



Shrouds of Holly

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While decorating the Pennyfoot's ballroom for a Christmas reception, Cecily sends her husband Baxter and stable manager Samuel into the woods to cut some fresh boughs of holly for the ballroom. An hour later their one-horse open carriage returns with the horse, the holly...and the unwelcome gift of a dead body. Baxter and Samuel are nowhere to be found. In what should be a season of celebration with friends and family, Cecily means to reunite hers and solve the mystery—even if a killer leads her in a merry measure.

Shrouds of Holly Details

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From Reader Review Shrouds of Holly for online ebook

Lisa Kleinert says

I either missed some sort of a paragraph where they tell you what the time of this book was, or they didn't include it. At any rate, I spent a good half of the book wondering if this was modern times at a themed bed-and-breakfast or if it was in the earlier 1900's. It was the latter.

Drebbles says

It's Christmastime and Cecily Sinclair Baxter is busy decorating the Pennyfoot Hotel for the holidays. She enlists the help of her husband Baxter and stable manager Samuel and sends them out to collect some holly. Much to her dismay, Baxter and Samuel don't return, but their horse and carriage does - with a dead body inside. Samuel soon turns up but Baxter is still missing and Samuel can't remember what happened. Cecily is determined to find Baxter, no matter what. Not only that, but she wants to find the killer of the body in the carriage. She's convinced she knows who the killer is but the local constable has his own suspicions and won't listen to her theory. Cecily is determined to bring the killer to justice even if it means putting her own life in danger.

"Shrouds of Holly" is another nice entry in Kate Kingsbury's annual Holiday Pennyfoot Hotel Mystery series. The series is set in the early 1900's and Kingsbury does a good job of capturing that period of time (maid Gertie's longing to ride in a motor car is a perfect example). All the favorite Pennyfoot characters are here: housekeeper Mrs. Chubb; Gertie; "French" chef Michel; Cecily's friends Madeline Pengrath and Phoebe Fortescue (and her husband, Colonel Fortescue); Kenneth Prestwick; Samuel; Pansy; and of course Cecily and Baxter. There is a nice little subplot involving Gertie that made me smile and I'm looking forward to the next book to see what happens. There is a nice sense of humor throughout the book especially involving Michel who loses his French accent when excited, Colonel Fortescue, and Phoebe's annual Christmas Revue that always ends in a hilarious disaster. The mystery is well plotted and well written and the solution not as easy as it first appears. Without giving away the ending, I want to say I chuckled when the identity of the killer was revealed - kudos to Ms. Kingsbury for the solution.

I always enjoy my visits to the Pennyfoot Hotel, I just wish it was more than once a year.

Lorraine says

This delightful English cozy, mystery made me feel as though I was in the middle of a Miss Marple mystery. The author is a supposed descendent of Agatha Christie and definitely does her ancestor justice as a writer of cozy mysteries. Will definitely be reading more.

Lynn says

Fun adventure with the staff at the Pennyfoot, but I wish there would have been more with the gypsies, it

seemed like they were forgotten after they were not needed for the plot. Sometimes it seems as if the author has far too many characters and far too little story for them. I wish the editors had caught that and really flushed out the good characters that were tossed by the wayside.

Angela says

This is the 5th Holiday Pennyfoot Mystery I've read so far (although I haven't read them in order.) I really enjoyed the mystery in this story. I found Baxter mildly annoying but thankfully he wasn't in it until halfway through. I loved Dan's flirting with Gertie and all the trips that Cecily and Samuel made to Whitfield Manor.

Joanna says

I really like the "country home" setting for books but this one was well into a series that I had not read any of and I really still feel after reading the book a little lost about characters' backgrounds, time period and just how it all came to be.

The story was good and for some characters there were some references to events or people in past books but I think there needed to be more.

I may read more of this series to catch up!

Ronna says

I love cozy mysteries and I love Christmas books. This fun Edwardian mystery revolves around the decorating of the Pennyfoot Hotel. A large part of decorating in the Edwardian period in England revolved around lots and lots of holly bows. While Cecily Sinclair gets ready for the hotel celebrations at the inn her husband, Baxter, and stable manager, Samuel, went into the woods to gather the holly. But when time passes and the cart comes home without Baxter or Samuel, but with a dead body, the mystery begins with Cecily and Samuel in pursuit of answers.

The characters in this book keep the period as a large part of this story with their various squabbles, relationships, and house duties. Especially enjoyed a servant's first ride in a motor car, and the Colonel who takes advantage of every opportunity to have a drink and run on and on about his days in the Boar Wars. The Christmas events tell of Edwardian Christmas customs and different foods. A great fun book for the season.

JInpeacock Peacock says

This is the last time, I think, that I will be tempted to read a book with so many rave reviews. If I had seen the cover before the book was checked out, I probably would have had an idea that it was not something I wanted to read. The setting is in the early 1900's in rural England at a seaside hotel/country club. The book is

to be a lively and funny mystery. My humour doesn't extend to the heroine of the story deceiving her husband (in a "I Love Lucy" fashion) and then having everything turn out all right because she had a good reason to lie and to deceive. The book wasn't particularly well-written either.

Paula Schumm says

This is a nice little Christmas murder mystery. Recommended.

Nancy Bennett says

I continue to enjoy this series, with new secondary character development ongoing, but Cecily continues to irritate me with her irresponsible behavior. Seriously, she is old enough to know better than to engage in illegal activities -- no matter how pure her motive.

Jerry says

*NOTE: The author of this book is Kate Kingsbury, **not** the beloved Christian author Karen Kingsbury. Please refrain from confusing the two of them.*

Kate Kingsbury wrote a grand Yuletide mystery yarn in this one. Complete with British charm, plenty of suspense, some light-hearted moments, and a diverse list of suspects, any lover of British-themed literature should definitely check this one out.

Alton Motobu says

Cicely Baxter, protagonist of the series, is too adventurous for a woman circa 1910 England. In this book she investigates the disappearance of her husband during a holly-gathering trip and the appearance of a dead body which appears at the front entrance of her hotel in the English countryside. She seems more interested in finding the killer than in searching for her husband presumably injured and lost in the woods for several days. Only in a cozy mystery does finding a supposed murderer take precedence over looking for your lost husband. She gets into a lot of cliffhangers at the expense of her stable master and co-sleuth, Samuel, and her advice to him whenever they get into trouble is "don't worry, you'll think of something." Interesting story line, with likable characters, but Cecily is unlikable at times.

Christine says

Ok, ok, this is the last Christmasy book I read over the holidays. I promise.

Pretty good! Like all the Pennyfoot mysteries, I keep my expectations fairly mid-low, and read it for the goofiness and over-the-top Holidays of Yore bits.

If I remember right I liked it better than the one I read last year (oh wait - I read two last year hmmm I liked it better than at least one of those...) and about as much as the first one. I am not reading these in order, and they're all pretty similar so they get a bit mixed up for me.

Cons - the "feminism" is wedged in with a crowbar, completely unnatural and put in, I suspect, just to make it more appealing to modernity (doesn't quite work for me); Cecily is more annoying than most of the background characters: sometimes it seems like all she ever does is moon about Baxter and at the same time, despite her supposed feminism, is constantly concealing her true self from him; Michel's fake accent - why??

Pros - the setting is lovely, the mystery is usually at least fairly engaging, there are always funny bits, Madeline is fun, all the books take place at Christmas and there are always several little story strands going on so that you don't get completely bogged down with Cecily's storyline.

C. John Kerry says

The length of time it took to read is not due to the quality of the book but to the fact it took so long for me to get it back out to finish. The basic premise is that of two men go out in a sleigh to collect greenery for decorations. Awhile later the sleigh comes back with a dead body, which is neither of the two who went out. And thus the game is afoot. The fact that one of the missing men is Hugh Baxter, husband of our intrepid sleuth, lends a sense of urgency to the situation. There is more than one possible suspect as well so we do have to do our homework, so to speak. I admit the resolution surprised me a bit, but on looking back there was at least one clue early on. The rest of our regular cast are here as well, with developments in some of their lives as well. There is also the occasional reference to events of the past. Thus we realize this a community of people who have a common history, rather than a group gathered together for a one-off tale, and who are strangers to each other. enjoy this series and hope to read other volumes.

Jean Hall says

Another interesting story set at Christmas time. I was never able to figure out "whodunit" so was surprised at the end.
