



Bookplate Special

Lorna Barrett

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Tricia Miles, owner of Haven't a Clue mystery bookstore, is still settling into Stoneham, New Hampshire, the kind of town where everybody knows your name—and where everyone's quick to lend a hand, even when murder is afoot . . .

The kinder folks of Stoneham might call Pammy Fredericks a free spirit. The less kind, a freeloading thief. Tricia has put up—and put up with—her uninvited college roommate for weeks. In return, Pammy, has stolen \$100, among other things. But the day she's kicked out, Pammy's found dead in a dumpster, leaving loads of questions unanswered. Like what was she foraging for? Did her killer want it too? To piece the case together, Tricia will have to dive in head-first....

Bookplate Special Details

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DonnaCarol says

Very good book. I don't know how Barrett does it, but that town, (Booktown) and those characters come alive for me. I caught myself thinking about them while trying to fall to sleep.

The sister/sister relationship is very touching and so realistic. I have 3 sisters. I know of what I speak. LOL. The female characters, lead as well as supporting are a perfect mix of intelligent,fiesty,strong,vulnerable,emotional careing & sometimes "snippy". Just like real life.I will continue to follow these characters in their lives in Booktown.

QNPoohBear says

Tricia Miles has a problem. Her college roommate Pammy Fredericks has been staying with Tricia for two weeks - more like freeloading - and Tricia has had enough. It's not so much the freeloading but the breach of trust that bothers Tricia - that and the fact that Pammy singlehandedly annoyed and chased away customers. Pammy assures Tricia that she has hooked up with some locals and will have some place to go. Tricia feels bad that Pammy alienated her family and has very few friends but is relieved Pammy won't be out on the streets. The next time Tricia sees Pammy is at the dedication of the new food pantry where former playboy turned philanthropist Stuart Page is giving a speech. Pammy tries to crash the event but is hauled away by Page's entourage. Pammy stops by her sister Angelica's cafe for a bite to eat and listens to her sister gloat about her wonderful new hire - none other than Pammy Fredericks. Tricia is not thrilled but Angelica needs the help and Pammy has food prep experience. Then Tricia is shocked to discover Pammy face down in a garbage can behind Angelica's cafe. Fortunately for Tricia, the police don't suspect her this time. Deputy Baker is kind and sympathetic but doesn't seem to be making a lot of headway with the case. Tricia is receiving mysterious phone calls about a missing book or possible diary that is the clue to the mystery. There's also someone smashing pumpkins on Main Street and the mystery of who shot at Tricia's window to solve. Meanwhile, her love life is in the dumpster with Russ planning to leave the state and return to city living and her business is booming but she has employee problems. Tricia decides to focus on the mystery of Pammy's death and seek justice for her friend.

Book 2 was checked out so I skipped ahead to 3. There are hints about what happened in the first two mysteries but no major spoilers. There is a LOT going on in this novel. There is way way too much extraneous plot and even some of the clues in the mystery are told in too much detail. First there's animal adoption/pet care, which I'm all for (though I'm not a cat person) but it has zero relevance to the mystery or main characters. Then there's "freegans" which I had never heard of or would have labeled dumpster divers. These people believe in reducing waste and carbon footprints by searching out free food in dumpsters behind stores. This squicks Tricia out big time and I don't entirely blame her but I felt her attitude was a bit condescending towards these people. It's no wonder they didn't really want to talk to outsiders. Then there's the whole former playboy turned philanthropist mystery. He's clearly loosely based on Ted Kennedy. That made me a bit uncomfortable and I wouldn't be too happy with the author for bringing up that old story if I were the family. Finally, there's birth defects and adoption, not to mention the personal lives of the characters and too much about Angelica's new business ventures.

The central mystery was engaging. I had to keep listening to the story to find out what happened to Pammy and why. At first it seemed easy to guess but I figured Tricia's guess was way too simple and there had to be more to it than that. I was right. I never guessed who the murderer was or why. Actually the thought crossed

my mind but I couldn't find a motive and I didn't want it to be that person. I did guess one vital clue before Tricia did and I thought I guessed who the shooter was. I was very upset at the reveal and how it all happened and why. It changes the lives of several characters in the story in a very big way. It also made clear that there were certain plot elements that were not at all relevant to the story and characters who didn't need to be in the story.

This book also introduces a new love triangle for Tricia. I didn't really care for the romance aspect of the book. In fact, I don't even like Tricia and I thought at one point "No wonder she can't hold on to a relationship." Her attitude towards the other characters was often rude, condescending, petty and childish. She didn't even support her supposed-boyfriend by reading his paper! I didn't see a need for her to investigate the mystery on her own, especially when she was told not to. She gets offended at the slightest little thing and it made me not like her much. She also thinks she's a brilliant detective just because she reads and sells mysteries. Russ doesn't get much page time but I felt sympathy for him because Tricia was horrible and overreacted. Deputy Baker is a softer, kinder man than Tricia is used to dealing with. He has more of a sense of humor than she does but I do not see these two as a couple at all. I felt bad for Pammy because she reminded me of my uncle's college roommate in some ways. Pammy was not a very likable person overall but she had some positive aspects to her character that Angelica saw and Tricia did not, despite years of knowing each other. I found Angelica a little more annoying in this book than the first one but I like her better than Tricia. She's more compassionate than her older sister and she's better with people. I liked Bob better in this book than the first and I don't think Tricia gives him enough of a fair chance though she claims she's trying for her sister's sake. Franny is a kind and caring woman who doesn't belong in this story at all. She seems very sweet and I liked her best of all. Ginny, Tricia's employee, has more page time here. She seems likable enough though she whines a lot and she doesn't show any character growth in the story when she should at least have some reactions to what happens to her in the story. Mr. Everett is still very sweet as is Grace and they deserve all the happiness they can get - away from Tricia and her crazy mystery obsession!

The audio book narrator was good but not great. She pitched her voice differently for male and female characters but that was about it. I couldn't tell by her voice who was supposed to be speaking.

I love Booktown and wish it was real but it's a shame the characters in this series are not more likable.

Karen ?* says

I've read three books in the series because I could get them on audio from the library and they are good "filler" books when you don't want to think too much. But the dialogue is always a bit stilted and very formal. It feels forced rather than natural and I thought by now this would have improved.

Not a bad cozy mystery series if you can get your hands on it, but I think there are others that are much better.

Deborah says

This review covers both book #3 and #4 in this series.

Lorna Barrett's series Booktown Mysteries really appealed to me when I saw the first one-"Murder is Binding", and I did enjoy it as your basic 'who done it' with the usual format of female sleuth with her own business, some involved relatives, some love interests and history, the requisite cat, and some cooking. All is good.

On to the next book in the series, where the personality of the main character, Tricia Miles, is developing. One problem for me here, is the author doesn't seem to make up her mind on what this personality should be. We get the basic do gooder to the extreme, with some overly highhanded attitude. There is reference to everyone thinking Tricia is a door mat due to her abundance of kindness. Then we get some holier than thou from Tricia as well, but it segues into slightly discriminating bitch with a touch of bad ass. Okay, many people have a variety of personality traits, but then there is also extreme vagueness about what does Tricia actually look like. At this point, I am up to book five and my mental picture of Tricia is one of a blank face, sitting at the booth in the café eating a Cobb salad with a twin set on and her nose in the air. She is colorless. I don't like Tricia, but could if the author gave her a defined personality and some color to her physical being. I do recall reading that she drives a Lexus in one of the books. Frankly, a beat up Jeep driving girl who swigs down some Southern Comfort and eats Capt. Crunch for breakfast would have won me over far easier. However, her eating habits are not in line with a cozy, in my humble opinion. The series constantly indicates that Tricia is so slim and hates deserts, sweets, and lives on salad. Boring! Me - no like. However, her big sister, Angelica, is downright chubby and loves all food. Of course! Halo for Tricia, and perpetuate the bad sister, Angelica.

This series had a great start and an interesting basic style for a cozy, with the NH setting of a Book Town, but it has become downright strange. Getting into both the third and fourth books in the series, which have become blended into one for me - this review is for both books. I was no longer enjoying the story as much as looking for incredibly odd ball and annoying incidents to jump out at me. I was not disappointed, as it became more and more frequent. Such as-half way through the third book, Bookplate Special, we finally get a glimpse of a Tricia never before seen. (Really, after three books)? This comes out when the hinted at new love interest, Grant Baker, who happens to be the investigating officer this book around in place of the aggressive unlikeable previous female authority Sheriff Adams. The only thing is here, once again, the author confuses us with Baker's description, he has green eyes, tall with sandy hair, a Trooper hat, a Mountie hat, a Captain title, a deputy with lots of bars on his uniform, but is a Sherriff. Yep, go figure. Anyway, suddenly we get-"Nobody tells Tricia what to do" in a scene with Baker. Really? Sweet little Tricia? This was so out of place I thought the page dropped in from another book! It was like the author at the spur of the moment decided to give Tricia some kind of oomph. The scene where this took place was Baker asking Tricia to step back for her own safety concerning her interfering in his investigation. Remember, Tricia, you're not a cop! This is a back and forth throughout both books number 3 and 4, first she gets mad that Baker doesn't seem to bother with her safety, then she is teed off because he is concerned if she becomes too involved she could get hurt. At one point, Baker implores Tricia to stay out of the investigation and asks her to promise to do so. Tricia's reply indicates that as she is the owner of a book store where every piece of inventory involves mysteries, how can she promise to do so? This is so lame-all credibility is now gone. Are we to believe that this shop owner, a middle aged female, untrained in any police position, should be qualified to investigate the third murder in this series? This pretense has become ludicrous, laughable, and ill-fitting to the series.

Basically, Tricia's self-righteousness progresses to such a peak she becomes a very unlikeable protagonist for this series. Her perfectness is grating. Her persona seems to 'own' the little town of Stoneham. She does everything so 'right', from running her business, assisting her sister's businesses, aiding everyone who may need money, because of course, Tricia is independently wealthy. She is also the shoulder to lean on, as Frannie and Ginny go to her with everything and the go-to person for knowledge about cats. Tricia is the saving force behind Mr. Everett and Grace. The love interest for Russ and Capt. Baker, to the point of them fist fighting over her. She is the one who happens to see the identity of the pumpkin smasher, the know it all about hermaphrodite birth defects, and on and on.

Speaking of which, that kind of serious birth anomaly is just too intense for a cozy mystery, in the same book as freegan's , a dialysis center being built, issues of adoption, of the hungry and poor, all in one book.

The ending of "Chapter and Hearse" brought memories of having watched Gunsmoke and Bonanza on TV as

a kid, when the shoot out between the villain, Tricia and her bystanders takes place in Angelica's business- Tricia is on the floor on her back holding a smoking gun, while Baker arrives to give our hero a hand up. When he asks 'what is she doing', her reply? "Taking care of Business". At that point she grabs him by his tie to plant a big kiss on him while disclaiming how he is NOT, her ex husband, or Russ for sure. Big reality check please, Ms. Barrett.

I may move on to the next installment just to see what further sainthood Tricia may have achieved, but I will check it out of the library, not buy it. I give a begrudged three stars as the book covers are great, the cat blameless, and the recipes are okay.

Chance Lee says

This is another one where I enjoyed the mystery, but found the main character incredibly unlikeable and awfully judgmental. Sometimes, I got the feeling that the author felt the same way, because characters repeatedly had to correct her or gently explain things to her. It never sunk in though, and by the time she told the police officer who didn't want her, a bookstore owner, meddling in a murder mystery, and she told him "You're not my mother," I realized that I would never like her. It is nice that she's a strong, clear personality, though, even though she doesn't particularly click with me.

Aside from her, the mystery was interesting, and it made good use of characters who had been mentioned but not utilized in previous books. Not much time was spent in the bookstore, which was a shame. Also, they almost got ran off the road for the third time in three books, and for the second time a major clue had been hidden on the shelves of the main character's book store. New plot devices, please.

Finally, it often irked me in the past books how Tricia was always drinking her coffee out of disposable paper cups. Does she own a mug? Someone finally calls her out on it in this one, and decides to use china mugs in the future. I hope so, as for some reason I am really concerned with this fictional waste.

Janet McCord says

As much as I enjoy the author's writing and liked the story line I just cannot like or seem to warm to Trisha Miles, the heroine. The possibilities of being a small-town mystery book shop owner who solves mysteries is not a new one and could be delightful but the way the main character goes about it just sets my teeth on edge. With no regard to the fact that she's withholding evidence from a police officer in a murder investigation, Trisha steamrollers on as she sees fit, getting in the way and, in one scene, actually acting like a spoiled brat and saying to the police Captain, "You're not my mother!" when he, quite justifiably, tells her to butt out for her own safety. When being threatened by a mysterious phone message or being shot at, rather than go to said police she keeps everything to herself and eventually reveals vital evidence when she sees fit.

Nevertheless, since this is the 3rd book of the series I've read, and will probably read more, there's something still attractive about the town and Trisha's friends. I keep hoping she will turn out more likable. And I find her aversion to good food off-putting too! The story and mystery itself were well drawn, with a surprising twist and the other characters are likable so I don't think I'll give up yet.

S. says

Not having read the first two books in this series, I feel like I'm missing something. Otherwise why would a

mystery book store owner who presumably knows all about crime from reading so many books doesn't realize she's hindering a murder investigation. Quick example, donating the box of books? It makes no sense.

Denise says

This is the third book in the Booktown Mystery series. I really enjoyed reading this book and the characters are building as the series goes on. What I particularly liked was that this book had a little more substance than most cozies have. The storyline brings in quite a lot of information about freegans (dumpster divers) and how it isn't just homeless people who eat salvaged food out of garbage cans. I had recently read a long article about this subculture (as it was called) and was pleased to see an author that presented it in a very sensitive way and wove it into the story quite well. I would highly recommend this series. Of course, as a booklover, how could you not love a book set in a bookstore in a town of bookstores.

I am also looking forward to book four "Chapter and Hearse". There is a preview in the back of Bookplate Special.

Roberta says

In this third book of the Booktown Mystery series but the first one I noticed at the bookstore.

In this book Tricia is an owner of a mystery bookstore called Haven't Got A Clue located in the small town of Stoneham, New Hampshire. She does virtually no work at the bookstore and apparently has only one full-time and two part-time employees but sells more books than the Manhattan Barnes & Noble. This small town also suffers from the "Cabot Cove syndrome" having a higher crime rate than Detroit and Chicago put together.

One star for being a book-related mystery and one star for the cat.

Mayda says

Tricia and her sister have their ups and downs, but they can count on each other in a crisis, which is a very good thing. Tricia kindly asked a visiting former school mate to move on, having over-stayed her visit, and the old friend winds up dead in the dumpster. Well, head-first in the trash container behind Angelica's store. Turns out, the old friend wasn't so nice, yet Tricia wants to find out who did her in. There is much interaction between the characters in this story, which furthers their development and adds to the enjoyment of the tale.

Bird says

I like the premise of this series, and the first two books were enjoyable. The one, however, bothered me. My main complaint is that most of the characters are unlikable.

Tricia annoyed me throughout the book. I'm tired of hearing how she doesn't like sweets because she wants

to stay skinny. I don't want to hear her complaints about Ginny arriving five minutes late to work, when Tricia spends most of her work days snooping around rather than helping her employees in the store. And her (basically non-existent, since it's only ever mentioned briefly) relationship with Russ was ridiculous. She complains that he doesn't have time for her, but she doesn't even read the newspaper he puts out (and it's a weekly - not daily!)...way to not support your significant other.

Then there's Detective Baker. I was immediately grateful the Sheriff wasn't in it, because that storyline was getting old, fast. So of course Detective Baker is hunky, and they're attracted to each other. Except, I have no idea what Tricia sees in him. (Or vice versa, since she wasn't a very enjoyable character in this one.) He's frequently condescending to her, ignoring her when she tries to make jokes, or poking fun at some of the things she says/does. It's not in a playful way, either. The author has no talent for writing about relationships.

Why is there some disastrous car chase/accident scene in every book? Every time Tricia gets in the car with someone to drive across town, I cringe, waiting for the inevitable bad-guy encounter.

Finally, it seems at times that the author is injecting her own beliefs into the story. Every once in a while, Tricia will think/say something that doesn't jibe with the rest of her character, and it feels like the author's just trying to make a point.

I didn't hate the book, although you might not be able to tell from this review! I'll probably read the next in the series, but I'm not rushing out to get it.

Patrizia says

Mi riconosco sempre di più nella protagonista! Ora ho pure scoperto che ci chiamiamo uguale (Tricia sta per Patricia)... In più, amiamo gatti e mysteries, non sappiamo cucinare, abbiamo un debole per gli uomini con gli occhi verdi. L'unica cosa diversa è che lei possiede una libreria che vende mysteries: per questo la invidio molto.

Detto questo, il colpevole è giunto come una sorpresa. Lungo il libro ho iniziato a disprezzare sempre di più la vittima, lo confesso. Comunque è stata una bella lettura, come al solito.

Book Concierge says

Audiobook performed by Cassandra Campbell

Book number three in the Booktown Mystery series. Tricia Miles, owner of *Haven't Got a Clue* mystery bookshop can't help but investigate when her college roommate, Pammy, is found dead in a garbage bin, a day after Tricia told her to find another "temporary" residence. It's not just any garbage bin, either ... it's behind Tricia's sister's café, which is right next door to the book shop. Angelica had even hired Pammy, after hearing her sob story of how Tricia "kicked her out."

This is a typical cozy mystery, with a cast of colorful characters, and a nosy amateur sleuth who simply cannot help herself when it comes to investigating a crime on her doorstep. There's a little romantic tension as well, and a few recipes at the end. (Angelica has written a cookbook, and runs a bistro, after all.) It's not great literature, but it's entertaining and a quick read. And, I just love all the references to books.

The audiobook is performed by Cassandra Campbell, who is quickly becoming one of my favorite audio

narrators. She has good pacing, and is an accomplished voice artist, able to handle the large cast of characters.

John says

I'm going to try to describe the problems I had with the book without revealing any (major) spoilers, so please bear with me if things get a bit awkward in my phrasing. Thanks in advance!

In writing workshops we were always told to say something constructive up front, so ... the setting is well done, and I found the plot, though eventually quite convoluted, moved along well in terms of pacing. The characters on the other hand were rather a mess.

Mr. Everett and Grace's wedding (not really a spoiler, IMHO) doesn't really add a lot to the plot, but doesn't detract either. They're their usual selves. No issue there.

Ginny, Tricia's assistant, does turn into a weepy mess as noted in other reviews. Perhaps that was intended as some sort of "foreshadowing" of later events, but her poormouthing over the cost of the house did get tedious.

Angelica actually came across as *more* likable here - perhaps because she runs two businesses, and has a book under contract, while Tricia moans about how hard she works (when not taking time off at the drop of a hat to play detective). Moreover, Angelica comes across as caring for others, not as self-absorbed as she'd come off previously.

Much is made of Stewart Page, a New Hampshire philanthropist with a Chappaquiddick-like episode in his past, after which he's devoted his life to Good Works. His main contribution to the story seems to give Tricia a specific piece of information, though otherwise has little direct bearing on the story. Significant space is invested in Tricia's hounding him for what amounts to a relatively minor contribution to the plot. Either he's being set up for the next installment, or he was intended to have a larger role, and then got lost in the plot shuffle?

No, he's not the killer, but that's established early enough on that I don't feel I'm spoiling things - he seems more a red herring, getting discarded partway through. He is noble and likable. Her spats with his bodyguard/assistant are tedious.

Eugenia, the diner waitress, and her family are featured in prominent roles this time, as was Nikki the pastry chef in the previous book. Not much to say about them, except that her mother's description of the town's new food bank procedures flummoxed me when she said, "We take non-perishables *up to two years* past their expiration dates. They don't taste as fresh, but they're edible." Ummmm I don't *think* so! They become so heavily involved that I'll say no more about them specifically, except that, yes, they do qualify as "cardboard" characters.

Sheriff Adams herself does not appear at all. Her (assistant) Captain Baker is sent to investigate the discovery of Pammy's body (the third one Tricia has found in about a year in the same small town!); presumably the sheriff realized Tricia was involved and washed her hands of trying to deal with her. Captain Baker is soon to see why for himself as Tricia interferes again and again until he blows his stack, Tricia becomes defensive ... and he backs down and apologizes! He is a sensitive man, whose hobby is ... baking! He reads a lot (though not mysteries), and is single. He's also proud that he presses his shirts himself. We are

given two descriptions of his features - the green eyes with which Tricia is smitten, and the "nice buns" noticed by her sister. **A spoiler I cannot resist:** Near the end, he is surprised when Tricia spontaneously kisses him rather passionately (in front of others no less) - I was surprised he did not push her away in horror.

Tricia ... whom I came to regard already as an unreliable narrator with her "decision" at the end of the first story that Sheriff Adams disliked her (paraphrasing) because the man she secretly wanted was so immediately struck by Tricia's hot-ness that her delusion that she could ever be desirable was shattered causing bitterness. Ho hum. Still, the audio narrator gave Adams a nasty enough edge that I was willing to accept that perhaps she really *did* go out of her way to be mean.

So, what does Tricia do in this book? She consoles weepy Ginny, buying a small fridge and microwave (via Craigslist); now Ginny can eat in the store back room rather than shivering in her car. Tricia herself is independently wealthy, but why say ... order from Best Buy in a few minutes when she can get cheaper used models less efficiently? She hounds Page on two occasions (a half day each where Ginny has to work the store alone). She spends an evening "dumpster diving" with the local Freegans (Pammy had become involved with them during her two weeks in Stoneham), has conversations with Frannie at Angelica's bookstore about how to deal with a new cat (this subplot prompts a ridiculous, Drama Empress outburst from her sister), washes dishes and squeezes spinach dry for her sister (different visits), and ... oh yes ... she has various run-ins with Captain Baker before molesting him.

More details would need a spoiler, but the average reader should feel annoyed that the denouement regarding Pammy's death proved quite bizarre - almost impossible to predict as there weren't any clues leading to it - just a scene in Haven't Got a Clue involving Tricia, Angelica, Ginny, three other people ... and a gun.

Oh yes ... many folks disliked the goose poop distractions in the previous book. Here we have a mad vandal smashing pumpkins right and left instead. Tricia, looking out her window, identifies the perp (to herself) one night, which gets filed away until later in the story. Not long before the scene described above, she confronts the person, almost literally saying, "Hmmm ... I have some down time, let me resolve that issue now (before I inevitably get threatened by the killer and rescued.)" She's quite nasty about it, while the vandal has a hissyfit meltdown.

I plan on reading the next (final?) book to see whether it's possible for Tricia to become even more self-centered, and whether some of the loose ends here have gotten tied up at all.

Lynne Tull says

BEWARE POSSIBLE SPOILER?

This series is going on my "do not read anymore" list. First of all, I am beginning to think Lorna Barrett is a committee. This book covered so many different social issues they are too numerous to list...from dumpster divers who dive for food (Freegans) to babies that are born with both sets of reproductive systems. Secondly, the main characters are not people that I would want to hang out with in real life; therefore, why should I want to spend my 'read' time with them. One sister is arrogant and self-centered. The other sister (the main character) is not only arrogant, but she is rude to people she doesn't even know and is condescending to those she likes. I can understand why her first husband left her and her boyfriend for over a year has dumped her. Even harder to believe he changes his mind and now there is to be a love triangle with him, her, and the new

man in town. I will continue to read her other series, Jeff Resnick, written under the name of L. L. Bartlett. I'll keep you posted on it.
