



Bitter Harvest

Sheila Connolly

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Now that Meg Corey's apples have been harvested and sold, she's enjoying some free time. But when the small but annoying mishaps plaguing her start turning sinister, Meg begins to worry that her first harvest may be her last.

Bitter Harvest Details

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From Reader Review Bitter Harvest for online ebook

Jonathan says

Very good, however I wish the author would have tied up a few more loose ends in the conclusion. I will continue with this series.

Ian says

Five books down and the sleepy little town of Granford, Massachusetts was starting to look like Detroit (the murder capital of the United States). Thankfully Book Five departs from all the murder and manages to steer the mystery in a different direction.

With her first harvest behind her, Meg starts to notice that things are going wrong. On their own they don't seem like much but when taken together, Meg begins to suspect someone is targeting her. She needs to find out who is out to get her, and more importantly why.

Bitter Harvest is probably the book in this series I have enjoyed the most. It's the most subtle and nuanced book to date and definitely one for fans of cozy mysteries.

Elizabeth says

This is the 5th book in Sheila Connolly's Orchard Mystery series. Meg and Bree are finished with the apple harvest, and can have some down time before getting ready for the next year's season. Only strange little acts of vandalism begin happening. At the same time Meg finds a 200 year old embroidered sampler in the back of a closet. She cannot figure out why it is in her house because the sampler was done by someone not related to the Warren family who built the house and whose ancestors have lived in it for 200 years. In doing the genealogy of the sampler's stitcher she learns how she connects to the Warren family, and she also learns of a genetic disease that is still present today in descendants.

The author raises awareness about Batten's Disease, a genetic disease that always ends up with affected children dying. I have cared for several children with this, it is a devastating disease.

✧ Jennifer says

This book had a very different plot, centred around deciphering a found embroidered sampler. It was interesting, although way too much internal dialogue for me - I found myself skimming more than a couple of times. But the characters have become increasingly more likeable with each book and I'll definitely read the next in the series.

Debbie says

I really am enjoying this series and this was a good winter read. Although it mentions Christmas a few times it is not a Christmas story, but it is still a good mystery. The character development has been great so far. I like keeping the same group and just weaving a few new faces in and out, here and there.

Kaye says

Just the thing for a warm summer evening..Meg and Seth are caught in a snowstorm in Meg's old farmhouse.

Jennifer says

I liked this much more than the previous book. I liked that there was a mystery without having a death to deal with. I was surprised how the sampler ended up tying in to the vandalism at her home. Like Bree and Seth I was getting a little irritated with Meg and her waffling. When she finally got over herself and apologized to everyone it was much better. I was glad they did not try to make the love triangle thing happen. Bree was hilarious in this book. I was heartbroken to find out that the Taylors keep losing children because of a genetic disease. Donna's reasoning for the vandalism made sense, in a desperate sort of way. Overall, very enjoyable.

Julie P says

When is a mystery not a murder mystery? When no murder takes place. Sheila Connolly's latest outing with orchard farmer Meg Corey is a mystery without a murder, and that's no bad thing. Winter is downtime for an apple orchard farmer, a time to take stock of your stock, of your life, and to catch up on paperwork that was held until the harvest was in. A blizzard, power outage, and a dead furnace leave Meg and her handyman cum love interest Seth Chapin plenty of time to take stock of Meg's colonial farmhouse. During their inspection of one of the front bedrooms they discover an antique sampler shoved in the back corner of a closet lying there undiscovered for well over 100 years. This discovery coupled with a series of odd, almost vindictive events forces Meg to try and figure out the sampler's origins and meaning, as well as uncover who is causing problems around the farm. Once you have suspended disbelief that no one would have found this sampler in the many years of people occupying the house, you'll find the book that much more enjoyable. More genealogy mystery than murder mystery, this cozy is best read in the middle of summer because Connolly so fully evokes the winter weather that I found myself shivering as I read - and it's August!

Dawn says

Meg has harvested and sold her first apple crop. It's been a long year and she is enjoying her time off while her farm manager is finishing the accounting to determine if they have made a profit. When a winter storm hits Meg's furnace dies and the power goes out. Luckily her close friend Seth is able to open the fireplace

flue and help her get a fire going. He also helps her begin cleaning many of the unused rooms in her house. While wiping out a corner on a high closet shelf Meg comes across a silk and lined sampler that appears to have been hidden away for a hundred years. She is puzzled not to recommend any of the names on the sampler despite having been found in her family home. As the winter storm hits Meg also finds herself experiencing what could be called a bout of bad luck. Things take a turn when Meg finds herself locked in the unheated barn overnight. Without any idea of who or why anyone could be angry with her.

I loved this book. I will say that my enjoyment of this series has not been consistent. I have enjoyed each book, but not each book is as good as a couple have been. This book combined my interest in genealogy and mystery. I also liked that the author was able to write a great cozy mystery without another murder in a small town. The characters in this book are well-developed. When new characters are introduced you immediately have a sense of who they are and perhaps, why. The setting is great. I love old farms and this book (series) plays right into that. This book could definitely stand alone, but over all this series is worth reading. I look forward to reading book 6.

Brooke says

So far this is my least favorite in the series. No murder and lacking action. Hopefully Sour Apples will end the series in a positive light.

Hilary (A Wytch's Book Review) says

It is Winter and the harvest is over, Meg, Seth and Bree should be able to relax but things are going wrong - just small things at first, the goats get out, a window doesn't shut etc. Then a blizzard is forecast and Meg's furnace packs in! Seth will be able to fix it - but they need to get through the weather first and still niggling things are happening. Maybe the item that Meg discovers in a closet can help solve all the problems.

Obsidian says

I have finally finished all of the "An Orchard Mystery" novels to date and found myself not pleased with this novel or the next one, "Sour Apples".

Readers please ensure that you read the series in order to make sure you don't go into the series completely cold. This newest novel features protagonist Meg finishing up her first harvest of the orchard. "Bitter Harvest" has our main protagonist Meg Corey putting her first harvest behind her. Meg though is starting to wonder about whether she has what it takes to make her orchard profitable as well as if her relationship with Seth Chapin is actually what she needs at this point in her life. Meg is also dealing with a series of mishaps around her home and is starting to wonder if they are truly accidents, or is someone out to get her.

I ended up rating this novel just two stars because the character of Meg has just become exhausting now. Meg's dwindling charm as a character and the fact that this novel has no murder mystery but instead has Meg solving the mystery behind a decades long family massacre does not help matters either. Finally, it really was the too far out there ending that was honestly not deserved that I could not get behind. Had a lot of trepidation about reading "Sour Apples" and after finishing that novel may have to skip "Golden Malicious."

Up until this point in the series I really liked Meg. She seemed a bit quirky and had a definite chip on her shoulder and at times just got on my nerves but I honestly liked her. However, in this novel she got on my nerves with none of her prior charm that made me like her and also just made no sense at all. Meg starts waffling on her life and her relationship with Seth and I was sick of it. Frankly, I don't even understand why she had any angst about Seth. As it is I am starting to feel as if that character is too good for her.

Meg's relationship with Bree is also getting tiresome. Meg's constant griping to Bree to do the books to see if the orchard made a profit made no sense to me. Is that not something that should be done the entire time? I was so confused by that. Also Bree and Meg both have the exact same personality so there was no relief from one or both of them being in a mood.

Also Meg's inability to just take time away from her business to do the bare minimum of fixing up for her home is also getting tiresome. Yes we get it Meg, it costs a lot to fix up your house. However, you have the ability to get money through her last adventure so her crying poor is just not cutting it anymore.

Although there was not a typical murder mystery for Meg to solve, she does take time out to 'solve' the death of a family that her family was related to peripherally. The ending in my opinion was quite lackluster along with the resolution to Meg determining who is behind her accidents.

Sara says

No death in this, but an interesting background story for this series. Can't wait to start on the next installment.

Tara says

I enjoy mysteries a lot and overall this series came at times when I needed 'cozy mysteries'. I needed to read something that wasn't too intense and I followed the series to a certain point. One of the reasons for the two stars is that I found the dialogue with the main characters to be emotionally unhealthy. Their responses are sympathetic instead of empathetic and not in a way I would like to be spoken to when sharing my story. People do speak to each other like this in real life and when it comes to the main characters I expect that they demand and communicate in a way that is true to life but at the same time emotionally healthy. The culprits are about the only characters I expect to speak unhealthily.

Kait Carson says

I've been a fan of this series from the start. I enjoy the rural setting and find the characters both likable and realistic.

Bitter Harvest is a true mystery, not a murder mystery. In this book, Meg is threatened by events. Small happenings that taken together are chilling but apart smack of coincidences. Worse, there is no obvious villain, unless you count the western Massachusetts winter. The subplot concerns an antique sampler stitched by a 12-year old ancestor of Meg's that tells a heartbreaking tale of death. On a stormy night, all of these elements come together leaving Meg, Seth, and Bree to resolve them.

This is a wonderful read in which we get to know the nuances of Meg's and Seth's relationship and glimpse behind the curtain into the whys of their behavior.

It takes a writer as skilled as Connolly to weave these threads together and solve this mystery while leaving us at least one tantalizing clue that will need to be resolved in the future by Meg and Seth.
