The legendary ninety-four-year-old Ada Geiger was one of the twentieth century’s most illustrious, controversial and remarkable cultural figures—the only person, living or dead, who had been a colleague of both Amelia Earhart and the Rolling Stones. She was also one of Mitch’s absolute idols.... When Les, the innkeeper, had contacted Mitch a few weeks back, Mitch was thrilled to participate in the event planned for Ada’s return.... Les had promised him that it would be a dignified, low-key symposium.

- from The Burnt Orange Sunrise

But Les lied. He had much bigger plans, full of Hollywood heavy-hitters, supermodels, rap music stars, high-profile athletes, and camera crews from every celebrity TV show in America. They are all to gather at the faux castle that Ada’s husband had built for her in little Dorset, Connecticut. All of them would come to celebrate the return of Ada Geiger from self-imposed exile—just the kind of event Mitch Berger hates, even though idolizing Ada was one of the things that had led him into the film world as a critic. But its too late to pull out now.

Then Mitch has a lucky break---or so he thinks at the time. The snowiest winter anyone under the age of ninety could remember has hit Dorset and vicinity with what seems like six more inches every three days. Soon, the regrets and have to wait till tomorrows come flowing in. The gathering is pared down to what Les had falsely promised---just a few people: Ada's
immediate family, Mitch and his lover, beautiful police officer Des Mitry, and a few deserving others make a manageably small group. When it snows even harder, they are all prisoners of the storm.

The reduced guest list makes the job a little easier for Des and Mitch when one by one the people at the Castle are killed off. Since our two friends have no intention of waiting to pinpoint the murderer until he—or she—is the only one left standing, Des and Mitch dare to dive into a breathtaking climax that has Des taking a terrible chance, and Mitch taking a worse one.

On the surface film critic Mitch Berger and state trooper Desiree Mitry have nothing in common. She is a black Christian and he is white. She is athletically fit while he is a pudgy couch potato. She keeps her feelings inside while he is an extrovert wearing them on his sleeves. In spite of all that and more they share a terrific personal relationship. They even have successfully solved a couple of homicide cases together although murder is the last thing on their minds when they attend a society gala at Astrid's castle in Dorset, Connecticut.

The party honors film director Ada Geiger, who broke the gender wall in the 1950s, but had to leave Hollywood due to the McCarthy persecutions. Her daughter Norma and her son-in-law Les own and run Astrid's castle, a hotel that is barely breaking even. The next morning, Norma is found dead in her bed from an apparent heart attack. Not long after that Ada is found also deceased, strangled by a telephone cord. Des believes that Norma was a homicide victim too and with Mitch covering her back and ignoring jurisdiction she investigates who killed the mother and daughter.

Mitch and Des are definitely the odd couple, which adds to the charm of this delightful police procedural Connecticut Yankee cozy. In some ways this tale is a twenty-first century version of Christies AND THEN THERE WERE NONE. This is locked room mystery which makes the case more difficult for the lead duo, but more fun for the fan. David Handler provides a unique voice that uses excellent characterizations to provide a fabulous mystery.

Harriet Klausner

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