



# Death of an English Muffin

*Victoria Hamilton*

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**Death of an English Muffin** Victoria Hamilton

**From the national bestselling author of *Muffin but Murder*, baker Merry Wynter returns with a fresh tray of muffins and a case that has authorities stumped...**

They say one's home is one's castle, but when it comes to Wynter Castle, Merry would like it to belong to someone else. But until a buyer bites, she could use some extra dough, so she decides to take in renters. The idea pans out, and Merry's able to find a handful of tenants eager to live in a real castle. The only problem is most of them are crumby, tea-swilling old biddies.

The Legion of Horrible Ladies, as Merry calls them, is led by the terribly nasty—and fabulously wealthy—Cleta Sanson. The abrasive Englishwoman keeps everyone whipped into a frenzy—until she meets an embarrassing end behind a locked door. Evidence reveals that Cleta was murdered, yet no one is privy to how the deed was done. Merry knows she must quickly find the killer before another of her guests gets greased...

**INCLUDES DELICIOUS RECIPES!**

## Death of an English Muffin Details

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Author : Victoria Hamilton

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# From Reader Review Death of an English Muffin for online ebook

## Sloane Collins says

My first foray into a Victoria Hamilton Cozy Mystery, Death of an English Muffin, is actually the third in the Merry Muffin Mystery series. And I'm hooked. I need to go back and read the first two in the series so I'm all caught up. But even having not read the first two, I was hooked by the story and the characters from the very beginning.

Merry Wynter has inherited a castle in upstate New York, so as she is working to fix it up, she takes in renters whom she has dubbed the Legion of Horrible Ladies. One of the legion, the nastiest of the group, is murdered, so Merry and her band of misfits set out to solve whodunit so she can get back to business as usual.

The author has a great voice for writing Cozies (my favorite type of read). The characters are engaging, and just kooky enough to keep it interesting. While it's somewhat of a long book, and at times it felt like nothing much was happening with the mystery, I was still drawn into the world of Wynter Castle. The setting description, not to mention that the main character is always baking muffins, makes me want to stay there and experience the castle, people, and village firsthand.

It's a very engaging story, and the mystery takes several twists and turns, with plenty of red herrings along the way. I was actually very surprised to find out who the culprit was. This is a must-read for Cozy fans.

I received this book from the author in exchange for a fair and honest review.

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## Alicia Farage says

I had a chance for an advance read of this title and enjoyed the third entry in the series. This is my favorite one, so far.

This is a series that I enjoy the characters and love watching the development of each 'regular'. I loved the way that Ms. Hamilton was able to set the stage by providing enough history and character description. One could read this independently and feel at home in the castle. She uses a similar approach to describing her new 'residents'.

It's too bad that Merry is fictional as I'd love to visit and sample some of her muffins. It was nice to visit Wynter Castle again and learn a bit more about Wynter Woods. I'll be looking forward to my next visit!

Note: I received an advance copy with no expectation of a positive review.

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## **James says**

A strong cozy mystery [for me] must contain a complex mystery with a mean victim, a group of solid core characters, a bevy of potential culprits who are tied together in a fascinating manner, and an easily visible and charming locale. The third book in the Merry Muffin Mystery series by Victoria Hamilton, *Death of an English Muffin*, has all that and more. I give this one 4.5 muffins, I mean stars.

### **The Villain**

A nasty old woman visiting the castle with her friends is killed. Cleta had some of the most offensive (for a cozy) and ruthless dialog I've ever seen. She's a miserable lady who takes her frustrations out on everyone else, and therefore, she deserved to be the one to die in this book. Readers will love seeing her get her just desserts!

### **The Core Characters**

Merry is awesome. She's a realistic and smart woman who is trying to figure out her path. Sometimes she pushes too hard, others she backs away in appropriate measures. I like her character a lot and she makes me want to find my own castle to renovate. Her friends are growing and she's building connections among the people in Autumn Vale. In the last book, I worried she didn't have better ties, but they are growing. I like the budding friendship / relationship with Sheriff Virgil, too.

### **The Suspects**

Cleta's fellow 80-something gals from New York City came with her. Friends (or frenemies) for more than 50 years, they hold secrets over one another and use them to get whatever they want. Which one is lying? Which one is telling the truth? Why are they all so bitter? Oh, those high society biddies need to be taken down a notch or two, and Merry is just the gal to do it.

### **The Setting**

Autumn Vale is in upstate New York. It's a gorgeous and inspiring village. I love the landscape, the castle and the small-town feel. To see the rivalries with neighbor cities is also amusing. I feel immediately transported to it.

All-in-all, this series is developing strongly. I recommend it for most cozy readers. I can't wait to pick up the next one.

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## **Doward Wilson says**

Or should we say, *Death of an Old Witch*? Merry has inherited Wynter Castle in Autumn Vale, New York and is working hard to restore it for selling or living in. To raise the money for upkeep and repairs she has rented a room to her best friend's elderly, wealthy aunt. After staying for a month she goes to New York for a doctor's appointment and returns with four more elderly, wealthy friends to rent rooms. Three of them aren't bad but one is nasty, snide, back-biting and likes to kick people when they are down. Needless to say, she is murdered in the locked loo and now Merry has a murder to solve if she wants to get the rest of them out of her castle. This has been a fantastic series with the first two books and this one just keeps it rolling. The characters are well developed, the background is fun and interesting and the murders are extremely well plotted and played out. You never know who did it and why until the end because the plot twists keep you hopping. Each book has tied some background threads together and they keep going. There is love, family,

treasure hunting, betrayals and murder for everyone's enjoyment. With a hint of more to come with a discreet ongoing investigation into the local post office and current post mistress, the author has me hooked and waiting for the next book. I highly recommend this series!

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## **Yvonne says**

Muffin baker extraordinaire, Merry Wynter, is back and still trying to sell Wynter Castle - a castle she inherited from an uncle she barely knew. In the meantime, she has to earn a living and baking muffins isn't cutting it. So, she rents out rooms in her castle and takes in a group of seniors she calls "The Legion of Horrible Ladies".

As you can guess, these are not the nicest people. One in particular, Cleta Sanson, is cruel to everyone including Merry. She can't understand why the group lets Cleta in their circle in the first place, but she's stuck with them for several weeks and must make the best of it. Then, Cleta is found murdered at the castle. The list of suspects is limited to the residents of the castle. There's no way Merry is going to sit back quietly while a murderer runs loose in her home.

Merry also finds herself more and more attracted to the local sheriff. Although still not over the death of her husband eight years ago, she's willing to give a new relationship a try. However, will her interference in the investigation put a damper on their romance before it even starts?

This is the third book in the series and Merry Wynter has become a stronger character with each book. Her potential romance is building slowly, but realistically. She's someone readers can truly care about. She's surrounded by some eccentric characters – some zany, some just really strange and some downright mean.

Mix the crazy cast of characters with humor, mystery, and romance and you have a delightful story that will keep you captivated for hours. It's a page turner! I'm anxiously counting the minutes until book #4 is released.

FTC Disclosure: The publisher provided me with a copy of this book to review. This did not influence my thoughts and opinions in any way. All opinions expressed are my own.

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## **NicoleG says**

Muffins, old ladies, and murder, oh my! That's what you'll get, and more, when you read Victoria Hamilton's 3rd Merry Muffin Mystery! Still trying to make a go of life in Wynter Castle, Merry Wynter decides to take in some paying boarders to help offset the cost of the old castle's many renovations. Merry calls the renters "The Legion of Horrible Ladies" and it doesn't take long before the reader figures out why! One lady in particular is extremely toxic and it's no wonder she is murdered! With the help of a few Autumn Vale citizens and friends, Merry needs to figure out who the killer is before someone else is toast!

I enjoyed this book immensely! I found myself wanting to have tea and crumpets with Pish and Gogi in that glorious castle (but only if Juniper cleans it for me)! The author also does a nice job with back story snippets so if you haven't read the other 2 books in the series you won't feel like you're late to the (tea) party!

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## Nese says

I have been a fan of Victoria Hamilton since reading “No Mallets Intended” and “Brand New Death”, the first book in this series, but I am sorry to say this book has fallen short of my expectations since almost all the focus is on the murder, talking about the crime scene and how hateful the murder victim was over, and over, and over again. The murder mystery is not really suspenseful or original, most of the characters are one dimensional, and there is no mention of interpersonal relationships except a hint of a romance between Merry and Virgil, the sheriff, and how the murder victim blackmailed her friends while alive.

While the first book in the series, “Brand New Death” is so original and entertaining with quirky characters, this book has out of town older women, showing up at Merry’s doorstep one morning without any reservations and moving in to stay a couple of months, who bicker constantly. I wish most of the book were like the last couple of dozen pages at the end, telling the story of the town’s people and new dynamics between the older ladies who eventually move out and go back to New York. I hope in the next book the story will be about the people in town and their relationships. Although the book is written well, I didn’t care for the content.

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## Debbie says

The Legion of Horrible Ladies has overtaken Wynter castle and Merry is at her wit’s end, particularly in dealing with their leader, Cleta Sanson. Merry needs the boarders in order to keep the castle afloat while she renovates and looks for a seller, but the drama has her questioning her decisions. Unfortunately, Cleta ends up dead and everyone is a potential suspect. Will Merry uncover the killer’s identity or will the locked door mystery remain unsolved?

Victoria Hamilton does a beautiful job at crafting a home and a town that readers want to visit time and time again. I love Wynter Castle! The whole concept is breathtaking but it is the surprise Merry and Lizzie find on the grounds of the castle that truly made me fall in love with Wynter Castle and its history. I want to roam through the various rooms, climb into the dusty attic, and explore the woods for hidden gems of history. Victoria Hamilton has created the sort of world that readers want to jump in and savor each and every moment.

Character development is critical to the success of a cozy mystery and Victoria Hamilton excels at it! The notion of the Legion of Horrible Ladies made me laugh and Cleta Sanson is exactly the sort of “horrible lady” one envisions from the name. I like that Victoria Hamilton still made me care about how and why such an obnoxious woman died, as it would have been far too easy to brush her death off as “good riddance”. However, my favorite character is the secondary character, Hannah, who displays integrity in the face of bullying.

DEATH OF AN ENGLISH MUFFIN is the third book in the Merry Muffin Mystery series and can easily be read as a standalone. References are made to events in earlier books, however, and I suspect I would have enjoyed it even more had I read the first two books. I’m going to correct this oversight as I definitely want to read more about Wynter Castle and the town of Autumn Vale! If you like a good cozy mystery with a lot of

real world issues, then look no further than DEATH OF AN ENGLISH MUFFIN. Easily recommended!

\*A copy of this book was received from the author in exchange for a fair and honest review\*

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### **Lisa Ks Book Reviews says**

Books one and two in this series were completely delightful. Getting to know Merry and be with her as she adjusts to life at Wynter Castle. But muffin . . . I mean, nothing prepared me for The Legion Of Horrible Ladies in DEATH OF AN ENGLISH MUFFIN. Fantastic! Merry had no idea what she was getting herself into when she rented rooms to that group of ladies.

Author Victoria Hamilton has really raised the bar with this installment of her Merry Muffin series. Extremely well written, as are all of Ms. Hamilton's books, each and every chapter was a fun adventure I didn't want to end. The mystery was tight and intriguing, leading up to a shocking, clever reveal that was inspired.

This was definitely one of those books that when finished, I hoped the next book in my to be read stack could measure up.

For return readers, prepare yourself for the best installment yet. If you haven't read this series yet, be assured, you can read DEATH OF AN ENGLISH MUFFIN and not feel lost. Author Hamilton did a great job in the beginning of getting readers caught up.

Be sure to check out the back of the book so you don't miss out on some delicious recipes!

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### **Mystereity Reviews says**

4 1/2 Stars

I have to admit, I am totally hooked on this series. I really like Merry, and I love the location. This book is the best of the series by far, there wasn't really anything I didn't like about it.

Merry Wynter gets sucked into hosting The Legion Of Horrible Ladies in her castle for six months when friend Pish's little old auntie, Lush (wtf is with the names in this family) comes to stay and brings her friends, including a mean and vicious old lady named Cleta. Someone finishes off Cleta in the bathroom and Merry sets out to figure out who did it with the help of hunky sheriff Virgil.

This one had a really good plot, a classic locked door mystery, lots of suspects with motives & opportunity. I felt like it rambled a little bit, though. Like this could've been wrapped up a lot sooner than it was. I wasn't bored, just a little...disinterested after awhile, particularly in the first third of the book, Cleta's antics got annoying after awhile.

Also, some of the names - Pish, Lush, Cleta, Lauda - were just a tad bit over the top. Lauda I kept reading as Latuda (which is a medication for bi-polar depression) and Cleta I kept reading as Cletus. And seriously,

Pish? All I can think of is Sean Connery having to go the bathroom. "Excuse me, I have to take a pish..." It distracts me from the story. Maybe it's just me, and I realize that authors have to protect themselves from accidentally using the name of an actual person in a story, but when there are names I think are stupid in a story, it kind of turns me off.

But that's pretty much the only criticisms I have of this book. Like I said, I'm completely hooked on this series and can't wait for the next to come out.

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## **Debbie says**

I really enjoyed this book. Merry is hosting a group of elderly women as she continues to try and figure out what to do with Wynter castle. Cleta is one miserable lady who is mean to everyone. Merry tries to arrange events to keep them amused combining them with the elderly from the home. At one such event the mystery begins. Merry is determined to find who has done this in her home to one of her guests.

My only problem was the repeated questioning of who invited Cleta? Then again Merry even mentions that she keeps asking it because no one will answer, so this was a minor drawback for me. Some of the usual town people are back, I love Doc, he even gave me a laugh out loud moment. The mystery was excellent and kept me guessing until the end and was well explained. I love that Merry doesn't do stupid things to endanger herself and love that her relationship with Virgil is growing but not too fast. This series has such a potential for growth in so many ways that it will stay fresh. Between the town seeming to grow and come to life and some of the minor characters growing, I'm sure we will see Autumn Vale flourish.

There is also the extra bonus of some yummy sounding recipes to try. I will definitely continue on with series.

**\*\*I received an advanced copy of this book and this review and opinions are my own.**

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## **Sheryl Booth of Booth Talks Books says**

Death of an English Muffin by Victoria Hamilton

Review by: Booth Talks Books

Victoria Hamilton's "Death of an English Muffin" is the third in her Merry Muffin Mysteries. Merry Wynter plays host to a group of ladies she refers to The Legion of Horrible Ladies. When one of them ends up dead, Merry is left wondering if one of her aged guests could possibly have it in them to kill one of their own. So what if she, Cleta Sanson, had been the most horrible of them all? As more secrets are exposed about the people in and around their little group as well as the town's people, the killer is discovered. Pay attention because it is a shocker.

There were a lot of characters in this book to keep up with. You might want to take notes to keep them straight. I felt like I was in a crowded bed and breakfast among the confusion right with Merry. With everyone running around, disappearing and so much to get done, I ran out of breath myself. Victoria nailed the B&B experience in an old castle in a small town. I loved the details used to describe the meals, teas and the rooms. I especially loved the well-developed characters of the "Legion" ladies. I feel like I know these women. I am pretty sure they were best friends with my late Granny!

I like how Merry's character becomes stronger as her difficulties start to mound. First with the intrusion of



the “Legion”, dealing with the family in town she was at bitter odds with and of course, her wanna-be love-interest. Through dealing with all of the problems plaguing her and the “Wynter Curse”, she finds her strength, voice and is able to learn how to take a stand not only for herself but also those around her that she cares for. She also helps those who are weaker around her grow in strength and character. She is such a beautiful example of a human being.

If I took away anything from this book, it is to never underestimate people, no matter their age, disability or upbringing. An outward appearance can be very deceiving. I love that Victoria explored this so deeply in “Death of an English Muffin.” It is something that many writers don’t explore. These older ladies reminded me of my feisty Granny Hagan. She was a force to be reckoned with. I would not have challenged that eighty-year-old lady for anything! Never mess with a group of old lady friends and never think just because they have grown older that they aren’t capable of great (or awful) things. Kudos Victoria!

As far as the question of must you have read the other two books prior to understanding this story, the answer would be no. But it couldn’t hurt to get the other two. I do plan to read the other two so I can understand the references to the notes mentioned as well as wanting to know how Merry came to inherit the castle and her run-ins with a certain trouble-making family. This book can for sure be a stand-alone read. \*I was sent Death of an English Muffin in exchange for a fair review.

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## **Vicki Spires says**

Death of an English Muffin (book 3 in the Merry Muffin Mystery series) returns us to Wynter Castle (American castle), where we catch up with Merry Wynter and her colorful circle of friends. Merry has taken the suggestion of a dear friend and rented out rooms in her inherited castle to several elderly society ladies in order to help finance the much needed restoration of the building and grounds. How much trouble could they be? Unfortunately for Merry and friends they find out all too soon just how much as they struggle daily with managing "The Legion of Horrible Ladies" requests, complaints and squabbles. When one of the ladies is murdered in Merry's beloved castle she sets her mind to finding the guilty party and reclaiming her home.

I have now read all three installments of this series by Victoria Hamilton, and while I enjoyed each of them I feel that this is the best to date. The story is well paced, and the mystery elements were quite good. As the series has progressed it seems that Ms. Hamilton has found Merry's "voice", and I am growing to like this character (and her ever expanding circle of friends) more with each book. One minor issue I had with the first book in this series (and to a lesser extent the second) was that the dialog could sometimes sound a little stilted (just my opinion) and could get a little over the top even for characters who are supposed to be somewhat flamboyant (again, my just my opinion). I did not find that to be the case here at all, and I felt that the characters expressed themselves beautifully. I enjoyed the return of favorite characters from the previous books, but I was sorry that we didn't see very much of Shilo in this book (though I suspect that there may be more going on with her in future installments - I hope so). The progression of relationships seems natural, and the characters are continuing to evolve in interesting ways. We see here, just as in real life, sometimes first impressions don't do a person justice (and sometimes they are dead on). In short, this is a strong entry in a very good series. I hope it is not too long before we get to see more Merry Muffin Mysteries. \*\*Please Note: I received a complimentary advance review copy of this book in exchange for my honest opinion.

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## **JoAnne McMaster (Any Good Book) says**

Merry Wynter inherited Wynter Castle from her late uncle, and has decided to temporarily take in renters. When her friend Pish says his aunt wants to stay, Merry is delighted. But Aunt Lush shows up with a group of four other women - all well-to-do, whom Merry has termed the Legion of Horrible Ladies. Now Merry's stuck with a demanding group of older women who don't seem to want to leave, and one of them - Cleta Sanson - outdoes all the others with her nasty barbs against others. But since she's paid for the time, Merry's stuck with her or faces a lawsuit.

When Cleta is found dead it's at first considered natural circumstances. But the coroner discovers that Cleta was murdered, and since the likely suspects are all staying at the castle, Merry doesn't want a murderer under her roof and does a little investigating on her own, hoping one of them will let something slip that leads her to the killer...

I was really hoping that this book, the third in the series, would improve over the last but it was not to be. A lot of the book rehashed the characters from other books and it got tiresome hearing how what a good friend Pish was. As a matter of fact, we really didn't get to know anything about most the guests so never got to connect with them. As far as the locals go, I can't in all honesty like Juniper, who doesn't listen to her employer and is mouthy; nor Emerald, who seems to have "found religion" of a sort and spouts it to Merry every chance she gets. That's annoying in itself.

I also didn't feel the connection between Merry and Virgil. I get that they're interested in each other, but there's no spark at all. They seem to be just two people who sort of leeches onto one another for lack of better prospects around. I also wondered about Merry's age. When the books began she was thirty-nine, but now it's less than a year later and she's 'almost' forty-two? How fast do people age in this town? Some people even age backwards. In the first book, Hannah mentions how she's thirty (stated "Binny left when Hannah was fifteen so it must have been fifteen years ago"); but now she's in her twenties. Curious, indeed.

Of all the characters, I disliked Lauda as much as Cleta. She was pushy, annoying, and rude; and we're supposed to believe she was the poor put-upon niece. If I were Merry, I would have just handed her a refund check and told her to hightail it off my land. I wouldn't put up with a rude, nasty person like that. She really wasn't much different than her aunt and all Merry did was trade one for the other. In Lauda's case, though, she could have removed her from the premises. There's also something said to Lauda that pertains to the murder which didn't make sense to me because it would have to be proven in order to be valid.

I also didn't get why Merry would allow five people (plus herself, Pish, and assorted employees) to live at her home and cook for each and every one of them. Just because someone is paying you rent doesn't mean you're responsible for all their meals. I've yet to see a landlord provide meals to all their tenants (if people are staying for months you in effect become a landlord, not an innkeeper) three times a day. Maybe breakfast, but send those people out to eat. Not to mention the recipes in the back are horrendous - Chicken Spaghetti? Bacon and Peanut Butter Muffins? (What is it with the bacon muffins? She had bacon muffins in the first book, too). Just my opinion on the recipes, though...

Anyway, as you can tell I wasn't enthralled with this book. It was merely average as far as cozies go. There was nothing to make it stand out and even when Merry discovers a little bit more about her father's family in each book, it's not really interesting enough to make me care anything about any of them, Merry included. She's got a rather morose type of personality, lamenting about one thing or another all the time. At least she's beginning to change a little bit toward the end of the book, so that's a good thing.

At the end, while I didn't feel we were given any clues as to who the murderer was, it was satisfactory and everything came out alright. As I said, this is fine for a mystery and can be read in a few hours or so.

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## **Fred says**

Death Of An English Muffin is the third book in The Merry Muffin series.

Merry Wynter has been trying to come up with something to get some cash flow going to spruce up the old castle she has inherited from her Uncle, so that she can put it on the market to sell. Finally, her good friend Pish, has come up with the idea of renting out some rooms. Pish's aunt Lush and three of her friends have moved in to the castle. Things are not as Merry had hoped and she refers to the elderly ladies as the Legion of Horrible Ladies. The most outspoken of the group is Cleta Sanson, everyone, even the other guests can't stand her. She has even alienated some of the residents of Autumn Vale and residents at Golden Acres, a retirement community. So it surprises no one when Cleta's body is found in a bathroom.

Now Merry, with the help of Pish and her good friend Shilo set to do a little investigating of their own to catch the murderer before the castle becomes known as a “death trap”.

The supporting cast will provide the readers with a few chuckles, too. Emerald and Juniper may not be the most competent employees, but they do provide some funny time. And Lizzie and Alcina, a couple of local teenagers, are back and are once again are an enjoyable duo.

A wonderful series and I will be watching for the next book in the series.

Recipes are also included.

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