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Glassblower Emmeline Dowell has made a home for herself among the artists of Tucson's Warehouse District. But her friendship with troubled newcomer Allison McBride takes a dangerous turn when Allison's husband turns up dead in Em's studio. Now Emmeline is involved in a murder investigation that reaches beyond the sunny Southwest. And when the killer acts again, it's up to her to pick up the shards of Allison's life before it's too late.

Through a Glass, Deadly Details

Date : Published March 4th 2008 by Berkley

ISBN : 9780425220474

Author : Sarah Atwell

Format : Paperback 288 pages

Genre : Mystery, Cozy Mystery, Fiction, Crime

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From Reader Review Through a Glass, Deadly for online ebook

Michelle Randall says

This book was so cute to read, and it was not like a lot of cozy-mysteries. The main character in the book doesn't actually investigate or try to solve the mystery, she just happens to be thrown into times and places that help her to understand what is going on and help her to help the police chief come to the conclusion.

Em is the main character, and she is a glass-blowing artist in Tucson. She has a habit of taking in strays, which is how she happens to have two dogs, with very short legs in an apartment over her studio! One day, a shy and scared looking gal walks into the shop to watch, Allison, and Em takes her in like a stray. Should be an easy life right, well that very night, Em finds a dead man in her glass-blowing furnace. To make matters worse, the dead man turns out to be Allison's wayward husband!

Twists and turns abound in this book, from the immigration of a young girl to America from Ireland, for what was supposed to be just a summer of work, to a smooth talking Irish gent, who turns out later to be connected to the Irish Mob in Boston first and later Chicago, to a runaway wife, money laundering and glass blowing, oh yeah, and a dirty FBI agent.

Em knows she doesn't know anything about investigation, but she is mad that someone dumped a dead body in her store, in her studio, in her life, and it makes her angry, and as she thinks about what is going on, she literally falls into places and people that end up answering the questions to what is going on.

I was a fun and easy read, and I loved it. It was so nice to have a heroine who knew she couldn't investigate, but just by reasoning and sheer luck, fell into the answers. It was more fun to read in that she wasn't trying to solve the mystery, it was just happening to her.

In the back of the book is a recipe for Irish Soda Bread, which happened to be what I made this morning before I started writing this review, and it was great. I loved it, and I had to compromise because I did not have any buttermilk, so I made it with regular milk, but it was still good!

The cover claims that it is the first in a new series, but I can't imagine how another could follow up on this book, but I look forward to finding out if there is another book and how its story flows.

Courtney says

Just one of the worst books I've read in a long time. I felt the plot was nonsense and the writing was poor. It had potential with the glass blowing aspect but really fell short in execution. Uncle Frank! What a ridiculous addition to this story...

Diane says

Dawn says

I've been researching cozy mysteries, trying to find one that might interest my mother-in-law who loves them. She also loves glass-blowing, so this series piqued my curiosity. The main character, Emmeline, is a glassblower and owns her own shop and studio in Tucson where she gives glassblowing classes. The thing I didn't like about this cozy mystery is that Em's behavior is completely implausible. At the beginning of the book, she meets a woman who is reserved, nervous, and seems like she is hiding something. Within hours of meeting her, Emmeline offers her a job in her studio. Within a day of meeting her, a dead body shows up in her glassblowing furnace (she discovers the body and is remarkably nonplussed). Turns out that the dead guy is her new "friend" Alison's husband. Emmeline defends her friend and continues to believe that she had nothing to do with it. Romantic conflict occurs when the chief of police turns out to be Em's ex-boyfriend, and then Em's brother becomes interested in Alison. The part that really bothered me was when Em serves packaged macaroni and cheese with cut up hot dogs as a dinner for her guests. Oh, but it's the kind where the sauce is a liquid, not a powder! Why is it so hard to find a good cozy series?

D.w. says

This book had potential. And up to the last third, it was going to be a much better book than it turned out to be.

We know from certain obvious marketing tells, that this is a murder mystery. Not the least being that the back cover material tells us so. There is a body. Then the ubiquitous second body also.

There are spoilers in this review because the work warrants it.

Atwell has a few stumbling blocks in the beginning, the least of which is her mother hen attitude of the new person in her life. How she decides the girl has an Irish face? (What is that?) and that she sounds Irish, when we read every piece uttered by the character and any vernacular comes much later.

Moving past that, we get into the murder, the mystery, then the clues coming together. A lot of telling. Not too much showing. That is something to work on.

We get background and see what glassblowing is, and how it relates to the mystery. But then it is all solved.

And only 2/3rds of the book. Not enough red herrings. No wrong paths. Just simple and straightforward, and with the Chief of Police and an FBI agent along for the ride, they couldn't get there.

But really it is the outside character who shows up and has so much of the detail of 'why' things have happened. And then, to make it dramatic, we kidnap one character and without any mystery any longer, just have to gather the ransom and make an exchange. 100 pages to do this, where our minds are not engaged. Where there are no puzzles to solve. It is point A to B to C...

That is what is not forgivable in this work. That is why it is merely average. That is why Atwell, unless I become rich with a great deal of leisure time, won't find me reading any more in this series.

Patty says

This is a first in a series and it is a good one! Emmaline, known as Em, is a small business owner and artist, a glass artist to be exact.

Em teaches others to blow glass as well as makes her own glass that is for sale in her small gallery in trendy Tucson. When Allison shows up one day and wants to learn how to work the glass, Em takes her under her wing and begins a friendship with the lonely woman. Then a dead body shows up in Em's furnace and the pace of the story picks up to its fast paced conclusion.

The characters that surround Em help to make the story much more fun. Including Allison there is Em's brother Cameron (Cam), her gallery helper Nessa, the local police chief, Matt and Em's dogs. All of them contribute to the story and make it more interesting.

This was partly a "whodunit" and partly a "why did they kill" so I didn't spend a lot of time worrying about solving the mystery, I just enjoyed going along for the ride.

There is a lot of glass blowing or making tips, in fact each chapter is headed with a definition of various glass making terms. I've always been fascinated with the art of making glass but after reading this know I couldn't do it -- 2000 to 2400 degree furnaces that you work in front of for hours? Nope, I'd be a puddle on the ground.

Looking forward to the next in the series.

Michelle says

This is the first in a series of cozy mysteries about glassblowing and is set in Tucson. Em is an artist and small business owner who supports herself through her shop and by teaching glassblowing. She lives above her workshop and retail store and has two small dogs. Her life becomes complicated when she meets Allison, an Irish girl who has recently moved to Tucson and is interested in glass, but is down on her luck financially. Em offers for her to come watch a class and possibly work for her to pay for classes. She befriends Allison, who seems very skittish and worried. When she hears a possible burglary in the night, she is shocked to find that a man has been murdered using her kiln and he is found to be Allison's husband that she had run away from in Chicago. Complicating matters is Em's prior relationship with the local police chief and her brother's arrival and subsequent attraction to Allison. It becomes clear that Allison's husband was involved in some shady business and his business partners now may be after Allison. Em must help find out what is really going on and help get Allison out of a very dangerous situation. The story has a few implausible points, but it overall a good mystery and has some nice details about glassblowing. Also included are a few recipes, but one of them is more of a joke on Em's poor cooking skills than anything else.

Wyshona D. Lawson says

This book was almost hilarious in the fact that I felt the author was afraid she'd never publish another cozy,

so every possible scenario that could happen were squashed together in this book: murder, kidnapping, hostage, dirty agents, love, blahblahblah. I will not be reading any more in this series.

Things were repeated. A lot.

Tracy Stackhouse says

New Series

Glad to meet glassblower , studio owner , and teacher , Em, as well as her brother Cam and her asset, Nessa. They get into a messy and dangerous tangle with the Irish mob. The start of a new series, this is one to watch.

Cathy Cole says

First Line: "Nessa? It's pretty quiet, so I think I'm going to work on that new frit technique. You can close up when you're ready to go."

Emmeline Dowell has carved a life for herself amongst the artists of Tucson's Warehouse District. Her shop, Shards, is getting more business, and so many people are signing up for her glassblowing classes that she's going to have to make time for even more. What she doesn't need is trouble, but that's what Em gets when she takes Allison McBride under her wing. When Allison's estranged husband shows up dead in Em's studio, the glassblower finds herself working overtime to help her new friend.

Reading *Through a Glass, Deadly* was a case of seeing problems yet liking the book a lot anyway. There were little things like an accent that was mentioned but didn't show up until much later in the book, Chicago mobsters who seemed a tad schizophrenic (did they have scruples or were they psychopaths?), a gratuitous murder, and a character who shows up at the end with answers to many of Em's questions. Sounds like more than a little when it comes to problems, doesn't it? Well, what makes me call them little is the fact that the Tucson, Arizona setting, all the information on glassblowing, and-- more than anything else-- the character of Em Dowell are so enjoyable that I willingly overlooked them.

A lot can be forgiven-- not that there's all that much to forgive in this book-- when the main character is so well drawn. Em is a mother hen. She dotes on two dogs she rescued from the pound, and she takes all sorts of people under her wing when she can see they need help. And she's not pushy or in-your-face about it. She's just the type of friend you'd like to have. Hardworking, smart, caring, funny. This book is written from Em's point of view, and I really enjoyed being in her head. She even handles herself rather well in a very scary situation, and has a wonderful geeky brother and a handsome police chief who's very interested in her.

How much do I like Em Dowell? I've already ordered the second book in this series. Nagging plot points can be fixed, but characters like Em are few and far between.

AngryGreyCat says

This is the group read this month for The Cozy Mystery Corner Book Club on Goodreads. Sarah Atwell is a pen name for Sheila Connolly, who writes the County Cork series, which I adore and two other series I have not tried yet, an Orchard series and a Museum series.

This series theme is glassblowing, which I admittedly know nothing about and don't necessarily have very much interest in to be honest. In general I am not an artistic or crafty person at all, not really any talent in those kinds areas. When I was a kid, in about second grade, my mom told me she always knew which project was mine when it was time to visit the classroom for back to school night. She said she just had to look for the worst one on the wall and that would be it. I have not improved over time.

Anyway, there is a lot to like about this book, the sleuth, Emmeline or Em, is different from most cozy mystery protagonists, at least initially. She hears the proverbial bump in the night and rather than rush headlong into danger, she actually calls 911 and waits until she hears the culprits running away before getting out of bed to investigate. She is a successful established business woman, most cozy mysteries start the series with the sleuth beginning their business. The setting is in Tuscon and she does make the setting important and incorporate it into the story line. It seems to me accurate and a good sense of place, although I have not been to Tuscon so I really have no way of knowing. Interesting comments about limited exterior lighting to prevent light pollution suggest knowledge of the area.

Her brother, Cam is also another non-traditional cozy character. He is obviously loyal and loving to his sister, an IT worker who lives a few hours away and visits when he can. He seems somehow naive and innocent in an interesting way. The other secondary characters are similarly interesting.

The book is also not traditionally plotted. There is a murder and it is pretty straightforwardly solved in about the first two thirds of the book. Then there is a second plot related to the murder but more in the lines of a low level thriller involving kidnapping and a missing valuable object(s). It made it a different read than the usual cozy.

The negatives are that at least for me, there is too much detail on the glass blowing. It might just be me, I like my themes in cozies to not overwhelm the mystery plot and here I found myself skimming some of the glass blowing detail because I couldn't understand it anyway. I mean I get that you have special tools and furnaces and that temperature is important, but beyond that...ehh. The other negative is that the mystery is not enough, there needs to be more red herrings or twists if it is going to be a mystery.

The negatives might improve in later books in the series. There are two more and then it appears that is it. Being that the series appears to be discontinued after 3 books, I am not sure that I will continue with it, although I do like a lot about the book.

Nancy says

A predictable and satisfying cozy. Hey, I read cozy mysteries now and then because they are safe. Nothing untoward will happen (except a body or two) and all the good guys are OK in the end, so predictable is just what I want.

Plus, I learned something about glass blowing. Our heroine, Emmeline, is just the right combination of benign and resourceful. The corpses belong to characters we aren't going to cry over. There's the requisite love interest, some safely tense danger moments, and plenty of Arizona landscapes.

Some bonus points here too. First of all, Emmeline didn't turn into super sleuth who is way smarter than the coppers. Good. She's reluctantly drawn in to the mystery and winds up assisting in the resolution in spite of not really wanting to. Secondly, she has two dogs. I was so relieved to find an author who makes sure to have the dogs walked and fed frequently, and never left in a hot car. The pacing was just right for me. Not all action, easy to keep track of the characters, and no tedious detours into side stories. Convenient chapter breaks helped too. The story was presented in readily digestible chunks.

Bravo, Ms. Atwell, I will be returning to this series in the future.

Michele says

I have a hard time with a story that starts with the main character meeting a complete stranger & directly decides this person is a good person & treats her like a old & valued friend. Also, the inclusion of a recipe that consists of slicing hot dogs into box macaroni & cheese seems a little much.

Angela says

Normally I would give a summary in my own words on the book and then my thoughts on it...I just can't do that with this book. Why you may wonder? Well, this book was so incredibly simplistic in its plot and how we came from the murder to the solving of the crime, I just can't do it. This book was an okay read, but it was not one that I loved at all, nor did I come to absolutely love any part of it. I liked the characters...to a point. I liked the concept of the plot. I liked that there was some learning in the midst of the mystery about glass blowing. I think the thing I came to like the most about this book was the main character Em, she was such a mother hen type and wanted nothing more than to help out strays, be them animals or people. I did enjoy watching her develop throughout the book. I just was not sucked in to this book in any way, shape, or form. I found it to be almost to simplistic in the mystery end of things and solving that mystery. There were not many twists or turns in the plot/book to keep me wondering and having that "can't wait to pick it up again" feeling. I stuck with it, pretty much just to read on about Em and see if she went anywhere with her ex, the police chief, again. The writing was a bit rough around the edges, but being a first book, I could forgive that. I don't really see myself picking up the next book in the series. If you are in to soft and simplistic mysteries than this would be the book for you I suppose. It just didn't do it for me, as a mystery reader who loves lots of action and wonder.

3/5 Stars

Jamie says

In *Through a Glass, Deadly* glass artist Emmeline Dowell has a strange unexplained breaking and entering at her studio, by someone who's left a corpse half hanging out of her oven. When it turns out the victim is the husband of her new friend Allison McBride, Em finds herself and her studio entangled in a murderous plot

that she might not survive.

Oh for fuck's sake, it's as contrived as *Another Hour to Kill*. The police are telling the main character repeatedly throughout the book not to get involved, as she does everything she can to help the murder victim's wife get her life back together. She gets her a job, and takes her out/invites her to dinner, and matchmakes the newly widowed woman with her brother. But when Em discovers what the mob had been searching for in her studio, and enforcers break in and kidnap the widow, and the mysterious stranger she's reported to the police earlier turns out to be Allison's long-lost uncle with mob connections and the answers to everything, she doesn't call the cops because all this would count as 'getting involved'. And when she uses this reasoning on her policeman ex-boyfriend later *he* apologizes to *her*.

The characters were flat and the author frequently tried to force feed us Allison's hair color and that she looked Irish. Like, to *everyone*. *At first glance*. They just look at her and go, "Wow, her hair is red. She's clearly Irish".

The book was interesting and had a lot of potential as being an interesting series to keep up with, but not for that shitty ending. She should have gotten slapped with handcuffs for withholding information in a murder investigation at least.

The verdict? I finished this book and I can't say I wished I'd've stopped early in, because it really was interesting and educational about glass-blowing. But the characters and conclusion are absolute garbage.
