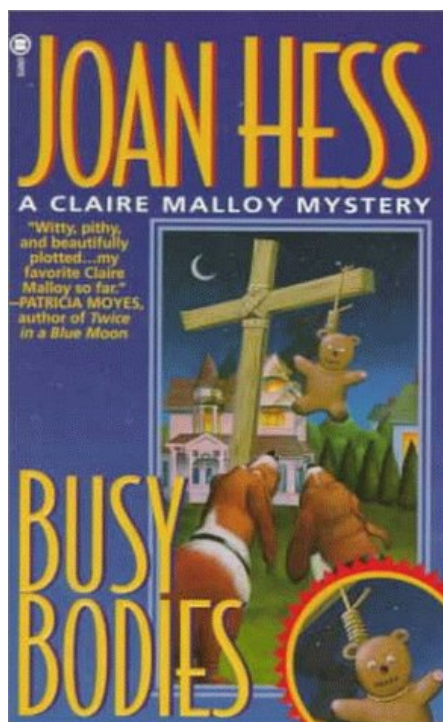




Busy Bodies

Joan Hess

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Leave it to Claire Malloy, owner of the Book Depot in Farberville, to start out having tea with retired schoolteacher Miss Emily Parchester and end up investigating a murder. An avant-garde artist who moved into a house on Willow Street has the whole neighborhood up in arms. His "interactive art, " complete with a nearly nude model and a coffin in the front yard, is attracting a mob of noisy gawkers.irate residents are worried about declining property values. The local mystery writer cannot meet her deadlines with the constant clatter. And when the artist's estranged wife rolls up in a limo and announces to one and all that she intends to have him committed to a mental institution, all of Farberville is in a dither. But before the night is out, even stranger things happen: the volatile artist's house goes up in smoke, a dead body is found inside the coffin, the artist is promptly arrested for murder...and Claire Malloy, devoted amateur sleuth that she is, starts snooping where she doesn't belong.

Busy Bodies Details

Date : Published May 1st 1996 by Onyx (first published 1995)

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Author : Joan Hess

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Genre : Mystery, Cozy Mystery, Fiction, Humor

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From Reader Review *Busy Bodies* for online ebook

Karen says

Humorous.

Dallass says

What can I say except I really found *Busy Bodies* to be rather disappointing. The characters were frustrating - especially the stereotypical teenage daughter who is more than a little self-absorbed, and obnoxious - and I found the main suspect to be quite ridiculous.

The silly actions our main character takes are frustrating, and her relationship with the detective did not endear him to me in any way.

I own another book in the series that I picked up in the bargain bin ages ago, and this has made me think twice about reading it.

1½★

Jeanette says

This was a nice book.

Rose says

This my first, though the tenth, of Joan Hess's Claire Malloy mysteries. I enjoyed the setting in a fictional small town in Arkansas as well as Claire as the owner of The Book Depot and interferer in police investigations. Delightful.

Sara Bartlett says

A fun book to read, I picked it up because the setting is in Fayetteville, my home town. I enjoyed reading about Willow Street, great character development but a little silly at times.

Mary says

A fun, beach read with a decent plot, quirky characters and a good pace. I'd read more in the series. I always enjoyed Hess's 'Maggody' series and wish there were more of them.

David says

Okay. Main character is a snope, an amateur. Good light humor and observations but the main character kept getting in situations I had a hard time believeing. I kept thinking why is she doing that? The best part was her friends bassett hounds Nick and Nora.

Mary Newcomb says

Caron still speaks in capitals, and this makes her all the more fun. This tale involves Miss Emily Parchester and her most interesting neighbors on Willow Street. I'm glad my neighborhood is a bit less interesting! The romance portion of this series is coming along nicely too.

The Badger says

The Claire Malloy series is a step above a Cozy, mainly because you actually LIKE the characters. Claire is the single mother of Caron, a teenaged daughter who's at the age of speaking in ALL CAPS. Claire is also the proprietor of a bookstore (which she doesn't seem to spend much time in, on account of solving murders and trying to calm Caron down to at least italics). Peter is Claire's detective boyfriend whom she's lucky to have, otherwise she'd spend the majority of her time in a holding cell for interfering with crime scenes.

If you're looking for a mystery series where you actually LIKE the characters (I love Christie, but spent much of my extracurricular time plotting the death of the sanctimonious bitch Ms. Marple), start on the Claire Malloy series. Likewise, if you're wondering whether to have children, pay close attention to Caron. I work with kids and can assure you that all teen girls go through the "I HATE YOU--I NEED A RIDE TO THE MALL" phase. Unless you're saving for boarding school, pay attention.

Lorraine says

Leave it to Claire Malloy, owner of the Book Depot in Farberville, to start out having tea with retired schoolteacher Miss Emily Parchester and end up investigating a murder. An avant-garde artist who moved into a house on Willow Street has the whole neighborhood up in arms. His "interactive art, " complete with a nearly nude model and a coffin in the front yard, is attracting a mob of noisy gawkers.irate residents are worried about declining property values. The local mystery writer cannot meet her deadlines with the constant clatter. And when the artist's estranged wife rolls up in a limo and announces to one and all that she intends to have him committed to a mental institution, all of Farberville is in a dither. But before the night is out, even stranger things happen: the volatile artist's house goes up in smoke, a dead body is found inside the coffin, the artist is promptly arrested for murder...and Claire Malloy, devoted amateur sleuth that she is, starts snooping where she doesn't belong.

This is the 10th book I have read in this series. Although I have more of them, I think I am going to call it

quits. Claire's sarcastic wit, her spoiled teenage daughter, and her lukewarm romance with her Detective boyfriend have all changed not one iota from book one to book ten. The plot changes, quirky characters abound; but they have lost my interest. I like to see characters grow and change in a series rather than stay in the same exact rut. This book may have been the straw that broke the camel's back as it involves a Christian couple. Claire is continually poking fun and making sarcastic comments regarding their beliefs. This definitely was a turn off for me. So I bid adieu to this series.

Natalie says

Mortified, outraged and shocked are words that could easily describe Zeno Gorgias' neighbors. Of course, he brought it on himself with his front lawn display of what he calls "interactive environmental art". His latest work involves a barely clad woman strolling in his makeshift cemetery beside the centerpiece, a coffin. This cemetery is by no means a peaceful one. Loudspeakers boom sexually explicit sounds to the ever gathering crowd.

Claire Malloy is having a cup of tea at the home of Miss Parchester, one such neighbor of the boisterous artist. The unconventional Miss Parchester feels Zeno is just exercising his right of expression, but Claire finds it hard to believe that the man in her life, Lieutenant Peter Rosen, can do nothing to shut down the three-ring circus that is creating such high emotion among the Willow Street residents.

Just when the situation seems at its pinnacle, a dead body is found in the notorious coffin and this time it is not part of the artistic experience. Claire must find out just exactly who among the long list of angry suspects committed the crime while still keeping her sanity and her man.

I found the characters in this book quirky and outlandish making it a very interesting read. One such character, Claire's wisecracking daughter, adds substantial stress to the situation as only a teenager can do. It made me want to pour a glass of wine for Ms. Malloy and toast to her motherly resilience.

Busy Bodies is the tenth Claire Molly Mystery by Joan Hess and it is a comical jaunt down the whodunit trail.

To further whet your appetite, included in the book is a first chapter sneak peak to number eleven in the series, Akin to Murder.

This review was written for Armchair Interviews at <http://www.armchairinterviews.com/>

Katie Hilton says

An entertaining murder mystery with wacky characters and some Keystone Kops action in Claire Malloy's normally quiet town. She helps solve the mystery, despite interference from the police and other do-gooders.

Renee says

I started reading Hess's Maggody books back in the late 80s and early 90s, when they first started coming out. It took an Advance Reading Copy for me to read anything in her other series, the Claire Malloy mysteries. Even then, it took me over a decade to actually pick it up.

Why? I'm not sure -- maybe I thought it was too much of a cosy for me, back in the days when I'd read only hard-boileds. (Thank goodness that working for Murder Ink cured me of that!) No matter the reason, I'm not sure that even now I can give a proper review. *Busy Bodies* is the 10th book in the series and it felt like it; it was like tuning in in the middle of a movie, with relationships and setting already firmly established -- for everyone else. The book certainly wasn't horrible -- I would like to pick up the first in the series at some point -- but I felt lost through a good part of it.

It's sort of ironic. Months ago I complained about *Eggs in Purgatory*, in part because there was too much color and too little plot. With *Busy Bodies*, there was a lot of plot -- but I was missing the color and history. Although I'm not going to abandon the series yet, I can't help feeling that an author should be able to find a better middle ground.

Pamela McLaren says

I wanted to like Joan Hess' Claire Malloy but with this book I just couldn't do it. I don't hate her but she seems very wishy-washy and I certainly wouldn't enjoy the relationship she has with her daughter (I'd sit her right down and tell her if she doesn't like her life with mom, she knows where she can take it! Just darn glad my daughter never went through this period) or her boyfriend (where's the romance? From this book they aren't even dating and they certainly aren't hanging out with each other other than in the bedroom). And does she have any friends other than her former teacher?

And then murder was highly contrived and the whole story seemed pretty fantastical. When the murder was revealed, it was exactly who I thought it was and further I didn't care!

This is indeed a cozy and for some the antics that Claire gets herself into and out of may be funny but Hess doesn't have the same comic touch as a Janet Evanovich. I have another book by her and I'll give her another shot and hope she improves.

Ann Marie says

Another Claire Malloy book. I get more involved with the characters than the murder(s). Not bad, I've read other Joan Hess books I liked better.
