

# Murder on the Toy Town Express

*Barbara Early*

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Liz McCall has come to love running her father's vintage toyshop back home in East Aurora, NY, so when the Train and Toy Show comes to town, she's all aboard for a fun toy-filled weekend. The only hitch is that her childhood bully Craig McFadden, now local business rival, has set up a booth next to hers. But the fun and games are over when Craig falls from the ceiling in a publicity stunt gone wrong.

What was initially thought to be a fatal accident proves much more sinister. Pulled into the case by her feelings for both Ken, the police chief, and Jack, her high school sweetheart whose brother is one the prime suspects, Liz dives headfirst into the investigation. But as she digs deeper, she's shocked to learn her father may have been the intended target.

The trouble train is barreling down and Liz may have just bought herself a first class ticket in *Murder on the Toy Town Express*, Barbara Early's delightful second installment in her Vintage Toyshop mysteries.

## Murder on the Toy Town Express Details

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Author : Barbara Early

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# From Reader Review Murder on the Toy Town Express for online ebook

## Karen says

I finished Murder on the Toy Town Express by Barbara Early on September 16th. This is a first in the series for me and boy is it ever a fun one! I love toys, vintage and new and I love trains so I could very easily picture the setting and plot of this cozy murder mystery. While I was reading it I felt like I was walking the Train show with my friend Sheryl, a fellow toy and doll enthusiast as we followed main character Liz and her father around for the investigation. This series touched on a number of themes that actually related to my own life and I found this to be a very touching and relatable cozy! I did not clue into who the murderer really was until the reveal, maybe not wanting to just a tiny bit, lots of smaller twists and turns that keeps you wanting more! I am excited to see where this series goes next! Murder on the Toy Town Express comes out October 10th.

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## Lola says

I received a free copy of this book from the publisher through netgalley and voluntarily reviewed it.

The first book in this series was one of my favorite cozy mystery reads last year so I immediately requested this book when I saw it pop up on netgalley. While I did think book 1 was a bit better, this book was still very good. I quickly got in the story, then a part seemed a bit slow, but once things start going wrong the pace really picked up again. I was lovely to be back in this town and the toy shop.

The mystery in this book was a good one again. It really kept me guessing, at first I had no clue who was the murderer. When the mystery progressed I mostly kept thinking the people who were suspects didn't seem quite right. There is a lot going on in this one and lots of people involved in some way which made for a great and complex mystery. It was hard to tell what was relevant or tied into the murder and what not and it made for an interesting touch. In the end I figured out who the murderer was seconds before the main character did. It suddenly clicked in place. And it was nice to see how everything tied together. I also liked how after they solve the mystery there is another chapter or so to wrap things up.

The first part of the book takes place at a toy and train show and lots of the important characters for this mystery are introduced there. The show was a fun set-up for this book, a bit like a convention with lots of sellers attending, but at the same time I was happy when they got back to their shop. The shop is just more fun to read about and I think it made for a better setting. I liked reading about the old toys and I really like that part of this story. The toy shop gives a nice flavor to this mystery and I really like reading about the shop and the characters.

Just as in the first book I enjoyed reading about Liz and her father, how they investigate the murder together and the punny jokes they make. I think they make for a fun duo and they work well together. I also thought it felt believable how they got tied up in this murder investigation and I had a lot of fun reading this book. We meet some new side characters as well as some familiar ones. There are some new side characters that I think/ hope we'll see more of. There were some interesting twists/ development with the characters as well.

The romance also continues and at the end of this book I am not fully sure what to think of it. It felt like it

turned into one big mess. At the end of the book 1 I saw potential in both love interests and thought they would both make a good match for Liz. At the end of this book I have completely changed my mind and I am hoping a third guy will pop up in book 3, because I just don't see things working out with these 2 in a way that would make me happy. Talk about a completely turn around. Although it was kinda different to see how things changed and developed here. I wasn't too happy with how Liz basically strings both men along at first and how she didn't take the time to really make a decisions, but sort of rolled into it, it felt very unsatisfying. So the romance in this book didn't quite work for me, but it was interesting to see things develop.

To summarize: Murder on the Toy Town express has a great setting and focus with the toy store, a fun daughter and dad duo trying to help solve the murder and a mystery that kept me guessing. I liked this second installment of the series and reading about this toy shop again. Liz and her father are fun to read about and I like reading about them. The mystery kept me guessing for a long time until I figured it out seconds before the main character did. The romance turned into a bit of a mess in this book and I hope another love interest will pop up in the next book, but it was kinda interesting seeing things develop, it sure wasn't what I had expected. I liked meeting some of the new side characters and hope to see of some of them in later books, as well as some already familiar side characters. There are some interesting changes and developments with the characters. This was a great sequel and I am looking forward to the next book!

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## **Carrie says**

Liz McCall has settled into her job as the manager of her father's vintage toy shop in East Aurora, NY when the Train and Toy Show comes to town. Liz and her retired police officer father decide they will set up a booth at the show to showcase some of the toys from their shop. The show should be a lot of fun but Liz finds that her childhood bully, Craig McFadden, is also at the show and now their business competition with a booth set up right next to theirs.

The show is going well when everyone spies Craig up in the rafters of the building walking around when suddenly he falls right into a display. Rushed off to the hospital everyone first thinks Craig's publicity stunt just went wrong and he's had a horrible accident. But when clues start pointing to there being more to Craig's fall and possibly even her father as the real target Liz once again finds herself investigating the case.

Murder on the Toy Town Express is the second book in the Vintage Toyshop Mystery series by Barbara Early. Each book in the series is a cozy mystery that features a different case so the books can pass as standalones if desired although there would be a slight bit of character building missing that occurred in the first book.

This cozy series has all of the fun elements that I enjoy from the genre, likable characters and a fun, unique setting along with a believable investigation from our main character with a bit of help from her ex-police father. I would warn that while any romance is extremely background in the stories there is a bit of a love triangle angle with two potential romantic interests for Liz but it seems put in more for involvement with the case than an actual push towards romance. I'll be looking forward to the next installment in the series and what's in store for our characters in the future.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.wordpress....>

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## **Peggy R says**

This is the first book that I have read in this series and given that it is only book 2 I didn't think I would be too lost. I am happy to say that was the case. Other than Liz's relationship issues, I didn't feel like I missed too much. The setting of a vintage toy shop was unique and I found myself smiling with the nostalgia of the old toys and games mentioned in the book. Liz and her dad are fun characters and I liked that this was sort of a father/daughter crime solving duo. Both characters are well written and I thought the father/daughter bond felt genuine. The mystery was quite well done. I know I say this alot, but I did not know the identity of the killer until it was revealed.

This was an enjoyable read and I will be back to see what the author has in store for Liz, her dad and the rest of the characters in the future.

I voluntarily read an advanced reader copy provided to me by the publisher, Crooked Lane Books, through Netgalley.

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## **Mark Baker says**

The Toy and Train Expo has come to town, and Liz McCall and her father have a booth for their vintage toy shop, Well Played. Their booth is next to a face from Liz's past, Craig McFadden, who used to bully Liz in school. Craig has some big announcement to make this weekend, but before he can, he plunges off the cat walk in the convention center. What's going on?

I never really grew up, so a series set in a vintage toy shop has me smiling from page one. The fact that the story is strong and kept me guessing only helps. The characters are wonderful, and I'd love to meet Liz and her family. There are significant developments in the romantic triangle introduced in the previous book. Add in a strong dose of humor thanks to certain events and Liz's father's love of puns, and you've got a winning book.

NOTE: I received an ARC of this book.

Read my full review at Carstairs Considers.

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## **Betty says**

The second book in the Toy Top Series and I have not read the one first but I have read this author before and always enjoyed her. This will work as a stand-alone. The train and toy show has come to town. Liz McCall is looking forward to it until she learns that her childhood bully, Craig McFadden's comic book booth is next to the Toyshop one. That morning Craig climbs to the rafters and falls to the floor landing in an elaborate train display. Before the answer is found Liz will encounter greed, missing comics, mobsters, FBI, a missing mother, and a chance to add a section on comics to Toy Shop merchandise. I recommend you book.

Disclosure: I received a free copy from Crooked Lane Books through NetGalley for an honest review. I would like to thank them for this opportunity to read and review the book. The opinions expressed are my own.

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## **Lisa Ks Book Reviews says**

Conductor . . . I mean author Barbara Early takes her readers on the ride of a life time! Toot Toot!

Having loved the first book in this series, DEATH OF A TOY SOLDIER, I couldn't wait to hop on board book two, MURDER ON THE TOY TOWN EXPRESS. Oh my goodness! It was well worth the wait!

Like a kid to a toy store, Barbara Early lured me into this second installment of the Vintage Toyshop Mysteries. From the first line of this book that had me laughing, the exciting mystery throughout, until the last line which left me sighing contentedly, I read this book straight through.

I am besotted with the characters in this murderously delightful series. Liz McCall, and her father, Hank, have a wonderful relationship that causes my heart to smile. Another favorite of mine is Liz's sister-in-law, Cathy. I would so love working with them in their toyshop, Well Played. I could see us becoming fast friends.

MURDER ON THE TOY TOWN EXPRESS was an exceptional mystery. Even with the victim being someone who deserved what he got, I was wrapped up in the investigation of who killed him and why. Following along one twisting and turning dead end track after another, when I finally reached the end of the line in this story, I couldn't have been more surprised. Game well played, Ms. Early.

Don't let anything derail you from reading MURDER ON THE TOY TOWN EXPRESS!

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## **Tracey says**

I think I start every review of a cozy mystery pretty much along the same lines: they're either horrendous or wonderful, with very little in between. I've even started developing a list of Cozy Cardinal Sins and tropes. Such as - -

1) Heroine is a small business owner

This book/series: check – but it's okay. This little shop sounds like it would be viable in real life; it's run by family; it sells something that legitimately can be lucrative.

2) There's a love triangle

This book/series: check – but it's okay. Normally this is a bad, bad idea – but it works here. The heroine has genuine affection for both men in her life, and it's handled in a way that feels fairly realistic.

3) Heroine is surrounded by wise-cracking family, friends, and co-workers.

This book/series: check – but it's okay. Because it's funny. "'You have a mind like an elephant's.' 'Yeah, wrinkled, gray, and way too much junk in the trunk. But that's totally irrelephant.' I rolled my eyes and

glared at him. Otherwise, he'd be making elephant jokes all day." That took the joke and pushed it too far – and it's so silly I had to smile.

4) Author thinks she's skilled at sharp, clever, witty

This book/series: check – but it's okay. Because she is. "Cathy's fictional version was a little more embellished, containing spear guns, spies, bikinis, an occasional zombie, and a whole lot of steamy embraces. She insisted readers would need something spicier." "But Dad had spun his words as adeptly as some cult leader, playing on my pride, my craving for his approval, my sense of justice, and that infernal inherited curiosity. I said nothing, but my next sip of coffee tasted an awful lot like Kool-Aid." (It was Flavor Aid, but that's just quibbling.)

5) Author thinks she's skilled at metaphor and simile

This book/series: check – but it's okay. Because she is. I don't think I've ever come across a description of someone's "stomach tied into a macramé plant hanger" before, and I like it. Oh, and this is lovely: "Jack's mother was a riddle wrapped in a lemon inside a porcupine." I want to use that in conversation. One more: "If he'd looked any more sheepish, he'd be eating grass in the fields and sprouting a thick wool coat."

6) The plot is filled with red herrings and has elements that are over the top, far-fetched

This book/series: check – but it's okay. Because Barbara Early can write. And she can plot. She can throw in a few left turns and wacky bits, and fold it into a story that hangs together and comes to a satisfying conclusion.

7) At least as important as the plot (if not more important) is the cast of characters

This book/series: check – but it's okay. Because these characters have a depth that you don't usually see in a light read. The family that runs the toy shop at the center of the series has a legitimate history, and it's not all Norman Rockwell and jokes. These folks have been through stuff, and Barbara Early obviously feels a real warmth towards them. The beauty is that she writes them so well that I do too.

The usual disclaimer: I received this book via Netgalley for review.

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## **K.A. Davis says**

MURDER ON THE TOY TOWN EXPRESS by Barbara Early is the second book in the Vintage Toyshop Mystery series but the first one I've read... and I'm all onboard for reading the first one and catching up before the next book comes out. From the very first page I was captivated by the charming setting, the oh so funny train puns, and a mystery that not only kept me guessing but had me going "wow". Ms. Early then wraps the entertainment up with a bombshell conclusion!

I greatly enjoyed getting to know the characters and despite not having read the first book, I never felt at a disadvantage. The author does a wonderful job making the reader feel like the characters are people you've known for a long time. The close relationship the protagonist, Liz McCall, has with her family and particularly her father, Hank, is very heartwarming. The family vintage toyshop, Well Played, is a place I would love to hang out. The descriptions and mentions of various games, toys, and candies brought back so many memories from my childhood. The nostalgic touch made this book even sweeter and I look forward to reading more in this series!

I was provided a copy with the hopes I would review. All thoughts and opinions are my own.

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## **Mystereity Reviews says**

Book 2 of the Vintage Toy Shop series was every bit as good as the first! This is shaping up to be a go-to series, and not just because I love the setting so much (and I'm with Liz about Sahlen's Hot Dogs, mmmm.) The twisty plot kept me guessing right up to the exciting ending, and there were a few "oh no way!" moments along the way. I love Liz's relationship with her dad, they make a great team and the running puns are always funny.

*"You have a mind like an elephant's."*

*"Yeah, wrinkled, gray and way too much junk in the trunk. But that's totally irrelephant."*

I felt bad for Liz in this one. I mean, what's wrong with a woman casually dating 2 guys? Apparently a lot, since Liz's family felt like they needed to nag her about it every 2 minutes. Can't a single girl have a little fun?

It was the plot that really stands out in this book, who killed Comic Book Craig and why? Craig wasn't a likeable guy by any means, and there were plenty of motives and suspects to keep me guessing, and the side plots added both a bit of fun and introduced new characters I hope to see more of in later books. The big plot twist at the end made for an exciting and satisfying conclusion and by the very last page, I was already dying (pun intended) to read the next book (October can't come soon enough!)

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## **Linda says**

When Liz McCall accompanies her dad, Hank to an antique show featuring toy trains, murder's just around the corner when Craig, a comic book seller, climbs to the catwalk area and plunges down landing on top of a train on display. He later dies at the hospital under suspicious circumstances. Once a cop, always a cop, Hank volunteers to help the police investigate after they discover some rare, high-dollar comic books missing from Craig's booth.

There are actually several mysteries within this mystery, so to speak, and I enjoyed the story.

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## **Juli says**

Liz McCall runs a vintage toy shop, Well Played, in East Aurora, NY along with her father. The duo have a booth at the Toy and Train Expo. Liz expects the show to be a busy, but enjoyable event. Until she sees an enemy from her past. Her childhood nemesis, Craig McFadden, has a booth for his comic book shop set up right next to them. And Craig is still a jerk. His employee, Maxine, seems very nice and definitely competent, which makes the situation a bit better.

Liz's dad says that he has spotted some rather shady looking people at the expo. Liz thinks it might just be his former law enforcement career making him see criminals in any large crowd.....but strange things start to happen, culminating in Craig taking a swan dive from the cat walk of the expo building into the train display below. Was his fall an accident? Or something more sinister?



I used to own a comic book shop so all the discussion of comics, grading and selling collectibles was enjoyable for me. :) The author did a great job of portraying the collector crowd....and how they behave, or misbehave, at an expo event. The collectibles market can be fickle. People sometimes think they have a high dollar item and get rather upset when you have to tell them it's a reprint or too damaged to be worth anything. All those reality shows that portray people finding gems worth thousands in their attics made everyone believe they had a mint hidden away in their home. :)

I love the idea of a retired police officer running a vintage toy shop with his daughter. The fact that the father still has his cop intuition was a great addition to the character. He notices people in the expo crowd behaving strangely.....and he was right! Liz is a strong, intelligent and determined main character. All of the side characters are believable and interesting. The toy and comic book background theme didn't overpower the mystery, but added to it. The mystery moved along at a good pace, with plenty of surprises and twists. I did not see the ending coming.....it caught me by surprise. But, it was one of those moments where I had to shake my head and say to myself that I should have seen it coming..... :) All in all, great cozy mystery!!

Murder on the Toy Town Express is the second book in the Vintage Toy Shop Mystery series. For more information on the author and her books, check out her website: <http://www.barbaraearly.com/>

\*\*I voluntarily read an advanced readers copy of this book from Crooked Lane Books via NetGalley. All opinions expressed are entirely my own.\*\*

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### **Deborah Almada says**

I was really looking forward to reading this book. It is the second in Barbara Early's Vintage Toyshop Mysteries and I had thought long and hard about ordering the first, but it was a hard cover and I had never read anything by this author before so I was thrilled to receive a copy of Murder on the Toy Train Express as an ARC!!!!

I love the whole premise of this book who wouldn't love toys and games, the shop and different family members with different interests all working together. I did feel a little lost with background, as I have not read book one, so it took a little while to get a handle on Liz, but once I did I really liked her, the book starts running with a Toy and Train show at a local venue. Liz and company find their booth next to a local business man who bullied Liz as a child and before she can worry about it too much Craig falls from a catwalk, he appears to have been drugged, valuable comic books are missing from his booth, and the mob maybe involved. Liz, her retired police chief dad, and a current love interest, the present police chief means all will be involved!!!!!!!!

This was a really good mystery and there is a lot going on in the lives of family and friends so this book is packed and a good read!!!!!!

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### **LORI CASWELL says**

Dollycas's Thoughts

Choo! Choo! All Aboard for another fun mystery from Barbara Early!!

The toy and train show has come to East Aurora, New York and Liz McCall and her family have a booth to sell their vintage toys. Liz McCall is a little nervous because an awful blast from her past, Craig McFadden, has the booth right next to hers selling his comic books. It is bad enough that he has a store across the street from their toy shop, Well Played, does she have to see him for the whole weekend. She quickly meets his clerk and learns she will be running the booth, because Craig has something special planned. I don't think dying was what he had in mind, but that is what happened. Accident... publicity stunt... one moment he was on the catwalk, then he was in the air and then he laid among the rubble of the disaster he created to a model train town. Was it murder?? Her dad, the retired police chief finds himself in the middle of the investigation and so does Liz when her high school boyfriend's brother becomes a prime suspect and she finds her dad may have been the original target.

All the characters I loved in the first story are back. The relationship between Liz and her dad is heartwarming and uplifting. The whole family pulls together to help with the shop and the booth. It is a true family business. They also have many loyal customers that show up for their nightly board game events. Well Played is a family gem in a day of the big box stores.

Now the victim, he was a bully from back in grade school right up until the day he died. He didn't have any friends and Liz even questioned if he would be missed. He was the perfect victim and while I never wish anyone dead, I was not sorry to see him go.

Ms. Early has written quite a puzzling mystery and I may be off my "game" but she had me so twisted, turned, and off the "track" that I pulled in the station right along with Liz. I had an OMG moment when I read that final twist. The plot was very exciting but the author threw in some funny instances too. There is also a bit of a romantic triangle going on. Liz is dating her high school crush and the new police chief. Her dad is giving her more than a little nudge to finally decide between the two. The author had me on board from the first page to the last.

So we have wonderful characters, a fun theme, an excellent mystery, with humor and romance. For me that chugs this story right into the depot as an absolutely perfect escape. Climb aboard, this is a story you don't want to miss.

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## **Rebbie says**

This is the 2nd book in the Vintage Toyshop Mystery series. Even though I didn't get a chance to read the first book before diving into this one, I was able to follow the plot just fine and didn't feel lost. The only thing that I missed out on was the backstory behind Liz McCall's love life, but that's ok because after enjoying this story, I intend to go back and read the first book too.

Liz McCall manages her dad's retro toy shop, and attends a trade show, where she meets up with a childhood bully named Craig McFadden who is now also in the business.

At the trade show, Craig is killed in what is at first believed to be an accident (don't worry, this isn't a spoiler), but is soon investigated as a possible murder. Liz and her dad investigate the crime together, and in doing so uncover a twist in the plot.

My favorite parts of the story were the relationship between Liz and her dad, as well as her romantic interests.

I anticipate that the romance in Liz's life will heat up even more in the next book. Overall this was a cute fast book to read, and was highly enjoyable.

Thanks to Netgalley.

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