



The Trickster's Lullaby

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A winter camping trip turns deadly as two missing teenagers, a twisted love triangle, and the spectre of radicalism create turmoil in the remote Laurentian wilderness.

Amanda Doucette's cross-Canada charity tour is in for a cold snap when she organizes a winter camping trip for inner-city young people in the stunning setting of the Laurentian Mountains. With a view to bridging cultural divides, she brings along a mixture of Canadian-born and immigrant youth.

Trouble begins when two of the teenagers disappear into the wilderness during the night: Luc, a French/English-Canadian with a history of drug use, and Yasmina, an adventurous young woman from Iraq who dreams of becoming a human rights lawyer. Although frantic, their parents are strangely secretive amid suspicions of drug use and forbidden romance. But when a local farmer turns up dead and terrorist material is found on Luc's computer, the dangers turn deadly. Now in a battle against both the elements and police, Amanda and Corporal Chris Tymko discover a far greater web of secrets and deception.

As Amanda races to save the young people from danger, she finds herself fighting for stakes far higher than their own lives.

The Trickster's Lullaby Details

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Author : Barbara Fradkin

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From Reader Review The Trickster's Lullaby for online ebook

Susan says

As the second book in the series, I can safely say that this isn't just an Amanda Doucette mystery. There are three solid characters that all seem to contribute to both the action of the story and the gathering of clues: Amanda Doucette, a former aid worker who has seen the damage war and violence can cause and is hoping to help heal some of that back home in Canada through at-risk youth camps, Chris Tympko from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police who has a crush on Amanda and never seems to be doing any actual police work within his own jurisdiction, and Matthew Goderich who is a journalist that knew Amanda back during her aid work days and is great at using his skills to find out information. While I like having multiple main characters, it does confuse the story a bit because they are all separately hunting down information and communication is sketchy throughout the entire story. The book spends a lot of time with the three traveling places and not having all the information. It was difficult to gauge distances and time and this made the book feel a bit scattered. I hope that calms down a bit in future books. Otherwise, a great story that took an interesting look at how terrorists are recruited.

A copy of this book was provided by NetGalley and Dundurn in exchange for an honest review.

Purple Country Girl (Sandy) says

I received a copy of The Trickster's Lullaby from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

2.5-3

The beautiful cover of Trickster's Lullaby grabbed my attention on Netgalley and, after reading the description, I thought this would be a good, entertaining read. Unfortunately, it never really gripped me and I never warmed up to Amanda, the protagonist. It also felt very ambitious and overloaded, and I don't think it truly lived up to its full potential.

Amanda Doucette runs a charity that takes at-risk teenagers on camping trips in the Canadian wilderness. During her latest trip, one of the teenage boys, Luc, goes missing one night. He's a kid with a history of drug issues. Among the theories are that he ran off to meet a dealer. Amanda doesn't want to believe it because he seemed so eager to go on the trip as a way to challenge himself and to put his past behind him. Soon after, a body of a man is discovered in another part of the woods but Amanda is unable to get any information on his identity. She is worried that it is Luc. When another teenager goes missing, a Muslim girl named Yasmina, some of the campers wonder if the pair ran off together - possibly the two were in a secret romance. Amanda reaches out to her journalist friend, Matthew Goderich, for help. Worried about Amanda's safety, Matthew reluctantly asks policeman Chris Tymko to see what he can find out from the local police.

Things get more complicated and troubling when terrorist propaganda is discovered during a search of Luc's computer. The situation will go from bad to extremely dangerous and deadly very quickly - with Amanda in the thick of it. At each turn, Amanda, Matthew and Chris find a lot of secrets and a lot of lies, making it difficult to trust anyone or to get any real answers.

The Trickster's Lullaby just didn't click with me. Amanda didn't work as a main character. I felt Matthew and Chris are better drawn and much more full of life. That could be because they do a lot of legwork and investigating while she is in the camp but, for whatever reason, she feels very flat. Of course, both men have feelings for her and Matthew is jealous of the younger, super trooper-type Chris. I found that a bit annoying. I also found Amanda being the type to run headlong into dangerous situations, as she does a few times in this book and, apparently in the previous book as well, to be brave but incredibly stupid. She seems the type to find herself in need of rescuing.

Overall, I found some of the situations implausible and the book a bit chaotic as the conclusion drew closer. Fradkin is a good writer but, in the end, this one missed the mark for me.

Thomas says

4 stars

I enjoyed reading this book, which is the second book in the Amanda Doucette series. Amanda was an aid worker in Nigeria who barely escaped from a horrific massacre. She is now back home in Canada, gradually recovering from the emotional trauma she suffered. She wants to recover by giving back to the community and has organized a winter camping trip for refugee teenagers in the Quebec wilderness.

But first one, then a second teenager goes missing and when a dead body is found, Amanda realizes that there is a killer nearby. She enlists the help of friends introduced in book 1 of the series, Chris Tymko, a Mountie in Quebec for French language training and Matthew Goderich, a free lance reporter.

There are enough twists and turns in this mystery to make it an entertaining read. The author is a retired psychologist and likes to explore why people do bad things or risk their lives to do good things. Both themes are developed in this book.

One quote:

Sergeant Sechrest giving orders to Tymko: "Jesus H., try to stay low. You stick out like a bug on a bedsheet."

Thanks to NetGalley, Dundurn and Barbara Fradkin for sending me this ebook.

Steven Buechler says

Fradkin's experience as a psychologist has no doubt given her insight to the darkness of humanity and it shows in her writing. But she also adds day-to-day concerns and fears that we all have (i.e. Am I sacrificing too much for my career? What about my love life?etc.) that gives a careful reader pause to consider in their own lives. And Fradkin has a nice clear style of writing that makes this book truly enjoyable, especially at the end of long, busy day that we all seem to suffer from.

<https://pacifictranquility.wordpress....>

Craig Sisterson says

They say you shouldn't judge a book by its cover, but this one's striking jacket grabbed my attention, prompting me to read the blurb and then give this new-to-me author a go. (I'm also a fan of Canadian crime

writing, and books set in the wilderness, so several boxes ticked even before I'd read a page).

Overall, I enjoyed the read. *The Trickster's Lullaby* is a good page-turner where Fradkin, who was a psychologist before becoming a well-established author with two previous mystery series, crafts an intriguing tale with plenty of 'what's going on?' and 'what's going to happen?' narrative drive.

I hadn't read the first book in the Amanda Doucette series, *Fire in the Stars*, but Fradkin gives new readers enough background to have a good grasp of her heroine's traumatic history, and how it might be affecting her current choices. Doucette has been an overseas aid worker who's seen the worst of what humanity has to offer, who has witnessed the potentially devastating effects of prejudice against those tagged as 'different' or 'other' in some way (particularly by those holding power). She's still looking to rebalance and reset herself by spending times in the peaceful Canadian wilderness, and by helping kids who come from different cultures to share experiences and perhaps grow understanding.

There's plenty going on in *The Trickster's Lullaby*, and most of it works very well. Fradkin delves into the psychological ramifications of the trauma Doucette has witnessed, as well as social and political issues like the online recruitment of disillusioned teens by radical figures.

It's an action-packed story set against a beautiful backdrop - the Laurentian Mountains in Quebec. The winter season adds to the sense of isolation and hovering danger, as Doucette and the schoolkids are beset by challenges from without and within. The group dynamics, challenges of dealing with teenagers, and the wild environment are all evoked with a nice sense of authenticity.

Personally, I found it a little tough to warm to Doucette. She's an interesting character with a fascinating backstory, but one I felt at a little bit of a distance from, rather than being right alongside. She seemed to make illogical decisions that were more about herself (proving something to herself?) than caring for the kids or doing what might be right in a situation, despite her experience. I was still compelled to find out what happens/ed, but I wasn't quite pulled in as much as I'd hoped. Maverick characters are a staple of storytelling, of course, but this felt a little different, and didn't quite click.

Despite this minor quibble, overall I really enjoyed *The Trickster's Lullaby*, and I'd definitely read more of Fradkin's mystery writing, and more of the Amanda Doucette series. A good solid four-star read that just had the occasional wobble or off-note that meant it didn't quite reach five-star status.

Margaret Bryant says

Excellent follow-up to first book in the series *Fire in the Stars*. Love the setting in the Laurentian Mountains, and the contemporary issues that Amanda Doucette has to deal with.

Heidi says

Firstly, can I just say that this was cover love at first sight – what an absolutely gorgeous cover! I couldn't resist it! Plus, I have discovered a lot of fantastic reads published by Dundurn in the past, so picking this book up was a double temptation for me.

The Trickster's Lullaby was my first introduction to the Amanda Doucette mystery series, and I really enjoyed discovering a new interesting, multi-layered female protagonist who stands out from other fictional amateur sleuths by offering an interesting past that drives a lot of her actions. Plus, she has an adorable canine sidekick, who is the perfect companion to a woman who spends a lot of time in the mountains. In this latest instalment, Amanda is trying to enrich the lives of immigrant youths by exposing them to the Canadian wilderness, hoping that they will form some friendships in the process. Having experienced trauma in her own life, Amanda feels passionate about the youngsters, who each come from war torn countries and have lived through some hellish experiences. Even Luc, the only Canadian youth in the program, is battling with his own demons and substance abuse issues. It soon becomes obvious that things will not work out as Amanda has planned, and what better place for things to go awry than a wintry wilderness camp in a remote place!

I loved the scenes of slight discord as a diverse group of people are thrown together in a wild place, and the escalating tension as things spin out of control. To be honest, The Trickster's Lullaby was not at all what I had expected, since I thought that the winter camp would feature for most of the story and focus on the group's interpersonal relationships. It became very obvious in the first few pages that group dynamics would be an issue, and I loved how the author built the tension and the reader's anticipation of conflict soon to come. However, the events in the camp only formed the first part of the story, and the scene soon shifted to a more political and current affairs arena, with other protagonists also featuring in the mystery and displaying a different angle to the story. Whilst I really enjoyed Amanda's friends' sleuthing and their various different characters, I admit that I would have preferred savouring the slow unravelling of the group and the escalating tension for a bit longer rather than the unexpected direction the novel was taking. Whilst the story was extremely well written and researched, and was certainly a topical issue, I admit I am not a great fan of politically based mysteries, and therefore perhaps not the perfect audience for this book.

That said, there is action, adventure, armchair-travel, some very interesting characters and a great surprise in store for the reader, so this is certainly an author who knows how to deliver a multi-layered, well-plotted mystery that keeps readers frantically turning the pages. I would love to see Amanda and her friends back in future novels – the more remote the setting the better. In the meantime, I must read the first in the series to discover a bit more about this remarkable former aid worker, who makes for such a refreshingly different protagonist.

3.5 stars

Thank you to Netgalley and the publisher for the free electronic copy of this novel and for giving me the opportunity to provide an honest review.

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Hannelore Cheney says

Amanda Doucette and her dog Kaylee are going on a trip to the Laurentian Mountains in Quebec, Canada, leading a group of immigrant teenagers from the inner city of Montreal. Amanda, still having flashbacks from her harrowing time in Nigeria, fleeing from Boko Haram, wants to help youth from different countries build bridges, despite differing faiths and customs, as well as show them the beauty of their new country. A week in the winter wilderness; snowshoeing, skiing, ice fishing and outdoor cooking, sleeping in tents

without modern day distractions, will hopefully form friendships and will work towards healing the wounds of their traumatic childhoods, fleeing their war torn countries.

Unfortunately, things go awry soon into the trip - one boy seems to have taken off into the wilderness and not much later one of the girls disappears as well. It could be the two were romantically involved, but when a man is found murdered in the area, things turn even more serious, adding the local police and the RCMP to the group's search efforts.

There are times when I got a little mad at Amanda, as she has a tendency to go into situations without thinking, putting her life and others' at risk, but the wonderful atmosphere of the Canadian wilderness, Montreal and the Laurentians had me reading way past my bedtime. This is the 2nd in the Amanda Doucette mysteries, and I am definitely a fan. Here's hoping the next adventure will be set in Ontario, maybe in the spring or fall?

Seriously though, this is a really good book and should appeal to a wide audience. Mystery, adventure, lovely setting, what's not to love?

Thank you Netgalley and Dundurn Press for the eARC.

Ivory Castle says

Amanda is still recovering from the psychological effects of a traumatic experience which occurred during her time as an international aid worker. Seeking a new purpose she forms a charity designed to help teenagers and their families coming from disadvantaged and migrant backgrounds. She takes a group of teenagers from Montreal on an adventure trip through the Mont Tremblant National Park. The camping plans don't go as expected when two of the teenagers go missing and the remote location delays police assistance. The situation worsens when one person turns up dead and another is suspected of having links to a terrorist group. Defusing frustrations and tempers takes all the skills Amanda gained from her overseas work as she struggles to ensure the safety of the group.

In addition to Amanda there are several other main characters that the author is able to make a perfect fit for the storyline. Luc is the young man whose mother begs he be allowed to join the group only for him to disappear one night. When a body is found everyone suspects it will be his. Zidane is a youth counsellor involved with Muslim youth who joins the group. When he starts to act in a suspicious manner Amanda believes he may have an ulterior motive for going on the trip. Sebastien and Sylvie ran a tourist business from home and are the guides for this trip. As well as being expert guides they have extensive survival skills and a vast knowledge of outdoor equipment. Yasmina is a bright and spirited teenager who begged with her very protective parents before they would allow her to join the other teenagers.

Although this book is a novel it still serves as a reminder of the growing world of radicalisation, the types of people more easily recruited than others and how cleverly they are radicalised. It is very easy to imagine these events actually happening. I was absolutely caught up in the story and used every opportunity to read it. Reading the first book in the Amanda Doucette mystery series is not vital to enjoying this one.

The author is a retired psychologist with an interest in what makes people do the wrong thing and that interest is displayed throughout the book. In my opinion she did an excellent job of developing the storyline and the main characters as well as maintaining the gripping pace. I highly recommend this to readers who enjoy mystery thrillers.

A digital copy of this book was obtained from the publisher via Netgalley and it was a pleasure to provide a review.

Carolyn says

This is an exciting, action packed book. I am enjoying the Amanda Doucette series immensely. The sense of place and the characters are well written and described. A feeling of suspense with never a dull moment was maintained throughout. There were twists and turns I never saw coming.

I do not care much for Amanda's behavior so far. She has her faults but cares deeply for people in need of rescue and seems to have abiding friendships. As an international aid worker she witnessed much poverty, exploitation and finally a bloody massacre in Northern Nigeria. She has returned to Canada and is attempting to recover from the horror she experienced and is involved in a worthy cause to help disadvantaged and traumatized youth.

Amanda is involved with a charity who funds wilderness adventures for young people. Most are from war torn countries or survivors of natural disasters from immigrant families. The selection committee has chosen a small group from predominantly Moslem families to partake in a winter wilderness camping trip in the Laurentian region of Quebec. Amanda is helping to lead the group and feels it will be a worthwhile bonding and life changing experience for them.

Going against a decision of the selection committee Amanda chooses Luc, a young man with a history of drug abuse, an arrest, and lack of friends to partake in the winter camping excursion. He convinces her that he has turned his life around, is drug free and wants to resume his education. He is polite and persuasive during his interview with Amanda. He is from a broken family in Montreal. Once with the group he proves to be a volatile mix with the Moslem youth and disinterested in forming friendships. The winter experience is a disappointing failure. Luc disappears at night into the snowy wilderness. Shortly thereafter a bright, modest Moslem girl with ambition to become a human rights lawyer vanishes from the campground. Their trail is hard to follow due to snow. Is Luc looking for drugs? Are the two having a secret romance and plan to meet up? Soon a body is found in the direction they seemed to be heading.

Amanda is determined to find them before they freeze to death. She is independent, impetuous, impulsive and seems to have no fear of danger or death. One close friend describes her as an adrenaline junky. She puts her life in peril to rescue people, rushing off on her own with her faithful dog, Kaylee without waiting for further assistance. In doing so she puts not only her life but lives of others in jeopardy. Her risky behavior makes for compelling, suspenseful reading.

In the previous book her rescue effort in Newfoundland landed her in the midst of a vast criminal network. This time her search helps uncover a jihad terrorism conspiracy. Her friends, Chris, an RCMP officer and Matthew, a former war reporter also show up to lend any help needed.

I can't wait to see in what location in Canada is chosen for Amanda's next adventure, and what dangers she will face.

Philip says

Before I get into my thoughts about this story and try to justify why I have downrated it so severely I want everybody to know that I don't think this is a bad book but, on the contrary, I think it is a very good action/adventure story that explores some very current and serious topics and is, as is every book by Barbara

Fradkin, very well written with great settings, well developed characters and, as usual, a couple of surprising twists and a spectacular ending. And, yes, I will most definitely read the next in this series as I have read all of Ms Fradkin's excellent Mike Green series and all of the great Cedric O'Toole Rapid Read series and, of course, have liked some of them more than others and I hope Ms Fradkin will resurrect Mike Green and company for some more adventures.

Now to try to justify why only 2 stars and some of the problems I have are a bit nit picky, some may be just personal preferences and at least one minor grievance could be because I misread something or read too fast and misunderstood something. As I mentioned in my review of "Fire In The Stars" a reader must have a great suspension of disbelief to accept the story lines in these types of novels but here, as in the first book, the whole plot is just so far out and over-the-top that no matter how much I tried I found it very difficult to believe any of it could have actually happened. While Amanda is a well written and fairly strong character I don't think I liked her quite as much as in book 1 and I thought she acted somewhat impetuously and recklessly and put herself into some dangerous positions without any real backup. I also think that not enough backstory from the African scene has been provided to adequately explain Amanda's problems and the position she has taken. Chris is a strong and likeable character but there is no way he could act the way he does and still remain a Mountie but would surely have already been booted off the force. The only characters in this book that I really liked were Matthew and the best character in the book is, of course, Kaylee.

Now my minor nit pick – I still can't figure out the significance of the title. Maybe I just missed it somewhere but I can't remember coming across a "Trickster", that I can recognize from any other literature, mythology or Indigenous culture, anywhere in the story. Perhaps I just wasn't listening but I never heard any "Lullaby" at any time either. Can someone explain this to me? Maybe I'm being a bit hard on this one but Ms Fradkin is one of my favourite Canadian authors and I was quite disappointed in this book and I look for and hope for better in subsequent books.

Nadine says

The Trickster's Lullaby is an action packed mystery thriller that explores themes of self-radicalization of Canadian youth who are groomed and recruited by terrorist groups. Fradkin dives deep into the psychology of those vulnerable to the tactics used by terrorist organizations and what these tactics might be.

What initially drew me to The Trickster's Lullaby was the author herself. Fradkin is a retired psychologist who now writes novels that explores different facets of the human psyche, more specifically why people turn bad. That is present throughout this novel. All of the characters that were accepted for the charity tour have faced many atrocities in their quest for a better life in Canada only to find that acclimating to Canadian culture brings along its own set hardships and difficulties. Fradkin also explores how young people raised in Canada can be radicalized and indoctrinated by ISIS recruiters given the relatively easy life they've lived. These recruiters are skilled manipulators who know the right things to say and know when to push and apply pressure to make their target malleable. Fradkin does a phenomenal job of communicating this potential recruitment technique by framing it in a way readers who have not experienced war and its devastating consequences could understand how someone could be converted. This is easily the best part of the novel.

I thoroughly enjoyed the multiple perspectives used to tell the story. The introduction of different perspectives was timed perfectly. At a certain point Amanda's perspective is too limited for the scope of the story, so having different perspectives and mindsets that offer more information and views on the situation gave the novel new life.

I haven't read the first novel, *Fire in the Stars*, but I think these novels can be read as standalones without losing too much of the characters and their relationships to each other. Amanda is a formidable character who will not take no for an answer. She charges headfirst into danger if there's a chance she can save a life. This quality makes her a frustrating character because a lot of the time she acts first then asks questions. However, this creates a significant amount of tension between the chapters as the reader puts together the information the characters don't have access to yet.

Overall, *The Trickster's Lullaby* is an action packed thriller that delivers more than a thrilling mystery to keep readers entertained. It also offers commentary and perspective into the psychological unknown of homegrown radicalization.

**I received an ARC from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

Breakaway Reviewers says

Chilling. Terrifyingly real read. This is movie material!

Amanda Doucette wants to do something good for immigrant teens in Canada. She wants to teach them about Canadian life, and also about each other. She sets up a five-day camping trip in the snow covered Laurentian mountains.

The teens are chosen from a variety of backgrounds and the idea is to rough it and enjoy a part of life most of them know nothing about. When you choose a person though, you cannot see into his heart, that which is written in his soul. The eyes smile but the mind is in the killing fields of ISIS. And three kids are acting increasingly strangely...

The snow trip is supposed to be a happy surprise. It just doesn't match the surprise the jihadists are planning. Then two kids disappear from camp and all hell breaks loose in the Canadian wilderness.

The author takes complete innocence, pure white snow, and slowly draws the reader into the mind of an extremist. It's a terrifying journey, especially considering who the recruiter actually is.

Brilliantly researched and written. If I could give 20 stars and force people to read this I would. Great work. Well done Ms Fradkin!

Elsa

Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review

Grace Koshida says

As part of her charity, Amanda Doucette organizes a group of culturally mixed Montreal inner-city teens to the remote Quebec wilderness for a winter camping adventure. But things go wrong when two of them go missing. Luc Prevost is a young man with a history of drug abuse and was someone whom Amanda was

wary of from the start. When the group learns that a man has been killed not far from their camp, they suspect it might have been Luc. Unable to get any more information, Amanda and the group decide after a search to carry on with their outdoor adventure. But when Yasmina, an adventurous young Muslim woman also goes missing, panic begins to settle in. Did Luc and Yasmina run off together?

With the help of her journalist friend Matthew Goderich and RCMP Constable Chris Tymko, Amanda tries to collect information about Luc and Yasmina's motivations and soon learns about the self-radicalization of Canadian youth and how they are groomed and recruited by terrorist groups. The story then turns into a national security nightmare. It is a race against time for Amanda to save both Luc and Yasmina and to stop a homegrown terrorist attack in Canada's capital city, Ottawa.

This was a thrilling read and another fine addition to the Amanda Doucette mystery series.

I received this ARC from Netgalley and Dundurn Press in exchange for an honest review.

Rosemary Standeven says

This is an addictive and compelling thriller, that is very difficult to put down until the last page is read. It starts innocently enough as a planned adventure in the Canadian wilderness for disadvantaged teenagers – most of whom are recent asylum seekers from war-torn countries. The idea is to expose these young adults to the glories of Canadian nature, to challenge them physically and socially, and to allow them to escape the problems of their past and their everyday lives, at least for a short time.

The organiser, Amanda, is escaping her own hell formed by her experience in Nigeria, under attack from Boko Harum. Helping other damaged people is how she hopes to heal herself. Unfortunately, some of the teenagers have agendas that are quite different to what Amanda has planned, and her help is not always appreciated. First one teenager goes missing – then a second. Amanda ropes in two friends – Chris the policeman, and Matthew, the journalist – to find out what has happened to these youngsters before their inexperience of the Canadian winter and wilderness kills them. All too quickly, the hunt for the lost teens turns into a national security nightmare, and no-one is safe. Amanda – never one to trust lightly – discovers once again that appearances can be unimaginably deceiving. Amanda, Chris and Matthew are met with silence and stone walls at every turn – from the teenagers, the parents and even the police.

The characters in this book are all very believable and well rounded. Each has their particular reasons for acting the way they do, but their reasons are often well hidden from those around them. The plot twists and turns as more of the characters' motivations are exposed.

As the story unfolds, it becomes horrifyingly apparent what a Sisyphean task the security forces have around the world in trying to keep a lid on terrorist activity. If the experts can't cope, then what chance do Amanda and her friends have? And how many deaths will there be by the end of the book?

I received this copy from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review
