



Trial by Twelve

Heather Day Gilbert

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~Trial by Twelve is the 2015 Grace Award Winner for Mystery/Romantic Suspense/Thriller/Historical Suspense~

Tess Spencer loves her low-key job at the Crystal Mountain Spa, which allows her plenty of down-time with her one-year old daughter and lawyer husband, Thomas. But when a pool installation turns up eight skeletons in the spa's back yard, Tess becomes entangled in a sleuthing job destined to go awry.

As the investigation gets underway, someone dumps a fresh body near the excavated burial site, confirming unspeakable fears. A serial killer has returned to Buckneck, West Virginia...a skilled hunter with a unique taste in prey.

When Tess agrees to help the cunning Detective Tucker gather clues from the inside, she discovers the posh spa hides more than dead bodies. Even as she sifts through layers of deceit, Tess realizes too late that the killer's sights have zeroed in on her.

Unpredictable psychological mystery replete with memorable characters, Trial by Twelve is Book Two in A Murder in the Mountains series.

Trial by Twelve Details

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Author : Heather Day Gilbert

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From Reader Review Trial by Twelve for online ebook

Wendy Huddler says

Heather Gilbert has done it again. Book 2 begins shortly after the second book ended. The mystery was just as thrilling as the Miranda's Warning. You start reading it and you can forget about the rest of your day. You will not want to put it down. The best part is, as with the first book, you cannot figure out who the guilty is. But just keep reading and you will soon find out.

Gwendolyn Gage says

Maybe one out of five books I start proves an engaging read, and for the third time, Heather Gilbert's wonderful characters, dialogue, and prose pulled me into the storyworld as thoroughly as TV crime shows like NCIS or Bones.

The few-and-far-between action scenes puts the story outside my usual preference, but there's something about the author's voice and strong heroine that captures my attention regardless. It's what I love about the author's books--she takes a genre that doesn't usually hold my interest, and defies the odds.

The beginning took a few pages to set up, but by the inciting event at the end of the first chapter, I was grabbing my Kindle to read at every possible moment. The story presents some great "red herrings", and I had fun guessing who the killer was. Though I wasn't shocked at the revelation, I hadn't come close to figuring it out. I liked that the killer's journal entries at the beginning of most chapters follows the style of the first book of the series. The killer's talk of Buddhism early on is an insight into his warped reasoning, and doesn't represent the other characters' values or beliefs. On the contrary, the main character and her family hold a Christian worldview, but the novel isn't preachy.

Set in the mountains of West Virginia at a spa where Tess works, this is a cozy mystery for readers who want a case to solve without violence or sex scenes, and appreciate a focus on family. I recommend reading the first book in the series, "Miranda Warning" before starting "Trial By Twelve". Can't wait for more by Heather Gilbert!

Jackie says

Another great, the second in the series of an outstanding read. Skeletons galore and mystery, what else can I ask for. Hopefully there's more to come.

Val Shaw says

Wish I could give it ten stars!

Oh how I love Tess, her family, friends, and town! I fell in love with them in book 1 and was so pleased to

come visit again. Heather is a master at character that you can't let go of. Read all her books, you will love them! I also love that she has Pinterest boards for her books to help visualize everything. I hope there's a book 3!

Werner says

Stylistically and in terms of its general tone and vision, this sequel has much in common with the series opener, *Miranda Warning*, and many of the comments in my review of the latter apply here as well. Even the structure is the same; through much of the book, heroine Tess' first-person, present-tense narration in normal text is supplemented, at the beginnings of the short chapters, by one or more italicized paragraphs from the unsigned and undated letters of a father to his child. As in the first book, we quickly get the idea that the two strands of material will prove to be related. But here, we also quickly form the suspicion that, in reading these letters, we're glimpsing into the insane world of a serial killer.

Pregnant in the first book, Tess is now mom to a roughly year-old toddler. She's gotten back into church, and into a rekindled faith that plays a role in her life, but doesn't overpower the plot of the book. Also, she's finally gotten her concealed carry permit (so her fans don't have to keep worrying about her being arrested :-), and she's gotten a Glock of her own, which she packs in a hip holster and generally doesn't leave home without. Back in the work force, she has a new part-time job booking appointments at a fancy spa near Buckneck. It's a position that suits her well --until, in the first chapter, workmen digging for a swimming pool behind the spa unearth what proves to be a veritable boneyard of female skeletons, killed with arrows to their chests. These deaths took place years ago --but then a fresh corpse turns up....

As a rule, I tend not to like the idea of serial-killer fiction (and nonfiction), and normally avoid it. But despite that, I really liked this book --the killings aren't directly described, and there's no wallowing in grisly gore. Although I pegged the killer's identity pretty early on (that's not unusual for me in my mystery reading), there were still questions I hadn't answered, and the denouement managed to pack a surprise. I did find it somewhat dubious that a police detective would involve Tess in his investigation, despite her performance in the earlier book; and even more dubious that an inveterate tobacco-chewer would give up the habit, even temporarily, on the basis that he does here. But these quibbles aside, this was still a quick, enjoyable read, a re-connecting with some of the characters from the first book, and a chance to observe the continuing growth of an engaging protagonist.

(Readers interested in such features will be pleased that the author has shared a recipe for "Cousin Nelma's Banana Pudding" in the back of the book. I haven't tried it, but it actually sounds like it would be pretty tasty, and relatively easy and inexpensive to make.)

Sarita says

I really enjoyed this cozy mystery. The first person's point of view was so interesting, due to a interesting main character, Tess. I enjoyed seeing her interactions with her husband and cute little daughter, as well as her friends and family. She is lovable and imperfect, a great "friend to have."

Their mystery kept me turning the pages. For the first half of the book, the chapters began with a letter from the serial killer, which gave you some insight into his or her development into the serial killer role. Their was

also a number of possible suspects which kept the guesses going. The ending was a bit of an anti-climax for me, not sure why, but after the great build up during the whole story, it felt a bit flat for me.

Definitely recommended to fans of cozy mysteries!

Ppianogirl1963gmail.Com says

Fantastic read

I absolutely loved this book. Just as good as the first one in the series. I'm hoping for more in this series.

Alyssa says

{About the Book}

Tess Spencer loves her low-key job at the Crystal Mountain Spa, which allows her plenty of down-time with her one-year old daughter and lawyer husband, Thomas. But when a pool installation turns up eight skeletons in the spa's back yard, Tess becomes entangled in a sleuthing job destined to go awry.

As the investigation gets underway, someone dumps a fresh body near the excavated burial site, confirming unspeakable fears. A serial killer has returned to Buckneck, West Virginia...a skilled hunter with a unique taste in prey.

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Unpredictable psychological mystery replete with memorable characters, Trial by Twelve is Book Two in A Murder in the Mountains series.

{My Review}

Trial by Twelve is the second book in Heather's Murder in the Mountain's series. The first book Miranda Warning was a favourite last year. So I couldn't wait to read and review Trial by Twelve. Trial by Twelve was one heck of a crazy ride and if your a fan of mysteries then you need to read this series. Tess Spencer ia back for another mystery, a serial killer who keeps dropping bodies and she thinks he is after her next.

Tess Spencer is still living in West Virginia with her husband and loving her job at the Crystal Mountain Spa. The job allows her to be with her daughter and help her husband pay of those darn student loans that so

many people are plagued with these days. One day while at work the construction team was digging to install a pool and during the dig human remains are discovered. The police are called and Detective Tucker along with Tess Spencer is on the case.

Trial by Twelve is an on-the-edge-of-your-seat mystery that you will not want to put down.

Jeanie says

Great read!! Each chapter is introduced with the bad guy's creepy letters to his son or daughter, and the story is highlighted with excellent descriptions of the beautiful town nestled in the woods mountains in West Virginia where 'Trial by Twelve' takes place. Second in the "A Murder in the Mountains" series by Heather Day Gilbert, it can be read as a stand-alone. This novel demonstrates how people of faith can respond to daily, as well as extreme challenges, when keeping one's eyes on the Lord. Tess Spencer met Detective Tucker as a result of the murders occurring behind the Crystal Mountain Spa where Tess is a part time receptionist/admin assistant. While the excavation was underway to add an outdoor pool, the work crew found a grisly, decades-old burial place of eight skeletons! Almost as proof that those bones were not there by accident, the body of a recently-murdered woman was posed there not long afterwards. Someone has their eye on the spa. That 'someone' has killed many times before, and may kill again if Detective Tucker, a top-notch woodsman and hunter, is unable to find the killer in their midst.

Tess and her husband Thomas, a hard-working attorney, have a young daughter, "Mira Brooke", short for Miranda Brooke, named after one of Tess' best friends whose health was rapidly failing. Miranda was like a grandmother to Tess.

The spa was shut down until the investigation was done, but Tess was there to answer phones and help the IT guy working on their computers. Tess spoke often with the detective when they were both at the spa. There was much to discuss, especially the clues that the killer purposely left behind to lead them on. Tess' husband did not want her involved in the investigation, but she did appreciate trying to discover who the murderer was with the camo-clad cop. The suspense grew exponentially as the suspect list multiplied and more women were found murdered.

I like Tess. She began attending church about a year before, a blessing that her husband was thankful for. She was growing in faith and prayer, and read her Bible often. She had once given up on Jesus after events that occurred as a child and young adult, but she said what is true for who have been prodigals – "Jesus never wrote me off." She's real; I appreciated her feelings about her faith and her fears, as she echoes what many of us wives might say of husbands: "When he prays, mountains seem to move. When I pray, things tend to get worse. Or – even more unbearably – nothing happens at all." It was, however, like watching her faith grow even as the worries about the crimes grew.

Tess, Thomas, Nikki Jo, and Charlotte (Miranda's daughter, Tess' friend) are very well-defined. I like each of them; they are three dimensional Christians who are like real people who go forward each day in spite of their flaws and scars. The peripheral characters are as defined as necessary for their roles, whether kind, overbearing, or creepy. The killer, whoever he might be, has revealed almost everything about himself – except his name and his son or daughter's name – through his creepy clues.

The plot is complex and detailed, and very finely taking the reader through the hunt for a serial killer that at once brings the reader taut with suspense, and relaxed as the prayers of the Spencer family are answered and they remain safe. I was beginning to suspect almost everybody, and was surprised to see who the murderer really was – someone I had thought about only briefly then discarded from my 'list'. This novel is very well-written with characters that I came to care about; I highly recommend this to fans of Heather Day Gilbert, and those who appreciate Christian views and excellent novels of suspense.

With a grateful heart, I received a copy of this book through the "For Readers Only" group at The Book Club

Network, in exchange for my honest review. All opinions are my own, and no monetary compensation was received for this review.

Rosalyn says

This story is great! I love the setting, the author makes you feel as though you are there in Buckneck WV, and the characters feel like friends.

The mystery kept the story moving right along, and I had to keep listening-it was very compelling!

If you like Christian mystery/suspense novels, I recommend this one!

Ian says

This novel took me back to my childhood when I feasted on Agatha Christie's wonderful Hercule Poirot mysteries. Now I typically read more edge-of-your-seat thrillers where the adrenalin is stirring from the very first page. Gilbert's Trial by Twelve simmers with intrigue as we see into the mind of a serial killer as they write letters to their child while seeing first hand the evidence of their handiwork.

Tess Spencer is a great character and I so look forward to watching her develop in future "Mountains" episodes. She has spunk, is intelligent and extremely capable, all the right attributes for an amateur sleuth. Gilbert refreshingly highlights Tess's marriage (to husband Thomas) during the course of these novels as affirming healthy and realistic marriages is an important theme to her as an author. Tess & Thomas both honour each other, even when they don't necessarily agree with the other, and we see a depth of love and understanding that one rarely sees in Christian fiction.

I loved the West Virginia mountains setting and Gilbert brings it alive in the readers mind with powerful description. We meet a cast of interesting and unusual characters that add to the story's adventure and intrigue.

There are moments in the middle of the novel where the tension lags a little but as we draw closer to the conclusion it lifts to fast track us to what I found to be a very surprising ending.

If you enjoy a good mystery excellently written with some loveable and not so likeable characters grab a hold of this series.

I received a complimentary PDF copy of the novel from the author on the premise that I would provide an honest review.

Judi says

This is the 2nd in the series and just as good as the 1st one! This time, Tess is working part-time at a Spa. Her husband, Thomas, is still a struggling lawyer and Tess is once again going to be in the middle of a murder. Miranda is not doing well at the Haven and her daughter, Charlotte and Tess are still great friends.

While the Spa owner is having a pool built behind the Spa, a body has been found. Well, not only one, but eight others spanning years. A serial killer is there in her city. And, if you know Tess, she is going to be in the middle of the murder investigation. When the Detective asks Tess to help "scout" out the owner and others at the Spa, she has now become the target.

Miranda, Charlotte, and all the lovable characters from the first book are in this one. Andrew is still looking for that "girl", Petey is still being the little detective and protecting Tess. You gotta want a Mother-in-law like Nikki Jo.

I just love these books. Can't wait to read the next one to keep following up with Tess, Thomas and their little girl.

Janet Sketchley says

Despite her troubled past, Tess is thriving in the close-knit Spencer family. She's a feisty, straight-talking (and straight-shooting) wife and mother, trying to supplement the family income. She's not looking for trouble, but trouble finds her – this time in the form of skeletons found buried at the spa where she works. Newer deaths suggest the killer isn't finished yet.

Tess nearly lost her life the last time she investigated a mystery, and with a young daughter, she'd rather stifle her curiosity and stay safe. Unfortunately, her boss needs her on-site, and the investigating detective asks her to be his eyes on the scene. He promises to do all he can to keep her safe – and then advises her to conceal carry a gun just in case.

This is a satisfying novel, where plot, characters and setting blend into a compelling read. Heather Day Gilbert knows how to keep readers turning pages. Tess is one of those rare-to-me characters I'd like to have as a real-life friend.

Most chapters open with a letter from a disturbing man to the child he left behind, who he'd trained in bow-hunting. If the man was the original killer, are the new deaths a second-generation event? His letters refer to Buddhism and various philosophers, but don't let that put you off.

Set in the mountains of West Virginia, *Trial by Twelve* is a clean read, featuring Tess and her family as Christian characters but without the strong spiritual theme that is sometimes expected in Christian fiction. Here is Tess' most overt thought on faith, comparing herself to her mentor, Miranda:

"I feel so inadequate in the face of her faith, but I know she'd tell me we each grow at our own speed and the point is to be *growing*." [Kindle location 3072]

And an example of her sense of humour, which means no disrespect to the church prayer chain:

"Quite a few people have police scanners in these parts, to keep up with the local news. It's a lot faster than the newspaper, but maybe not quite as lickety-split as the prayer chain." [Kindle location 3001]

Trial by Twelve is book two in the A Murder in the Mountains series. I'm not sure if it's stronger than book one, *Miranda Warning* (which I very much enjoyed) or if I feel that way because I'm getting to know the characters better. Either way, bring on book three!

Heather Day Gilbert is also the author of the acclaimed Viking historical novel, *God's Daughter*. A sequel, *Forest Child*, is in the works. For more about the author and her books, visit <http://heatherdaygilbert.com/>.

[Advance review copy provided by the author.]

Jocelyn Green says

Another page-turner from Heather Day Gilbert! Loved this book just as much as *Miranda Warning*, if not more. I loved spending more time with characters I'd already grown to love, and meeting new ones, too. The mystery is well-paced, with enough intrigue and drama to keep me guessing to the very end, sprinkled with humor that had me laughing out loud several times. I'm committed now--I'll read every Murder in the Mountains that this author writes!

Beth says

I think I just always have a soft spot for the first book in any series - it's hard for a second book to live up to its predecessor. With *Trial by Twelve*, I did not have one bit of trouble falling right back into the world and characters that Heather introduced in book one!

Though for me there wasn't as much action, or perhaps the mystery was not as layered as the first book, Heather's strong writing voice and the amazing characterization held my attention the entire time. The mystery actually did keep me guessing, even though for a time I thought I had figured it out. Sometimes I don't know whether to go for the obvious because it's never the obvious, or go for the "out there" option. I went back and forth between this story and love how I was kept wondering until the very end.

And since I already fan-girl over Tess in my first review, I'll try to refrain from doing that here - she's basically my favorite right now, quirky but still realistic. She does push the envelope at times with her sleuthing work, but when she does get into trouble, it's in a realistic way, not in a "too stupid to live" kind of way, if that makes any sense. :)

And because I laughed at this quote, I have to share here:

"My dear husband Thomas has informed me that I can't walk without natural hip action. The more I slow to adjust my walk, the more my hips determine to swing of their own accord."

And because I found this one to be beautiful and worth re-reading:

"The pale morning sun filters through the forest canopy around us. I imagine my dewy rosebush soaking it up, photosynthesizing like crazy. The coo of a mourning dove echoes, somehow soothing my heart. Sometimes I feel so entangled with the West Virginia seasons, it's like I'm breathing through them."

I'm so loving this series - looking forward to going on another adventure with Tess!
