

# RUBY Milk



A PENNY WADE MYSTERY  
**Lucy English**

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When social worker Penny Wade meets her new client, Dani Martin, she thinks her job is to help the sixteen-year-old cope with her mother's sudden death. But Dani raises some troubling questions about how Anita Martin died.

The police call it an accidental death. After all, people die from anaphylaxis every day. Dani is convinced her mother was murdered. Where was her always-handy EpiPen? Who was with Anita when she ate a pastry contaminated with nuts?

When a second murder victim turns up, Penny risks her life to uncover the disturbing truth about Dani's family, whose illicit connections reach from the back alleys of Boston's art world to the underworld of India's gem trade.

## Ruby Milk Details

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## From Reader Review Ruby Milk for online ebook

### Marisa Hossick says

Meh. Not impressed with the writing, storytelling.

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### Wendy says

SO good. Pugnacious social worker Penny Wade makes her sleuthing debut in this absorbing new mystery by Lucy English. Ruby Milk finds Penny plunging headlong into danger to save her engaging teen client, Dani Martin, from the treacherous adults who surround the teen following the suspicious death of the girl's mother.

Penny leads us on a fast-paced journey into the Indian gem trade, via the streets of historic Boston, where she not only seeks a murderer, but also stumbles through her love life, wrestles with a painful past, and frequently seeks the sanctuary and advice of her circle of good friends, who are all quite entertaining themselves.

English really has created a captivating heroine in Penny Wade, who proves to be as feisty and resourceful on the job as she is vulnerable and wounded in her private life. She's no stranger to heartbreak or trouble, and she's a fierce advocate for the innocent. Readers will find themselves pushing and punching right along with Penny as she fights for justice in this whirlwind of a novel.

Ruby Milk charmingly draws its title from a bit of Indian folklore, found deep in the heart of the story, which winds its way to its conclusion without ever stopping to take a breath. And check this out- as an added bonus, the author offers readers an expanded experience by inviting us to follow some of Penny Wade's interesting friends on Pinterest. It's a great way to stay connected while waiting for the next installment to come out. I normally am not a mystery reader, but the Penny Wade Mysteries definitely have me hooked. I strongly recommend this one.

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### Renee says

I don't normally like to read mysteries, but this was good. ...The book was fun and an easy read that I enjoyed. The main characters had depth and charm. From 16 year old Dani who is sure her mother has been murdered to Penny Wade the case worker assigned by social services.

There are a few pg-13 style sex scenes and a bit of a romance that lends this book not just in the accidental mystery category but also a bit of chick lit.

This story is an accidental detective story primarily, however, with the fact that Penny is a social worker her investigating Dani's mom's death seemed right to me. No one else wanted to help this girl and a social worker is who she would turn to.

I liked this more than a thought I would. It was obvious the author did her own research into the different government departments (like social services) and convincingly wrote about Boston's art scene and the India Gem Trade. Simply put; she put a lot of time and hard work into writing this.

Four stars instead of five because there were some grammar, narrative and formatting issues, but I tend to over look those. I mean I self publish and have an editor for my own work and still things get missed. I don't like solely to judge a novel on this, especially when I liked reading it. Plus I find these sorts of issues in professionally edited books sold at Barnes N Nobles. This novel could stand right along side in the Mystery Section as far as I am concerned.

Also, I love the cover.

This novel does end on a small cliff hanger, put I enjoyed the way the story wrapped up. Writing a review on a mystery is hard! I don't want to give away anything. All I can say is read this book and check it out for yourself.

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### **Roxann says**

From the cover: When social worker Penny Wade meets her new client, Dani Martin, she thinks her job is to help the sixteen-year-old cope with her mother's sudden death. But Dani raises some troubling questions about how Anita Martin died. The police call it an accidental death. After all, people die from anaphylaxis every day. Dani is convinced her mother was murdered. Where was her always-handy EpiPen? Who was with Anita when she ate a pastry contaminated with nuts? When a second murder victim turns up, Penny risks her life to uncover the disturbing truth about Dani's family, whose illicit connections reach from the back alleys of Boston's art world to the underworld of India's gem trade.

The book was a fast easy read that I enjoyed. The main characters were well developed. I liked that the reader got to know the characters fears, wants, dreams, etc. The story is full of twists and turns that keeps you guessing until the end. Overall a well written book and story.

I received the book for free through Goodreads Giveaways.

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### **Sara Claridge says**

Penny Wade is the social worker you hope would look after your daughter should she be left alone among family and friends, any of whom could be the one that murdered you. Written in the first person, I was immediately drawn into the story as Penny and her teenage client delve deeper into the mystery, alongside Penny's complicated love life and family torments.

The book twists and turns, and I spent much of my time thinking this person was the murderer and then another person. I was of course entirely wrong, which makes for a great ending and an even better start to a new series. Can't wait for the next Penny Wade mystery.

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## **Linda Cole says**

### **Great start**

This book was easy to follow and kept me guessing till the end. Penny was troubled in her own personal life but still wanted to help others even if she was in danger

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## **James Faro says**

Penny Wade is a social worker at Community Counselling Services in Boston. Her new client is sixteen-year-old Dani Martin, whose mother, Anita, recently died from anaphylactic shock. Anita's death is being treated as accidental but Dani is not convinced. She insists her mother always had her EpiPen near by but can't find them in her apartment. Dani's character is well developed as a young girl who is lost and desperately wants answers: she is determined and won't give up until she finds out the truth about her mother. Dani and Penny set out to discover the truth.

I found the protagonist, Penny, a difficult character to like and she seems totally unsuited to Social Work. In one scene she breaks down and starts crying while talking about Dani to her mentor, and yet, she neglects her other clients and shows little concern for them. This comes across as unprofessional. She also uses people; her friend, Toryn, at the D.A. Office, and Hank, a retired Police Officer, who both pass on confidential information to her. She meets Marco who, after helping her, she tells him she doesn't want to see him any more. She then meets up with her ex boyfriend, Will, who also helps her on her search.

Penny daydreams a lot and dwells on her difficult childhood with her cold and distant parents. Why does she have no sympathy for her mother who lost her daughter, Sarah, at the age of seven?

There are many characters in the book. Some are well developed and intriguing, such as Harry, who owns the Mt. Vernon Jewellers where Anita worked as a designer, and Gloria, Penny's fun-loving room mate. However, I think some characters were unnecessary, such as Mr and Mrs Dodge with much time spent on describing their house and family. Similarly, Aunt Helen's funeral scene and the visit to Owen and his family could also have been cut back, as, for me, they detracted from the main plot.

However, the story is interesting and well written with plenty of twists and turns. The plot is unpredictable and kept me guessing. The Boston setting is imaginatively described and makes you feel you're there, in the city. I couldn't predict the ending which for me is the mark of a good mystery. An intriguing and interesting book.

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## **Mike Driver says**

Move over Miss Marple.

Ruby Milk opens with Penny Wade, a social worker at Community Counselling Services in Boston, who finds herself landed with the case of Dani Martin, a sixteen year old girl, who has recently lost her mother, Anita, to an accident. An accident Dani believes was really murder.

From this beginning, Penny, who is initially unconvinced, is gradually drawn into the detective role, as the persistence of Dani, and a missing EpiPen, start to raise her suspicions about the true nature of events. The writing is skillful and the characters are nicely rounded, and whilst the accidental sleuth track is one that has been trodden before, Penny, with her misfiring love life and more believable background makes for an

interesting and engaging lead. This, plus the Boston setting, insights into the Indian jewellery trade, and the use of food as a recurring theme, all add a little more colour to the traditional mystery canvas.

Overall, a very good read and well worth your time, and with a slightly tighter edit this could have been 5 stars.

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### **Lee Ann Horner says**

I was between three and four stars for this book. I enjoyed the characters and how Penny, a dedicated social worker, gives her all to help one of her charges Dani. She is the only person to believe Dani, who is convinced her mother has been murdered, and sets out to help her prove it. There was a span in the middle of the book where I found the dynamic was missing but it picked up again. The bad formatting and spelling got on my nerves a bit but I got the book as a gift for an honest review so I can't complain. In the end I was actually surprised to discover who the murderer was and that is the whole point of a thriller/mystery, is it not?

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### **S. Rivera says**

First off, my copy of this one had a few formatting issues. I noticed the author mentioned she was going to fix that. The characters in this story were fun to get to know, and the plot was tantalizing. I haven't read a lot of mystery or crime solving books, so this was new, led me along nicely, holding my attention. I had a little more time to read over the last few days, so wanting to know what happened next, I didn't have to put it down, thank goodness.

It is sort of a cliff hanger, so be warned. The main plot does resolve, but there were a few unresolved issues with the main character that left me in a bit of shock when it ended. That makes for a good series, and I think/hope there will be more--because I need to know what happens to Penny.

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### **Barb VanderWel says**

I love this & I can't wait for more.  
I will be also leaving a review on Goodreads @ Amazon.  
And letting everyone know about it.  
So i gave it a 5 Stars.

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### **Pam says**

Ruby Milk is a Penny Wade mystery by Lucy English. I had no idea what to expect from the book when I started it. I was pleasantly surprised to find it was so good. It was an excellent book. I loved the way Lucy English wrote and developed her characters. I loved that Penny was so confused and unsure yet, without hesitation, went into some serious situations to help Dani.

Penny is a social worker at the Community Counseling Services in Boston. She had been burned out in Juvenile services and changed her focus. However, she was finding it hard to counsel her clients. She really wanted to help them; but they really didn't want help but were forced to go to talk to her. Her love life was non-existent and she was barely able to pay her portion of the rent and eat. She loved her roommate, Gloria, and the cozy apartment. Her life began to change when she was given a new client.

Dani Martin was to talk to Penny. Dani, 16, had just lost her other and was distraught. She wasn't distraught only over her Mother's death; but the fact that no one would listen to her claim that her Mother had been murdered. Dani didn't want to stay with her Uncle Dob Nayak and his wife; but her Father was in Philadelphia with his new family and she didn't want to go there either. She wanted to find her Mother's murderer and couldn't leave Boston. Penny, who should have discouraged her, decided to help her find answers. However, Penny, like the others, really thought Anita, Dani's Mother, had simply had a severe allergic reaction to something and died.

Who would want a single mother who designed jewelry dead? Were the police right and it was a tragic accident, or was she killed? Could Penny balance her job, her aunt's death, cleaning out her Mother's home, face her sister Sarah's death from long ago, and help Dani? It is an excellent book.

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### **Graham Dodge says**

My last two book reviews have been fairly negative to the point that I wondered if the issue was with me rather than what I was reading. *Ruby Milk* by Lucy English destroyed that thought completely. I do recognize a great story when I read it, and by the end of Chapter Two this book had settled itself quite comfortably into a four star rating, and it never looked back.

Sixteen year old Dani loses her divorced mother to anaphylactic shock, and Penny Wade is the case worker assigned by social services to help the bereaved teenager get her life back on track. Dani's innocent and quite understandable questions regarding *How Could This Have Happened* soon become more complex conundrums such as *Why Can't I Find My Mother's Laptop*. Penny's own personal issues need to take a back seat while she considers whether to investigate Dani's idea that her mother might have been murdered. Unsubtle suggestions from Dani's extended family to let sleeping dogs lie soon escalate to an attempt on Penny's life – or is that unfortunate accidents just an inopportune co-incidence – while suggestions from her boss that she is allocating too much time to a single case make Penny fear for her career. Then a new man Marco comes into her life, awakening an urge for love that she had frozen since her last breakup, and suddenly Penny's life is seriously out of control.

First the good bits (and there are lots of them). This is an easy book to read with a polished style and well-revised grammar. The main characters are pleasingly three-dimensional with finely featured fears, foibles and fantasies of their own, either supporting or realistically disagreeing with Penny's own inner demons. Romance, including subtle sex scenes, is appropriate to the story.

I'm not a great fan of the accidental detective solving homicides in their spare time, yet it is a universal truth that crime generates social work, thus Penny's adventures have a more logical basis than (say) Angela Lansbury's perpetual blundering into yet another unexplained death in '*Murder She Wrote*'. Kudos to the author for getting that part right.

The scenario of a young female social worker solving crime risks crossing into chick-lit territory, and although there were times I wanted to skip over some paragraphs describing Marco's balsamic scent or the

proper ingredients for a wild mushroom salad, the book stayed on track as a murder mystery, albeit one that isn't going to electrify the hardboiled gumshoe brigade.

Penny's inside agents at government departments have realistic reasons for their existence and for their willingness to break the rules to get Penny classified information when they can. Again, this is a well-thought out aspect of the book that provides an aura of authenticity to the narrative.

A minor down side for me was that this killer's motive seemed slightly forced and I'm not convinced that they couldn't have worked out a smoother solution to their problem – one that didn't involve murder and the attention of the authorities. I also have trifling nits to pick with the author's method of implementing a First Person narrative, yet in retrospect most of those nits can be dismissed as a personal stylistic preference.

In conclusion, a well-deserved four star rating, and a reluctant acknowledgment that not all accidental detectives should be shot on sight.

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### **Jennifer Girardin says**

When likeable Boston social worker Penny Wade witnesses a body being taken away on a crowded street, she stumbles into an engaging and spiraling mystery when she is assigned to assist the deceased victim's sixteen-year-old daughter, Dani Martin, who insists that her mother was murdered.

And it is not without some serious justification.

Suffering from anaphylaxis, her mom diligently avoided tree nuts and kept a plentiful supply of Epipens handy to treat her condition, should a dangerous allergic reaction arise.

But when it's discovered that all of the Epipens have mysteriously disappeared, Dani enlists the help of Penny, who optimizes her resources to discover the truth.

The characters of Ruby Milk are exceptionally well-detailed and richly drawn, and feel like people you could easily get to know, their circumstances believable and their situations diversely appealing. The dialogue is fast paced, flowing, and superbly realistic, and pulls you into the story, making you wonder what will happen next, while cheering Penny every step of the way.

A rich and detailed mystery with likeable characters, full of suspenseful twists and turns, and a gripping ending, Ruby Milk is a gem that keeps you guessing until the end!

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### **Chikamso Efobi says**

Ruby Milk is well-written story about Penny Wade, a social worker with a difficult childhood. She takes up the case of 16-year-old Jani, who has just lost her mother. What is supposed to be an otherwise normal and everyday case, turns out to be more complicated because Jani is convinced that her mother, Anita was murdered and her death is not accidental - as the police have ruled. Jani's sole evidence is the fact that Anita's EpiPens are missing. With little more evidence to work with, Penny finds herself getting too involved in Jani's life to the point of taking on the role of a home-bred detective. She enlists her friends to help solve the mystery behind Anita's death but not without some consequences.

Penny Wade struck me a bit as an older and more mature Nancy Drew. I enjoyed reading the story and finding out more about this relatively complex, yet relatable character.

I found Ruby Milk to be an interesting story, filled with suspense and twists that would keep you guessing till the very end.

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