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Not A Creature Was Stirring



Synopsis

Summoned to a Christmas feast at the isolated country estate of multimillionaire Robert Hannaford, retired FBI agent Gregor Demarkian is soon back on the job when Hannaford is murdered.

Originally in paperback. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Mass Market Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Crimeline; Reissue edition (November 1, 1990)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0553287923

ISBN-13: 978-0553287929

Product Dimensions: 1 x 4.5 x 7 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (38 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

After losing his wife Elizabeth to cancer, Gregor has taken early retirement from the FBI, and has returned to his old neighbourhood in Philadelphia in time for Christmas. Just as he's adapting to the urban renewal that has revamped Cavanaugh Street, he finds that his old reputation won't leave him alone...Father Tibor, Cavanaugh Street's Armenian Orthodox parish priest, has been approached by Robert Hannaford, with a proposition for Gregor. If Gregor will attend a family dinner at Engine House, Hannaford's mansion on the Main Line, Hannaford will make a generous donation to Father Tibor's church. Why would an old-money, elderly financier want an expert on poisons and serial murder to attend a quiet Christmas dinner with his wife and grown children? Gregor's boredom with his retirement is cured, as he reaches Engine House to find the police investigating Hannaford's murder. This is the first Demarkian Holiday Mystery (Christmas) and introduces Bennis Hannaford (one of Robert's daughters) and her dysfunctional family. The cast of characters of Cavanaugh Street introduced here includes Father Tibor (who escaped from the Soviet Union in the bad old days of the 1980s) and Donna Moradanyan. Donna's boyfriend, Peter, has disappeared since Donna became pregnant, so Gregor is enlisted to find Peter for her as the Hannaford case unfolds. There are a number of interesting subplots, not necessarily related to the murder; at least

one for each of Hannaford's seven children. Anne Marie, the only one of the seven still living at Engine House, is falling apart while taking care of their mother, who is dying of multiple sclerosis. Chris and Bobby might both qualify as compulsive gamblers, in different ways, while Teddy has gambled (and lost) that his university's faculty would never find out that he's been plagiarizing his students' work. And so on...Haddam (a.k.a. Orania Papazoglou) concentrates on character development in this volume, particularly Bennis' family background (which is essential to the plot). If necessary, you can read the other books first, since she's careful not to name the killer in the other volumes of the series, even when discussing the events of this volume, but this one really should be read first. Cavanaugh Street changes over time, since the breakup of the Soviet Union and the consequent liberation of Armenia as an independent nation occurred while the earlier volumes were being written, and a number of immigrants move to the neighbourhood as a result. Should definitely be read before *Feast of Murder* and *Bleeding Hearts*, since a few of the suspects for Robert Hannaford's murder can be eliminated if you've read them prior to *Not a Creature Was Stirring*.

I am absolutely delighted to see that Jane Haddam has finally arrived on kindle! This novel, "Not a Creature was Stirring", is the very first in her long-running Gregor Demarkian series, which I read when first published in 1990 and it remains one of my favourites. When we meet Gregor Demarkian he is a fifty five year old man, retired after twenty years at the FBI. His beloved wife, Elizabeth, is dead - Demarkian had retired mainly to care for her - and now he is a man without purpose. He has returned to his childhood Armenian ethnic neighbourhood in Philadelphia and this place, Cavanaugh Street, and his neighbours are all very important to Demarkian's character and the books. In many ways, this novel really sets the scene for a series which becomes (like all good series) filled with characters who seem like old friends. Of course, this first novel also introduces the important character of Bennis Hannaford, whose family are wealthy, influential and extremely dysfunctional. When Robert Hannaford, father of Bennis and her six siblings, contacts Father Tibor (an eccentric Armenian priest) and asks him to arrange for Gregor Demarkian to attend a dinner at his family home, events are set in motion which end in murder. When Demarkian is asked to act as a consultant in the case, he finds a reason to go on living. Sadly, not all the books in this series are currently on kindle, although I hope that they will eventually appear. The series in order is as follows: Gregor Demarkian 1. *Not a Creature Was Stirring* (1990) 2. *Precious Blood* (1991) 3. *Act of Darkness* (1991) 4. *Quoth the Raven* (1991) 5. *A Great Day for the Deadly* (1992) 6. *A Feast of Murder* (1992) 7. *A Stillness in Bethlehem* (1992) 8. *Murder Superior* (1993) 9. *Dear Old Dead* (1994) 10. *Festival of Deaths* (1994) 11. *Bleeding Hearts* (1994) 12. *Fountain of Death* (1995) 13. And

One to Die On (1996)14. Baptism in Blood (1996)15. Deadly Beloved (1997)16. Skeleton Key (2000)17. True Believers (2001)18. Somebody Else's Music (2002)19. Conspiracy Theory (2003)20. The Headmaster's Wife (2005)21. Hardscrabble Road (2006)22. Glass Houses (2007)23. Cheating At Solitaire (2008)24. Living Witness (2009)25. Wanting Sheila Dead (2010)26. Flowering Judas (2011)27. Blood in the Water (2012)28. Hearts of Sand (2013)The next book on kindle is *Act of Darkness* (The Gregor Demarkian Holiday Mysteries), although the second book is actually "Precious Blood". Although the books are all stand alone stories and can be read as such, it is always best to read a series such as this, with lots of familiar characters who appear in many books, in order. However, I am not complaining - I have waited a long while to replace my beloved, tattered paperbacks (which I will still keep, but which are falling apart) on kindle. Also, as many of Jane Haddam's earlier books are now out of print, hopefully this will enable new readers to discover the delights of one of my favourite fictional detectives. Jane Haddam also has another series, Patience McKenna, the first book of which is *Sweet, Savage Death* (The Patience McKenna Mysteries).

This series has been recommended to me by several different individuals over the past few years and I decided that with a Christmas theme, December would be the ideal time to give it a go. I can quite happily report that I enjoyed it tremendously and will be going on to read the next in the series. It had a classical 'closed room' mystery feel to it. Not cozy by any means, but still on the gentle side without foul language and gore. If you like the Louise Penny books, the Julia Spencer-Fleming books, or older classical mysteries (think Agatha Christie) this would be along those lines and worth a look.

This first installment in the Demarkian series is a huge step up from the earlier novels. It's fantasy fun for me, as a middle class housewife, to read about the evil doings of the very wealthy and socially elite. Meeting so many of the characters who will be continued in the series added to the interest along the way. While the murders are perhaps a bit far fetched, I don't read mysteries for reality. The daily headlines take care of that.

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