

Allison's Book Corner October 2020

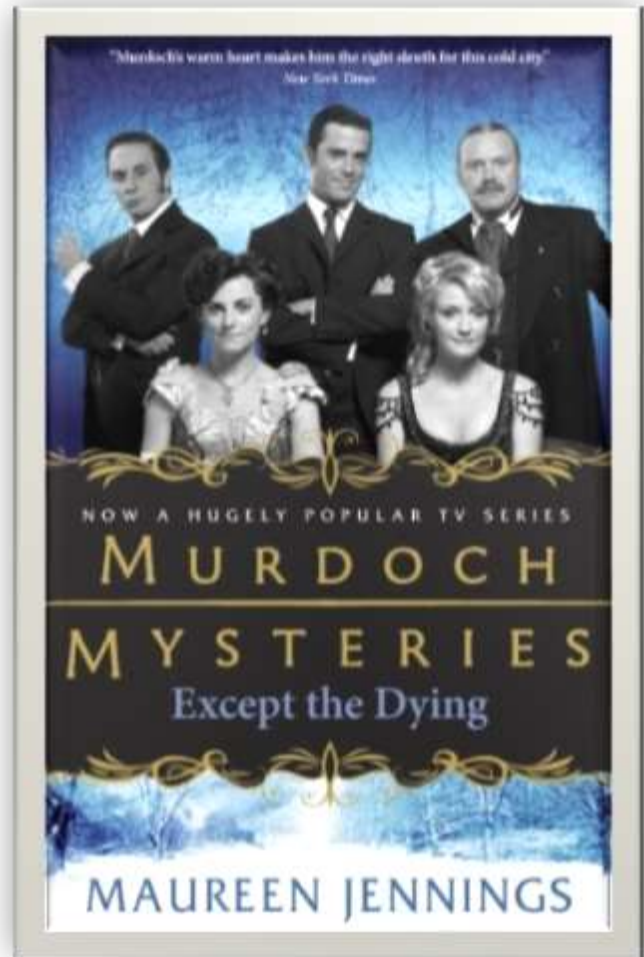
Except the Dying by Maureen Jennings
(McClelland & Stewart 2012)

Sometimes, when the seasons change, it is a good time to switch up from the genre you usually read.

Memoirs are my favorite, but I also love a good old-fashioned mystery; when I was a young girl I kept a list of all of the Agatha Christie books I devoured. As you can imagine, I get many recommendations from library patrons. Recently I was encouraged to check out "The Murdoch Mysteries." There is even a popular TV series based on the books. I did not have to be told twice. "Except the Dying" is the first in a seven-book series and after reading this one, I cannot wait to read the rest voraciously.

The series opens in the winter of 1895 in Toronto, Canada. The reader is drawn in immediately as the author describes two people removing the boots from a dead body lying in the snow. It's gruesome, but the descriptive, compelling writing makes you want to read further and find out about the dead body. Also, who would have the nerve to steal from the deceased?

The dead body is that of a French-Canadian housemaid. She had been working for a wealthy British family who immigrated to Canada. (The author is also a British transplant to Canada.)



Maureen Jennings has a way of making the reader feel she is right there in the story with the characters. She vividly brings to life a certain era. Her detailed descriptions of the clothing, the furnishings, the different classes, weave together a brilliant mystery. And exactly “whodunit” is not obvious; I dislike when the suspect is easily discovered in the first or second chapter.

The young Detective Murdoch is also quite an interesting person. We grow to care about him as we learn about the fiancée he lost to an early death. Our man Murdoch lives by a code of values that help him solve the mystery while investigating the prostitutes, the newspaper boy and the wealthy.

I loved reading about Toronto in the late 1800s. If you enjoy a well-written historical mystery, please treat yourself to this series. The books and DVDs are available in the RCLS catalog.