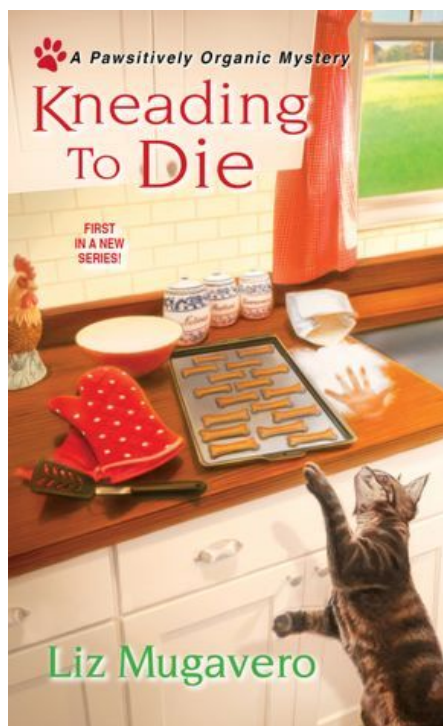




Kneading to Die

Liz Mugavero

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Maybe the best thing that ever happened to Kristan "Stan" Connor was losing her high-stress public relations job. Now there's plenty of time to spend in her sleepy new Connecticut town working on her dream: baking healthy, organic pet treats!

Before long the neighborhood dogs are escaping their yards to show up at Stan's doorstep, begging for the kinds of special homemade treats her Maine coon cat Nutty loves so much. And Stan's pet-loving neighbors are thrilled with the new organic options available to their furry family members. But not everyone loves Stan and her newfangled organic ways...

It seems Carole Morganwick, the town vet, is from the old school of pet care. But when Stan swallows her pride and brings a very unwilling Nutty in for a checkup, she not only finds Carole dead under a pile of kibble. . .but also that she's in the dog house as the prime suspect! Finding the real killer and clearing her name will require some seriously surreptitious sniffing around. . .and hopefully, curiosity won't kill this innocent cat!

Includes Gourmet Pet Food Recipes!

Kneading to Die Details

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From Reader Review Kneading to Die for online ebook

RebeccaS says

Stan has just been let go from her high profile PR job and on a whim bought a cute country house in Frog's Ledge. She is hoping for a small-town vibe where she easily bonded with her neighbors and had some time to relax before re-entering the corporate world.

Unfortunately, someone in town had other ideas. While taking her beloved cat to the vet, she discovers the vet's dead body and quickly becomes a person of interest. As the outsider, she struggles with people's suspicions.

I felt so bad for Stan because she had been through a lot already, and I just wanted her to make friends in her new town. And she had to do her own sleuthing just to clear her name, even though she barely knew anyone in town, including the murder victim. Also, her boyfriend was a moron and just not a great person (which I could tell from the very first chapter). I was totally surprised by the culprit. (view spoiler)

My favorite part was that Stan cooked all her cat food from organic sources and really wanted to try one of her dog treats (I know that sounds weird, but they were made from peanut butter and cheese and other yummy things). I can't wait to see more of this and get to know the town characters even more.

Ivonne Rovira says

Lisa Mugavero has spawned yet another cozy mystery series with a humorous heroine with an offbeat nickname, a twee boutique business, and a kitty sidekick. Kristan “Stan” Connor moves from West Hartford to rural Connecticut and turns her hand to making organic pet treats when she’s laid off from her job. When Stan’s adversary, the prickly local veterinarian, winds up dead, Stan finds herself the prime suspect, based on the thinnest evidence I’ve ever seen in any mystery book. Naturally, Stan sets out to clear herself, but the entire quest seems bumbling and implausible.

While the impulsive Stan is a likable protagonist, Mugavero’s plot just seems unbelievable and the other characters in Frog Ledge, Connecticut (yes, Mugavero really is into corny) — including the love interest, bar owner Jake McGee — are either forgettable or clichés. I found myself skimming large sections of the book to get to the end, but then I stopped, realizing I just didn’t care enough to even skim.

The cozy universe is crowded with caterers, restaurateurs, bartenders, waitresses, innkeepers, antiques dealers, bookstore owners, clothes shop owners, yarn shop owners, gift shop owners, glassblowers, quilters, interior decorators, professional organizers, soap makers, alternative therapists, herbalists, landscapers, florists, beekeepers, artists, artisans, beauticians, even a blacksmith. Sometimes it seems that more amateurs are involved in police work than actual coppers! If that cozy universe needs one more cat-lover mystery series, it isn’t this one.

Carol says

Leaving the corporate world behind, Kristan “Stan” Connor buys a Victorian house in a quiet, small town of Frog Ledge,

Connecticut. Stan and her Maine Coon cat, Nutty are about to embrace a totally new style of living.

Stan makes organic treats for Nutty which will soon become popular with the other dogs and cats involved in the story. Besides meeting fun loving fur babies, the readers are introduced to an array of artfully created, vivid, colorful characters even some quirky plus a few resentful characters that make up Stan's new neighborhood.

The town, Carole Morganwick, vet does not agree with Stan's organic treats. Carole delivers the old school animal care.

Carole stops by Stan's house to insist she bring Nutty in to her practice for an exam. When Stan and Nutty arrive.....

they discover the vet dead in the veterinarian office with a needle sticking from her neck!!! Now Stan finds herself a suspect for the murder. How will she prove her innocence??

A well plotted, fast moving cozy mystery read.

There are delicious pet recipes included at the end of the book.

This is book # 1 in the Pawsitively Organic Mystery series.

I look forward to reading the rest.

Bandmama (aka Lucy) - Claiming Mitch as mine says

I was fortunate to receive this book via Goodreads Giveaway. I thoroughly enjoyed this book! The author does a bang up job inviting you into her small town. Each character is described to the point that you really feel you know them (or someone just like them anyway). I am a pet lover and so of course the fact that this book includes pets and those who rescue them interest me but this plot and story would be enjoyed by anyone. It is well written and I did not figure out "who did it". I thought it was super cute and cannot wait to read the next book in this series, especially since the teaser implies Halloween time.

Thank you Liz Mugavero and thank you Goodreads for sharing such a jewel with me.

Suzanne says

Needs a little work

This is the first in the series and for me was a little flat and could use some better descriptions of the characters. More depth to make them feel real.

I will probably read the next book to see if it comes alive.

Recipes are better for dogs than cats since dogs eat just about everything.

Larraine says

At the suggestion of a member of my Mystery Readers Group on Facebook, I decided to give this one a try. I've been shying away from a lot of the cozies lately because so many of them are repetitive. Plus I'm not a fan of a book that has every chapter starting with "so and so decided to wear her black skirt and lime green

twinset."

This is the first book in this series, so we'll see. However, this was a fun book. We meet Stan, short for Kristan. Now you have to suspend belief here just a little. And I do have one tiny little complaint. Do we have to have yet ANOTHER blonde heroine in her 30's with a pony tail? Really?

After losing her high powered corporate job as a media specialist, Stan has decided to make a big change. She takes her severance and decides to buy a pretty green Victorian house in a small Connecticut town, which is a big change from her condo in "the big city." Conveniently, at the age of 34, Kristan has been a VERY savvy investor who is able to buy her house for cash and has enough money to live very well apparently.

Stan has a Maine Coon cat named Nutty who she rescued as a stray. He has Irritable Bowel Syndrome so she makes his food from organic chick and rice. She also makes special treats. (There are recipes in the back of the book.) She also has a friend who operates a rescue, taking animals who are going to be killed from "The South" and taking them to New England where she helps to find them new homes.

Stan has barely moved into her new home when she witnesses an argument between her neighbor and an older woman who turns out to be the town vet. A couple of days later that same vet knocks on her door and all but demands that she bring her cat in. She is known to be an old fashioned vet who believes in vaccinations. The town's librarian is convinced that her cat who was always an indoor cat and never had vaccinations got lymphoma after having a vaccination. Stan makes a verbal appointment with Carol, the vet. However, when she gets there she finds the vet dead. Soon she becomes the chief suspect.

This was a fun little book. It should be interesting to see how the character evolves. It's pretty obvious where the character is heading from the very beginning. Hopefully, this one will be an interesting and fun character - even if she is yet another blonde with a pony tail.

Diane ~Firefly~ says

Great start to a new mystery series. I like Stan (short for Kristan) a lot. After her job is "eliminated" she moves out of the city to start over. Unfortunately she soon discovers a body and some in her new small town prefer to blame outsiders. She does win over a few locals by winning over their pets with her homemade treats. Overall I really liked most the characters and look forward to catching up with them again in the next installment.

Sarah says

I have been anxiously waiting for this series to come out and I was not disappointed! Amazon delivered my e-copy to my Kindle and I started reading as soon as I could. I love Stan! She's an amazing character and her and Liz Mugavero's thoughts on pets, animal rescue, raw pet food and homemade treats echoes how I feel too! Liz also worked with Eric Walsh, owner of the Big Biscuit. I know Eric as his shop is in a town near where I live. My dogs LOVE Eric's homemade baked treats and his raw treat selection including jerky, fish skin and tracheae.

The mystery unfolded as the town vet was murdered. It turns out, she wasn't a fan favorite and made her fair share of enemies. It's unfortunate that the town state trooper fixates on Stan, thereby causing her to start her own investigation.

I love Frog Ledge and the unique cast of characters woven into the storyline. I love that right now, Stan doesn't have to focus on money or not having any money or being poor. I get so sick of some of these cozies where the main character is destitute. I am not sure why this is something that is written into half of the cozies I read. I also love that she doesn't dress like a slouch and wears nice things.

I can't wait to make Nutty's cheesy treats for my pups. I know they are going to love them. I read the excerpt from the next book in the series and as soon as it hits Amazon, I'm pre-ordering it!

I am only sad that Liz will be at the Big Biscuit this Saturday to celebrate her launch and I can't make it. I have other plans! I would've loved to have gotten a signed copy of the book and a picture!

Mystereity Reviews says

Just ok. Too much inner dialogue (why so much of the book is devoted to the soon to be ex boyfriend is beyond me, she didn't seem to care about him much) and the plot was terrible. Character development was iffy, too many secondary characters introduced with little or no context. Overall there's room to grow, so maybe it'll get better but I won't rush out to get the next one.

QNPoohBear says

After her job is eliminated, Kristan "Stan" Connor moves to a bucolic farming community in Connecticut with her Maine Coon cat, Nutty. Her boyfriend, Richard, thinks she's crazy and wants to help her get back into their corporate world. Stan isn't sure what her next move is but she's kind of glad to have the time to figure it out. While moving in she accidentally overhears a neighbor arguing with another woman. She soon discovers her neighbor is a homeopathic veterinarian, which makes Stan happy because she cooks Nutty's food herself due to IBS issues. Unfortunately, the other woman is also a vet, Carole Morganwick- a traditional old school vet who bullies Stan into making an appointment for Nutty. When Stan arrives for the appointment, the vet is nowhere to be found. Then Stan stumbles over Carole lying on the floor with a needle in her neck! A newcomer to town, Stan becomes chief suspect number one, closely followed by her best friend Nikki, an animal rescuer. Stan sets out to clear her name and find out who wanted Carole dead. This isn't an easy task with some locals reluctant to talk and others who loathed the woman. Stan is determined to get to the bottom of the mystery before she winds up in jail.

I really liked the concept of this story. Pets are my thing and I firmly believe in taking care of them the best we can and helping them be as healthy and live as long as possible. I often cook dog treats (even though I don't have a dog right now) and I know people who feed alternative diets. However, I had a few issues with the simplicity of facts:

Stan cooks the same food for dogs and cats without consulting a vet about nutrition. While it is acceptable to cook for pets, it needs to be done with the help of a nutritionist veterinarian.

Stan doesn't even think about allergies or sensitivities while feeding other peoples' pets. She at least asks first if they can have a treat.

The homeopathic vs. traditional vet: As Amara notes, homepaths and traditional vets can work together to help pets. It's not an either or situation. I know people who use both just fine.

I also know people who claim their cats got lymphoma from vaccines. I don't know anyone whose dog died from vaccination but I know people who say their dogs got sick from over vaccination. A responsible modern vet will run titers and spread out shots longer. Carole did not seem like this sort of a vet.

Not all commercial pet food is crap. If it's made in China - yes, if it has corn as the first and primary ingredient- yes, if meal is the first ingredient- yes, if you buy it where you buy your own groceries- yes. I hope these issues are addressed in the next book.

The mystery was interesting. It went on too long and was rather repetitive and complicated. At first I thought I knew who did it, changed my mind a few times and ended up totally baffled. I was completely surprised at the reveal. While the thought crossed my mind fleetingly, I dismissed it. I wasn't surprised at one of the secrets revealed but the rest were shocking. I liked the small town. It sounded like Stars Hollow from Gilmore Girls at first but it's actually much bigger and a farming community. What I didn't like was the romantic drama. When will chick lit/cozy mystery heroines stop dating money and power obsessed douchebags? When will women stop being attracted to supposed womanizers even if they have a cute dog?

The pets are the best characters in the story. I'm not a cat person and Nutty isn't the most charming cat but I liked him. My sister had a half-Maine Coon with IBS. I loved the dogs more than Nutty. Duncan is a big goofball and like Stan, I worry his Daddy doesn't take as good care of him as he should. I especially adore Scruffy, the Schnoodle. She is SO sweet! I want to try out some of the recipes in the back next time we have dogs over.

The humans are not as endearing. Stan isn't a bad heroine. She loves animals and is supposedly a d*** good investor, but she is pretty clueless about everything else. She means well but goes through life with rose colored glasses at times. I figured out her passion and next move long before she did but I hope she does her research first. Her job offer sounded like fun but not for her. Nikki is a stereotypical animal rescue person. She's passionate to the point of being hot headed at times. She could be a dangerous murderer. I didn't like her keeping secrets from Stan. I loved the southern transplant Char with her eccentric style and warm, loving heart. I didn't warm up to Jazz as much as I am dying to visit her sweet shop. What is she doing in that small town? She's a fish out of water for sure. I can't decide if Jake is smarmy or sweet. His backstory is largely absent except for dire hints from Jazz. His sister, the state trooper, is a stereotypical small town cop with a narrow mind. It's one of the tropes of this type of story.

I look forward to reading the next book in the story soon.

Content: Some mild language, some violence, mention of animal cruelty

Yvonne says

After Kristan “Stan” Connor loses her high profile public relations job, she decides it’s time for a huge change. She leaves her big city life and moves to a small Connecticut town with her Maine Coon kitty, Nutty. Her boyfriend gives her no support in making the move and takes every opportunity to ridicule her for it, but Stan is determined to make it work.

Stan’s new neighbors are delighted to learn that she bakes her own organic pet treats. In fact, not only are the humans happy but so are their pets. Stan becomes friends with all the cats and dogs in town. One dog even shows up at her house at all hours, making his very sexy daddy look like a bad parent :) However, not everyone is happy with Stan’s organic treats. The local vet, Carole Morganwick believes in the old ways and intends to show Stan by treating Nutty. To keep the peace in her new hometown, she agrees to bring a healthy Nutty to the vet. When they arrive for their appointment, all they find is a very dead vet covered in kibble.

The local police are convinced that the newcomer is a murderess. It’s up to Stan to prove her innocence, but things take a turn that Stan is not prepared for.

I absolutely loved this book. I loved everything from the cover to the very last page. I adored the heroine right from the start. I can’t wait for the next book in this series. I don’t think you have to be an animal lover to enjoy this one. It’s well written, with realistic characters – a couple of eccentric ones are tossed in, too – and there is a hint of a romance that will hopefully carryover into the next book.

I actually bought this one for my own collection to read and it wasn’t for a requested review or a blog tour. I haven’t read enough books that I bought for myself for my own enjoyment. I’ve also been really lucky lately in reading books that I’m loving and giving 5 stars to. This is another one!

Nancy Narma says

Canines, Felines and Murder Abound”

Stan (short for Kristan) Connor is the new girl in town. After her PR position with Warner Insurance has been eliminated, she decides to leave city life behind and move to the more laid-back, sleepy community of Frog Ledge, Connecticut. She gets a surprising impression of her new neighbors before her car engine is cold and the boxes had been carried in from her car. “Boyfriend” Richard is little to no help with the unpacking and settling in. He is still a hot shot with Stan’s former company and can’t understand why she wants to get away from the city he calls home. Stan tries to explain that she and adopted rescue Maine Coon cat, “Nutty” need a fresh start and knew they had found it when Stan saw, fell in love with, and hastily purchased the quaint green Victorian. Stan becomes acquainted with her community and its numerous quirky but likeable residents. She’s pleased to have Amara Leonard, an animal Homeopath living right next door. Stan makes many friends, human and animal with her homemade treats and meals, originally concocted because of Nutty’s stomach problems. She also learns early that there is tension and discord concerning the town Vet, snarky Carole Morganwick. The uncomfortable feelings escalate when Dr. Morganwick makes an impromptu visit and barges into Stan’s house, insisting she bring Nutty to the clinic as a new patient, for an examination, prior to office hours. Stan’s inner voice keeps casting doubt in keeping the appointment but, because of her love for her feline buddy and trying not to stir up troubles in the new town—she goes. When Stan and Nutty arrive, the door is

unlocked, but the office is dark. Stan calls out.

She hears a door close and figures it's Dr. Morganwick and follows the sound to the examination room to let her know they had arrived—only to find Carole's lifeless body with a needle stuck in her neck and covered in kibble. Stan calls 911 and, after answering a deluge of questions from the State Trooper, she is treated like the prime suspect. But she barely knew her! With small town gossip running rampant, quiet whispers ask the same question over and over. "Who could have done this dastardly deed?" "Who hated her that much?"

Amara, due to jealousy? Stan's friend and head of "Pet's Last Chance" rescue mission Nikki Manning?

Many unexpected twists and turns take place as she tries to clear her name and get on with her new life. And will that life include Richard? Will Stan and Nutty find room for a new canine friend? Or will it end in a battle of wills and flying fur in the cozy green Victorian? Kudos to Ms. Mugavero for a very enjoyable read and characters I'm looking forward to becoming better acquainted with in her next "Pawsitively Organic Mystery" of which she has graciously included a snippet to whet our appetite. There was only one thing missing in this book—some dog and cat treat recipes.

Cozy lovers, be sure to add this one to your TBR list. You won't be disappointed!

Nancy Narma

Valerie says

Kristan "Stan" Connor has just moved to the small town of Frog Ledge, Connecticut . The town sounds so quaint I can't blame her. I picture the town square from Gilmore Girls! Newly let go from her cutthroat career job she has decided leaving behind the wreck her life has become and starting over fresh. But being the newcomer to the town becomes a problem when a the local veterinarian is murdered and Stan is pegged as number one suspect.

Stan has a cat named, Nutty, who needs a special diet because of IBS. Stan has learned to make Nutty's food and treats organically and it has helped. The treats for her cat are so good that the neighborhood dogs are drawn to them too. I pictured a pied piper moment when Stan went to the local animal shelter. So she has half the town fleeing from her because they are afraid she will do them in and the other half running after her to get treats for their animals!

I know that cozy mysteries pretty much follow a formula and some things are expected so it is nice to read a book that does them well. I really liked this story. Liked the characters a lot and loved meeting them as Stan met them. All the characters, animals included!

This was a delightful read and I would recommend it highly!

✧ Jennifer says

A solid 4 star read and an excellent start to a new series! I'm loving the characters in this book - each is unique and there's no struggling to keep them straight in one's head. The town sounds charming, except for the small town atmosphere when things get tense. The author goes further than most cozy authors detailing just how difficult and devastating it can be to be a suspect in a murder in a small town - especially when you're not a 'native'. This angst can get a bit heavy once or twice, and there are a few times when it feels like the story is stalled in "let's pile on the protagonist" mode. But overall, this book kept me involved from beginning to end with a very well-crafted murder plot that had me guessing until the very end.

I'm looking forward to future books in this series and I'm definitely going to try at least one of the pet treat recipes that are included. :)

Jean says

Frog Ledge, Connecticut. Who'd want to live there? Stan Connor, that's who. Kristan Connor, a recently laid-off public relations professional, opts for a big change by moving to a rural small town away from her mother and her boyfriend/co-worker, Richard. She has fallen in love with a quaint house and has resolved to make do on her severance pay and investments until the right job comes along. In the meantime, she bakes organic treats for dogs and cats and passes them out to friends and neighbors.

That's the plan, anyway. Karma has a way of changing things. Robert Burns said it well, "The best laid plans of mice and men..." Liz Mugavero's *Kneading to Die* kicks off the "Pawsitively Organic Mysteries" series with a bang when Stan stumbles across the murdered body of the town's not-so-beloved veterinarian. Maybe her bedside manner wasn't fuzzy enough with her furry patients, or purr-haps someone had a bone to pick with her? Being the new kid on the block and being the one to find the body, plus being at Dr. Morganwick's office without a documented appointment puts Stan near the top of the suspect list. Everywhere she turns, Stan feels the eyes of the townsfolk on her. Is she really a suspect, or is she just overly sensitive? After all, she has no motive. Stan gets it into her head to do her own sleuthing.

This, of course, leads to opportunities to make acquaintances with neighbors and possible suspects. Even her best friend Nikki, a dog rescue worker, makes her list of potential killers. Soon she feels she has no one she can trust. Richard is not supportive. That's all I'll say about Richard. She has a few neighbors who stick by her, especially Jake, who runs a bar and has a dog, Duncan, who's unruly and lovable. All of the animals, including Stan's cat Nutty are quite delightful. I will say, though, that the illustrator of the cover of my paperback version portrayed Nutty as a tabby – my own felines think that's purr-fect – but Nutty is a Maine Coon.

One misadventure leads to another, and Stan finds that someone seems to be out to get her. Fortunately, Jake has taken a liking to her. Despite what her new friend, Izzy, told her about Jake being a "player," Stan welcomes his help. Is there a relationship with Jake in her future? Maybe Duncan can help convince her.

As cozy mysteries go, this one was quite pleasant and enjoyable. I liked the characters and the plot. I've come to expect that some cozies will be – well, sappy, I guess. This one is not, at least not in my opinion. But as someone who writes cute, clever (I'm told) bios for our local Humane Society website for cats and kittens in need of homes, I found *Kneading to Die* to be just what the vet ordered to keep me purring as I read for a few days.