



Poor Tom Is Cold

Maureen Jennings

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While hunting down the killer of a constable from his station, Jennings' likable detective, William Murdoch, is drawn to the plight of a young wife whose predatory stepchildren plan to shut her in an insane asylum to prevent her inheriting her husband's estate. With her ability to invoke the Toronto of a century ago and its many levels of society, the author finds under stones of silence the social outrages that so vividly trigger her mysteries.

Poor Tom Is Cold Details

Date : Published February 6th 2001 by Thomas Dunne Books (first published February 1st 2001)

ISBN : 9780312268923

Author : Maureen Jennings

Format : Hardcover 256 pages

Genre : Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Historical Mystery, Fiction, Crime

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From Reader Review Poor Tom Is Cold for online ebook

Carol Palmer says

I've heard that "Murdoch Mysteries" is a very popular TV show world-wide. However, in the USA, it is virtually unknown. Lucky me! Our local CBS affiliate shows it at 1:30AM Sundays and I just happened to catch it when they first started running it. So, I've seen the first 9 seasons so far. And I LOVE it! I mention all of this because the TV show is loosely based on the Detective Murdoch series of mysteries written by Maureen Jennings. I say "loosely based" because the atmosphere of the show is very different from that of the books. In the novels, you have a much darker and more sinister setting -- probably closer to reality than the TV show. When I read the novels, I don't really even make a connection to the characters on TV.

In this book, Jennings does an excellent job of capturing the time period of the turn of the 20th century. The characters are vivid and the plot is creative and interesting. I recommend this novel.

Alex says

Love the Murdoch Mysteries series!

Carissa says

Meh. The books get progressively worse and frankly I'm tired of my 2 Murdochs being so different. I'd much rather stick to the tv show, thank you very much, where at least there's truly something to like about him.

Debbie says

Not really a who done it so much as will all these strands come together in time for Murdoch to keep anything worse from happening.

D J Rout says

This one concentrates a lot on mental illness rather than physical illness as a background to the plot. The solution to the mystery is revealed right at the end, as you might expect, but it isn't a convincing solution.

And what the hell does the title mean? Cold barely features and there's no-one called Tom even in it!

I may have to re-read it to see if I missed something.

Ryan says

To start, a confession: I only discovered Murdoch through the television show, and am now starting in on the books (of which I mistakenly thought this was the first). As such, that's my frame of reference going into this.

The book was very different from the show I've grown to love - some characters are missing, others are very different, and the tonality of the entire story is completely different. Enough that it feels like a completely disconnected story from the Murdoch Mysteries television show.

And yet, I loved it in its own quirky way. The depiction of 1890s Toronto is gritty, without becoming anachronistically noir, and Jennings puts an amazing amount of detail into understanding the social structure and mentality of characters of the time period, without making it obvious or pointing out the differences.

The mystery itself - why a member of the Toronto constabulary would commit suicide during his shift, in an abandoned house - it's well told, and actually is a 'mystery', rather than a thriller that you're able to see coming from a mile away, which is nice.

Steven Clark says

I've seen the Murdoch series on TV, so I wanted to give the source a try. I like Jennings's style. She has a good, rolling prose and it was quick to read, and she also has very good period detail and gives you facts and asides that are interesting and help the story. I knew all about Waterloo teeth, and her descriptions of mental asylums are grim and to the point. This isn't the TV Murdoch, and despite that, the story is gripping and always kept my interest, with well-developed, exciting characters. If I have one major criticism, it is that Murdoch is more an observer than participant, and it seems the novel is really about Peg. I think there should have been much more Murdoch, and more backstory on the murdered constable. Also, the ending was very abrupt, and Murdoch, as another reviewer put it, stumbled onto the resolution instead of really solving it. There could have been a better wrap up. I wanted to see Janet and Peg happy, and maybe Murdoch a little happier, too. But it was a good mystery and I really couldn't put the last fifty pages down (which kept me from writing!). I got my money's worth.

Scott Williams says

I wanted to give this a higher rating. I quite enjoyed it until the end. It seems to me, the whole thing wraps up very quickly. It was not a satisfying ending but it was still an enjoyable read.

Alyssia Cooke says

I enjoyed this although the ending let it down a bit as it finished remarkably abruptly. The theme of suicide at this historical point is interestingly dealt with and the multiple strands of the novel only come together in the last handful of pages. I certainly didn't see where it was going, although there are enough hints that it is intuitive enough that the twists and turns made sense even as you wonder where its going next. An additional

final chapter would have left this feeling more complete, whereas that is really my only complaint - whilst the mystery is resolved, the novel doesn't feel like it finishes; instead it just stops.

Randy says

The title comes from Shakespeare's "King Lear," and, as you might expect there is the death of a young police constable that is initially thought to be a suicide. The book mostly deals with an extremely dysfunctional family composed of a father, his son and daughter, a step-son, and father's third wife (younger than his daughter). Murdoch is dealing with a bad tooth and is dreading going to a dentist, is attracted to a young widow and her son who are boarding in the same house, and gathering evidence to determine whether the constable's death is suicide or murder.

This is a really good mystery, and it wasn't until the very end that I was able to determine what really happened to the young constable. I'm also enjoying how Ms. Jennings conveys us back into the late 1800s with the mannerisms, culture, and words used then.

Shawna says

Although I didn't find this novel as fast paced as the first two I read, I still enjoyed it. I love how Jennings does not gloss over awful and unfair things were in Victorian Toronto and for this reason I will continue to recommend her books.

Gwen says

(Reading these slightly out of order as I'm limited by what the library has available--but if you've seen the show, you can fill in the missing character details, at least about Murdoch.)

Not as good as the first book in the series. There was far too much going on here to really have a tight, coherent narrative: the treatment of Chinese immigrants, the use of hysterectomies, the role of psychiatric institutions, a conniving family, a lying prostitute, long scenes about juries, and so much more. The characterization of Murdoch and Crabtree (and their professional relationship), though, was very well done. I really got a feel for both men. (All the other characters kind of blended together...)

Can anyone explain the title? I was looking for a reference in the book, but I might have missed it.

Donna says

I am a big fan of the TV series of the Murdoch Mysteries and so while visiting Toronto on business I was happy to find this one in a bookstore there. As luck would have it, the hotel I was staying in was just at the corner of the area covered by Murdoch's police station and I had walked some of the streets described in the book, just a 125 years later.

Of course, the usual problem of reading a book after seeing a movie, or especially a long running TV series, is the mental picture of the actors versus the descriptions of the author but I'm happy to say they were not too far apart. All in all the story was good and it all came satisfyingly together at the end. I'm certainly going to look for another one in this series.

Louise says

My first Maureen Jennings novel and I really enjoyed it.

From back cover:

"Maureen Jennings's first two novels, *Except the Dying* and *Under the Dragon's Tail*, impressed readers and reviewers alike with their vivid portrayal of Toronto at the turn of the twentieth century.

In this third adventure featuring the amiable detective William Murdoch, he becomes involved with the apparent suicide of Constable Oliver Wicken - a man who was the sole support of his mother and invalid sister. The evidence, according to the coroner, is irrefutable. Wicken was shot in the temple with his own revolver and a farewell note has been found beside his body. When new and disturbing evidence is brought to light, however, Detective Murdoch is asked to investigate further. His inquiries take him far afield and he begins to suspect the suicide was not what it seemed.

Whether describing a tooth extraction, the unquestioning prejudice toward the few Chinese immigrants in the city, or the well-intentioned, but bizarre, treatment of the mentally ill, Maureen Jennings once again brings the period vividly to life."

Cheryl says

This was a mystery within a mystery within a mystery. The kind of story that makes a great PBS Masterpiece Mystery. I'd read Maureen Jennings first 2 books in the series quite awhile ago in paperback. Then I couldn't find them anywhere and then most of them popped up as Kindle editions on Amazon so I've some catching up to do! Detective Murdoch's "sleuthing" seems more accidental than purposeful, but nevertheless these are great historical mysteries with plenty of great Victoriana and quirky but oddly likable characters.
