Old-Fashioned Whodunit

Mitch Berger has been accepted at least on the surface by some of the posh families in the small enclave to which he has moved - even his open affair with the beautiful black policewoman is looked upon peaceably. But when a member of the small group of men who gather for early-morning walks is found dead, the subsequent investigation, involving both Mitch and Desiree, opens a very large container of personal evil that has no place in any society.

Tito Molina and Esme Crockett are the Bennifer of Dorset, CT. Theyre famous, impossibly gorgeous and married. They, their publicist, their fans and van loads of paparazzi have descended on the peaceful, posh village of Dorset for a few weeks of relaxation. However, after a midnight extramarital tryst goes awry, Tito winds up at the bottom of a cliff very dead, the victim of an apparent suicide.

Mitch Berger, newly minted resident of Dorset and movie critic for the New York Times is devastated. Although he viciously drubbed Titos most recent film, he had gotten close to the troubled young superstar. He felt that Tito was an outstanding actor who was simply wasting his talent on big budget dreck. And there was the little matter that Mitch was the last (well second to last if you count Titos murderer) to actually speak to Tito.

Enter Des Mitry, Dorsets resident Trooper and Mitchs lady love. Des is called to the scene of Titos death and is thus pulled into the investigation surrounding what turns out not to be suicide after all, but murder.

Once again Des and Mitch team up to help solve a crime in the elite little enclave known as Dorset.

This book is the third in a series following Cold Blue Blood and Hot Pink Farmhouse. This was quite a fun little book which took me no time at all to read. I didnt really care very much about the characters of Tito or Esme...
since neither of them were at all sympathetic. But that really doesn't matter because this book, and the two others before it in the series, is really about Mitch's assimilation into the Dorset community and the evolution of his relationship with Des. Murder and Mayhem make for great plots, but the soul of this series is the three main characters: Mitch, Des and the village of Dorset.

The plot of the story is really a by-the-numbers murder mystery. Long time mystery readers or even people with twisty minds will figure out the whodunit (if not the why-dunnit) very quickly. There are the requisite red herrings and even a secondary plot involving post 9/11 vandalism against a Muslim couple. Who was Tito meeting that night? What is the real nature of his relationship with his wife? Why does Esmé's mother hate the snarky publicist so much? Are the Crockets trying to manipulate Des and Mitch by revealing so much so soon? These questions are answered in due time.

In the meantime, we get a picture of a closed and elite Dorset society willing to keep secrets and cover up scandals. We see the imperfections of a so-called perfect family and many not so perfect perfect marriages. We are witness to the Peyton Place-esque bed-hopping of the residents and the murky tangled relationships that exist. In the midst of it all is Sexy Des, who tries to solve a mystery in her forthright, no-nonsense, take no prisoners manner. And Mitch, whose life imitates movies observations often bring the funny. Did I mention these books are quite humorous?

The biggest minus of this book is that I wanted to see more of the residents we met in the previous books. This one did bring back Bitsy and her troubled ballerina daughter, Becca. But I really didn't recognize any other Dorseteers from the previous books.

The biggest plus (other than the really cute relationship between Des & Mitch) is the continued evolution of Des erstwhile partner, Soave. He was a jerk in the first book, by the second book he was actually human. And now in this third book you really actually like him.

I highly recommend.

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