dumping of sad realism on top of a short piece of escapist fluff.

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### **Laurie says**

Wow, this wasn't really a cozy. It's cleverly written, with changing points of view. It's a gruesome and quick read. Happy Holidays!

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**Scott Drake says**

An entertaining light holiday tale. While the author leads the reader around by the nose and points the finger at one or another suspect, there is one that draws the reader into complacency so when the final of the 12 days comes, there is a delightful build-up to the revealing. An unexpected killer, but not unsubstantiated as the reader can skim back and catch glimpses of clues and red herrings.

Also a psychological thriller, this is a fast reading book and should be enjoyed around the holidays to maximize enjoyment.

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