



## Christmas Card Murder

**Leslie Meier**

**Lee Hollis**

**Peggy Ehrhart**

Kensington (Oct 27, 2020)

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In Leslie Meier, Lee Hollis, and Peggy Ehrhart's cozy novella collection *Christmas Card Murder*, strong women follow holiday clues to solve crimes in their communities.

Nothing spices up the holidays like getting the gal pals together to solve a small-town murder. These three novellas are driven by capable, determined women who juggle a variety of important roles in their neighborhoods. They are all aided by their journalism skills and tight-knit friend groups, which combine for engaging narratives around their mystery-solving processes.

Each crime is linked to a Christmas card, and the holiday atmosphere is portrayed in descriptions of decorations, cozy fires, and familiar traditions. Feminist undertones are present in the first story, "Christmas Card Murder," about expectations related to women's behavior over generations; in side-by-side plot lines, systematic justice is questioned. Because of its details and activity, the story is both full and deep.

In "Death of a Christmas Carol," love and fidelity are put to the test as three empathetic women confess their relationship fears to each other following a scandalous claim. The story's suspense is driven by the women's anxieties and unexpected revelations, and followed up with a clear-cut resolution. Interludes in the form of local news articles are included, their cutesy background stories enhancing the story alongside usable recipes for festive drinks and snacks.

Mother and daughter dynamics are highlighted during "Death of a Christmas Card Crafter" alongside observations on friendship and scorned love. A few twists result in a surprise ending, though some characters are forgotten along the way. The story centers on crafting a group, Knit and Nibble, that can be replicated thanks to the story's included instructions for a doll sweater and chocolate cake, both inspired by its events.

*Christmas Card Murder* is an entertaining cozy mystery Christmas collection ruled by multifaceted, empowered women.

DELIA STANLEY (November / December 2020)

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