



# A Small Case of Murder

*Lauren Carr*

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## **A Small Case of Murder** Lauren Carr

""Remember that dead body we found in the Bosley barn? How could you ever forget! His face is seared into my mind..." Decades after writing those words, Lulu Jefferson's letter launches Joshua Thornton and his children into an investigation of an unreported death. Joshua soon learns that the small town pastor Lulu implicates in her letter moonlights as the valley's drug lord.

Just as the reverend's granddaughter is on the verge of revealing his secret enterprise, she is brutally killed along with Joshua's high school sweetheart, Beth Davis, in a double homicide.

Appointed special prosecutor to solve the murders, Joshua Thornton uncovers a web of deception spun on the other side of the globe a half a century ago.

## **A Small Case of Murder Details**

Date : Published May 1st 2004 by iUniverse

ISBN : 9780595302536

Author : Lauren Carr

Format : Paperback 368 pages

Genre : Mystery, Audiobook, Fiction

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# **From Reader Review A Small Case of Murder for online ebook**

## **Maral Haytaian says**

3.75

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### **Edith says**

There isn't really any mystery to this book. When someone is rude to the good guys, you know they're either evil or soon to be dead. I could respect the author for making the heroes Christians, if she hadn't made such a hash of it. The plot is so simplistic that the good guys are unbelievably good and the bad guys are unbelievably bad. The juvenile characterizations and materialistic sensibility spoiled the effort, not to mention the weird double standards. Girls who have sex before marriage, get tattoos, dye their hair, or wear Goth makeup, are bad or dead or both. Bad girls will come to bad ends, but men who have reformed are all the more interesting for having sown some wild oats. The good guys look great with their shirts off and all the girls lust after them, not that it does them any good. The good girls are either dead or unmarried wallflowers who've cared for their aged mothers all their adult lives and don't wear makeup often or well. Huh? Why can't a good woman drive a sports car and have a little sophistication (or fun) without dying? Because she's only there to make the hero look good?

The psychopathic pastor of the megachurch is a successful showman. The good pastor is a nervous speaker. The bad girls get to have gay sex, but the shallow good girl who marries for money accepts all kinds of abuse rather than break her marriage vows. Again, what's going on here? Is this Christian literature or a send-up of Christian lit? The good guys drive sports cars or ride motorcycles, are doctors and lawyers and have broad chests. The bad guys have no virtues, and if they look good, it's only because they cheat. Eh? Would the hero be any less heroic if he died his hair? Would the villains be any less villainous if they didn't?

Dear author: portraying your hero as getting dirty and sleeping on the floor during his family's move-in doesn't make him seem realistic, it makes him seem inept. Ditto letting him be caught asleep and barefoot in his office, or carrying a handgun in his waistband. Someone who thinks they've got a mail bomb on their hands shouldn't follow your recipe for disaster (hand carrying it back to a small town post office). Fathers who feel their children are being threatened by the bad guys shouldn't send them off alone in the family van. Children and women aren't indiscreet idiots who can be counted on to say the wrong thing, blunder into danger, and accept death before dishonor...just for the sake of a ridiculous plot. The story would have been much better with far fewer villains and victims. And did the villains really have to be so very villainous? (Two spouses are murdered, two siblings are murdered...as if one of either wouldn't have been enough for the reader to get the point.)

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## **Mary Manson says**

**Really Enjoyable Murder Mystery**

I stumbled upon Lauren Carr when I purchased The Thorny Rose books. I really enjoyed her writing style but references were made to previous characters and events. When I finished the book, the page showed all of Ms. Carr's books. On the Amazon Author Page, all of her books were listed in order. Needless to say, I now own all of the books in the series and, yes, I am reading them in order. I am truly enjoying the books and am ready to move into Book 2. My book is calling me.....later.....

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### **Anna Fennell says**

I would rate this 3.5 half stars. First, this had a lot more action in it than I initially expected. Murder, bombings, break-ins and car crashes were occurring all over the place. What seemed like a pretty straightforward murder kept getting more and more complicated. Mystery is my favorite genre and as a mystery this book followed the correct set-up with red herrings and complicated twists. The only issue I had was with the main character who although having a complex back story lacked depth for me. This might have been caused by his military background.

I did enjoy that the story is set in West Virginia.

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### **Simsd953 says**

Not for me. I found it boring and it seemed as if the author was trying to put everything in a single book (could have been a series of shorter books about the church and the evil family).

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### **Ellen Dark says**

A Small Case of Murder is an interesting book. I enjoyed the story itself, but the writing needed some work. The story is about Joshua Thornton, a widowed, recently retired JAG lawyer, who has moved back home to a small town in West Virginia with his five children. While cleaning out his grandmother's attic the children find an old, unopened letter addressed to Josh's dead mother. The letter is from a friend, who died of a drug overdose the same day Josh's parents died in a car accident, over thirty years earlier. The letter tells them of a dead body that vanished. When Josh asks his cousin, the local doctor, about the death, it turns out that several other people died around the same time as Josh's parents and friend.

Josh begins to investigate, and soon is embroiled in lots of mysteries. One of the things he investigates is the local drug scene. Its common knowledge that the pastor of a large church in town is the local drug lord, but his congregation seems to be unaware of this.

Soon there are more deaths that are clearly murder. Josh, his cousin Tad, and childhood friend, Jan search for answers. The Thornton children also get involved, much to their father's consternation.

There are some awkward elements in the book. There are religious references that seem to be thrown in, and the climax is rather unbelievable.

Would I read the second Joshua Thornton book? I think I would just to see if Lauren Carr had improved as a writer.

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## **Sheri says**

I would have enjoyed it more if it was less preachy.

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## **Jerry says**

A good book for bringing the history of Joshua Thornton into the mix of Lauren Carr's series. Anxious to see what the next book in the series brings.

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## **Rhonda says**

I enjoyed reading a Small Case of Murder. It was full of murders and suicides over a long period of time. I wondered if I would like it as well as Lauren's later books.

Yes I liked her later books best but while saying that I did like this book.

I had a hard time putting this book down once I started it.

There are a lot of characters in this story. I especially liked meeting Joshua Thornton and his family.

Joshua moved his family after his wife's death back to his hometown of Chester, West Virginia. Joshua left JAG because he now was a single parent to his 5 children. He plans to open up his own law practice. Joshua bought an old building that the town doctor owned and it came with a lot of books and patients files.

His cousin Tad was the town doctor now and was interested in the records and asked for them.

During the move Joshua found a letter written from his parents friend Lulu that had died on the same day as his parents had. The letter was never opened till now.

It talked about the dead body the four of them found on their prom night that disappeared before they could get back with the Sheriff to show him. The sheriff did not believe them.

Joshua and his family were interested that his parents found a dead body and did not know who it was. Lulu's letter mentioned that she saw the dead guy in a picture of

Reverend Rawling, Sheriff DeLaney and some other guys in army uniforms. She asked Reverend about the picture.

Lulu died of a drug overdose the same day she mailed the letter also the same day Joshua lost his parents.

There are a lot of murders that happened in the past and again now that have not been solved. Everyone knows who the leader of drugs in the area but no proof. Joshua quiet life that he moved back for doesn't last for long even in church.

I like all the plot twists and turns that kept me from putting the book down till I finished reading it.

I was given this ebook to read from Lauren and in exchange to write a honest review of it.

Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (April 26, 2011) 324 pages.

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## **Laura Thomas says**

Recently widowed Joshua Thornton, a retired Navy Jag Commander, has packed up his 5 children and the family dog, returning home after almost 20 years to open his own legal practice.

Chester, West Virginia is like most small towns where everybody knows each others business. That all changes when Joshua's children discover an old, unopened letter to his parents dated on the day of their death 30 years ago. Joshua's curiosity about the contents of the letter opens a can of worms and the bodies start to pile up.

Chester may be a small town but this becomes a huge investigation. With mysterious car accidents, drug overdoses, a missing body and flying bullets, this book has it all.

With plenty of build up and a well developed cast of characters, Lauren Carr has written a great who-dun-it. She gives you a huge wrap-up and just when you think it is over, she delivers an ending reminiscent of Perry mason!

I wanted to stand up and cheer and I will be rushing to get the next book in the series. Yes it is a series but able to stand on its own.

Source: Net Galley

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## **Terry says**

Josh Thornton Book 1

Best-Selling Mystery Author Lauren Carr's debut novel, *A Small Case of Murder* (originally published in 2004) is set in the quaint West Virginia town of Chester, where everyone knows everyone, and there is never a secret that someone doesn't know. In such an intimate town, how many suspicious deaths can be left unquestioned?

Following his wife's death, Joshua Thornton leaves a promising career in the U. S. Navy's JAG division to move across country with his five children into his ancestral home. While clearing out the attic they find a letter written to their grandmother postmarked 34 years ago.

In the letter Lulu Jefferson wrote "...Remember that dead body we found in the Bosley barn?...I saw him today...I went to talk to the reverend and there was his picture on the wall." What dead body? His interest piqued, Joshua asks about Lulu and finds that in 1970 she died on the same day that she penned the letter implicating the pastor in an unreported murder. There is much more to this story than a 34-year-old letter. It's a 34-year-old mystery!

Today, a double murder has the whole town under a microscope. The state attorney general appoints Joshua special prosecutor to solve the crimes. In a small town where gossip flies as swiftly as a spring breeze it is impossible to know who to trust.

Asking simple questions about events long ago could prove to be deadly for Joshua and his family.

Read this Author Revised Edition of Lauren Carr's debut mystery novel. It's the same GRAND mystery, revised and edited for re-release by the author herself!

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## **Jill says**

Unbelievably predictable and beats you over the head with details. It's also written in a painfully deliberate manner. The adjectives are repetitive, and Carr is constantly reminding you that the protagonist is manly, the

amazing quarterback, small-town hero who dated the head varsity cheerleader. Everyone either loves the protagonist or is jealous of him, because they're a loser, etc. Super cliché. It just got really old really fast. This book was written for readers who don't pay attention to detail and want a mystery that takes no mental power to process. This one didn't do much for me.

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## **Vicki says**

Ms. Carr's title is fraught with irony, as so many folks die in this book that you will lose count if you aren't keeping a tally sheet. The protagonist is a retired JAG lawyer, who has left the service to be a more "in touch" parent to his five children. Their mother has recently passed away so Josh Thornton chooses to move back to his home town of Chester, West Virginia and into the home that had belonged to his grandparents. The first death we learn about in the prologue as we "witness" an unknown assailant attack Lulu Jefferson, a friend of Josh's young parents back in the 70's.

When the book begins some 35 years later, Josh and his children are unpacking their own stuff and making room for it by clearing out some of Grandma's old stash in the attic. The kids come across an old unopened letter addressed to Josh's mom. Josh surmises that his grandmother was too heartbroken to open a letter to her recently departed daughter. Coincidentally, both Josh's parents were killed in a car wreck the same day that Lulu died...but the kicker is that Lulu's letter mentions a body that they had run across the night of their Senior Prom in an old barn. In her letter she tells that she has seen a photo of the dead man on the Reverend Rawling's wall, and the Reverend had said it was a picture of him and his buddies from the Korean War!

(Okay, for those who are counting, that is 4 dead bodies, not counting Josh's wife, and we are barely into double digit pages at this point...)

Ms. Carr definitely has a sense of humor...her villains are villainous enough to seem like caricatures, but especially in the case of the Reverend and his family, their congregation is apparently clueless as to the Rawlings' main livelihood of running the local drug business. But to the rest of the small town residents, it seems to have been common knowledge for decades.

But if you think a murder 35 years ago is all Josh will have to resolve, you have another thing coming. We are introduced to a number of the residents of Chester aside from the Rawlings clan. Tad MacMillan is the town doctor and Josh's cousin. Beth Davis is the town pharmacist and was Josh's high school girl friend. Tess Bauer is the tv journalist who is trying to get the scoop on the Rawlings' drug business. Jan Martin owns the pharmacy where Beth works. Curtis Sawyer is the sheriff, who just might be on the Rawlings payroll. Before it's all over they have all become either suspects or victims, sometimes both.

There is not a lot of character development, but there are certainly twists and turns that keep this mystery moving right along to a surprising and unexpected conclusion, where, in Sherlock Holmes' style, Joshua reveals what he has pieced together from the clues he has observed in a public setting, introduces a "surprise witness," and forces the "perp" to reveal himself in a most shocking way.

Hope you have as much fun reading it as Ms. Carr apparently did writing it!

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## **Lis Carey says**

After the death of his wife Valerie, Navy Commander Joshua Thornton has retired from the Navy and moved back to his childhood hometown of Chester, West Virginia to be a single parent to his five children. He has moved his family back into the old family home he grew up in, raised by his grandparents after the deaths of his own parents in a car accident. A JAG officer with a stellar record, Joshua expects to set up a quiet country law practice.

On the first day in their new home, his kids find a letter mailed to Joshua's mother, coincidentally, on the very day that she and his father died. It's from a friend who had been with them when they discovered a dead body in a barn, that then disappeared before they got the sheriff out there to see it. The friend, Lulu, was conveying the exciting information that at Rev. Rawlings' home, she'd seen a picture of the Rev. and Sheriff Delaney with the dead man.

Lulu also died that day, apparently of a heroin overdose.

But that's old news, right? No bearing on events today, surely.

What's current news is a strange young woman being interviewed on tv, claiming that Rev. Rawlings is the valley's drug lord. What's current news is the Reverend's granddaughter Vicki is stalking Joshua's cousin, Doctor Tad McMillan. Also current news is that Joshua's old girl friend Beth, now a pharmacist working in a drugstore owned by another old friend, Jan Martin, has been illicitly selling drugs to Vicki, who is a known drug dealer.

And suddenly, Joshua finds himself appointed the special prosecutor to investigate the murders of Vicki Rawlings and Beth Davis, and the allegations that Rev. Rawlings is the local drug lord.

The long-lost disappearing body, of course, is highly relevant.

This is a good mystery but in some ways a frustrating book. Every single one of the adult women in it seems fragile or damaged or just plain nuts. It's tiresome. If I hadn't already read *Dead on Ice*, it might be black mark bad enough to put me off any more--but I have read it, and I know that Carr's female characters get a lot stronger and more interesting--exceptionally so, in fact, though expanding on that would be a spoiler for later books in the series.

Mildly entertaining in itself, but strongly recommended as the start to a strong series.

I borrowed this book from the library.

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## **Denise Zendel says**

Following his wife's death, Joshua Thornton leaves a promising career in the U. S. Navy's Judge Advocate General division to move to Chester, West Va., with his five children into his ancestral home. While clearing out the attic they find a letter written to their grandmother, postmarked 34 years ago, regarding what turns out to be an unsolved murder.



In addition to the long-ago mystery, the town is faced with a double murder. The state attorney general appoints Joshua special prosecutor to solve the crimes. Everyone is a suspect, even his best friend from high school. His kids get in on the investigation, finding the long-hidden first body, and placing themselves in serious danger.

I picked this up because I am a fan of Ms. Carr's other series involving Mac Faraday, his German Shepherd, Gnarly, and Archie Monday, Mac's long-time love. Sometimes I'm afraid to read a different series by an author I like, in case it doesn't measure up to my affection for the series I do like.

I was pleasantly surprised with Thornton's story. The plot is a little complicated, with a lot of dialogue and flipping back and forth between the past and present, but the characters are interesting, and the plot was good enough to hold my attention to the end. My e-book copy did have an odd quirk – random hyphenation of words in places where there hyphens weren't necessary: “clip-ping” and “con-summating” and sys-tem,” for instance. This took me out of the story a little bit, but I just decided to ignore it. Typesetting issues aside, this was a good read. I would read more in this series.

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