



## For Better or Worse

*Donna Huston Murray*

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Men have once again become an issue for amateur sleuth Ginger Barnes—men who abuse their wives, men capable of murder, and men who ask her out.

While working on a DIY project at her newlywed daughter's house, a bag of bricks is thrown from the neighboring third-story window. Next, pops that sound like muffled gunshots have Gin racing for her phone. Eric, who lives in the house with his grandmother, claims she's obsessed with mystery novels. Yet after the septuagenarian falls down a flight of stairs, she's so frantic to keep Eric away that Gin must intervene. Was the fall actually attempted murder?

In her husband's eyes, Cissie Voight cannot do anything right. Gin occasionally helps the frazzled young mother, and when she needs a dresser carried upstairs, Gin brings Eric along. Bad move! The electricity between the two new acquaintances sparks a chilling premonition. This time Gin's good intentions will produce grave consequences—for everyone involved.

## For Better or Worse Details

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Author : Donna Huston Murray

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## From Reader Review For Better or Worse for online ebook

### **Elissa says**

Faced with an excess number (hmmm, I'm thinking anything above zero might qualify here) of overbearing, obnoxious and possessive men, several perfectly nice but easily cowed women, and a pair of toddlers, the Law of Awareness suddenly comes into play. You know the one. Having not seen too many green Toyotas on the road, that's the color you choose for your new Celica; and suddenly every other car you see happens to be a green Celica.

This is my very first Ginger Barnes mystery although it is the 8th in the series and the novel starts out like solid "good" fiction. In fact I was several chapters into the story before I remembered this was supposed to be a "cozy." A certain lightness of tone as a couple squabbled gave itself away but without disturbing that solid and well-rounded feel. But don't let that deft touch with characters and plot fool you into thinking this is lighthearted! There are some serious issues dealt with here (no spoilers but the clues are there!) and serious solutions presented as well. Plan on exercising those gray cells with this one!

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### **DJ Sakata says**

Favorite Quotes:

A transparent haze of colorless hair exposed the shape of the tiny woman's skull while sagging puffs of flesh made her appear to be melting.

Photographs were snapped as if baby Jack were the reincarnation of Elvis.

'My mother doesn't cook,' Chelsea tried to explain. 'She makes food.'

My Review:

I could kick myself for not noticing this series until it reached the eighth installment, but while prior knowledge was not necessary as the book stood well on its own, I am sure I would have gleaned great delight in having also read the first seven as well. I was well pleased and reveled in this engaging and cleverly crafted mystery that was chock-full of quirky and intriguing characters. Written primarily from a first person POV, I adored the tactless and curious Ginger, her inner musings and insightful observations were ceaselessly amusing and entertaining. Ms. Murray's writing and storylines were interesting, pleasantly delivered, easy to follow, well-paced, and often delectably humorous. Each character was colorfully detailed in a knowable manner. I enjoyed every page and greedily want to read all her words.

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### **Emily says**

When should you mind your own beeswax and when should you butt in?Ginger Barnes is a Main Line woman of a certain age, recently widowed with grown kids who considers herself the consummate problem-

solver (and definitely not a buttinski). Ginger knows the right thing to do when presented with heavy issues - she tackles them head on because helping others is the right thing to do. Ginger is helping her daughter with a home repair project and gets involved with two neighbors: an elderly woman with a nephew who may have nefarious intentions, and an overwhelmed new mom whose husband is abusive. A friend of a friend also needs a babysitter for his grandson, and Ginger starts piecing together some erratic behavior by the kid's parents.

This was the first book I've read in the series. I love Ginger! She's a character with true character. She makes me want to retire early and become a suburban sleuth. The dialogue is peppy and not trite. Donna Huston Murray's writing handles the weightier issues frankly and responsibly. If you like the Stephanie Plum novels, the Main Line Mysteries would be a good choice for a new series.

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### **Suspense Magazine says**

Ginger (a.k.a. Gin) Barnes is back after a much-too-long hiatus and I couldn't be happier. In "For Better or Worse," the eighth in author Donna Huston Murray's Main Line mystery series, Gin is working hard to get her life back on track after the death of her husband three years ago. Rather than sit around, the always handy-around-the-house Gin has volunteered to help her daughter, Chelsea, and husband, Bobby, with renovations on their new home. Her first task is retiling the kitchen floor. As Gin is measuring, she's startled to hear a loud sound outside. She discovers that someone has thrown a garbage bag loaded with clothes and bricks from the third floor of the house next door. Bricks? Yes, bricks. This is followed a short time later by what sounds like gunfire. The neighbors turn out to be the elderly and crochety Mrs. Zumstein and her grandson. Gin is starting to wonder what kind of a neighborhood her daughter and son-in-law have moved into.

Her misgivings ratchet up when she meets two of the other neighborhood couples, who each have a young child. Cissie Voight and her controlling husband Ronald are Chelsea and Bobby's neighbors, and although Cissie loves her baby dearly, she's having trouble adjusting to motherhood. The fact that Ronald criticizes everything she does only makes her miserable, as Gin finds out firsthand.

The other couple is Susan and Mike Swenson, parents of 18-month-old Jack. Susan has taken a part-time job and Gin is roped into babysitting, a situation Mike is not happy about.

When one of the neighbors is critically injured and dies, it's up to Gin to unravel the mysteries of all three households so that justice can be served.

"For Better or Worse" is a roller coaster ride of a mystery with believable characters who could be anyone's next door neighbors. Lots of twists and turns and more than one surprise at the end. A real treat for cozy readers.

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### **Lisa Morin says**

For Better or Worse is a riveting story that will leave you begging for more.

The main character, Gin, is a down to earth, independent woman who isn't afraid to stick her nose in other people's business.

While doing a DIY project for her daughter, Gin encounters some strange goings on.

An elderly neighbor is throwing bricks out her window, a young neighbor is finding it difficult to live with a controlling husband, and of course, there is another set of characters who are just plumb nuts.

I grabbed For Better or Worse from NetGalley, the description was interesting and I was intrigued.

I read it all in one sitting, I just couldn't put it down.

I highly recommend this book to any cozy mystery fans, you will not be disappointed.

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### **Carol Keen says**

A four-star read. This book does have abuse situations. They are handled okay, but I hadn't expected that. Ginger is an okay character. I didn't dislike her, but she wasn't my favorite at first. She did grow on me after a bit. It is the 8th book in a series, but for this book that didn't have any bearing on this book, it stands alone without a problem.

My copy came via Net Galley. My review is all my own left of my own free will.

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### **Kristina says**

For Better or Worse by Donna Huston Murray is A Ginger Barnes Main Line Mystery (Book Eight). Ginger Barnes, known as a problem solver, is a widow with her son in college and her daughter is newly married (empty nester). Ginger is installing tile in the kitchen of her daughter's new home and soon finds herself involved in two of the neighbor's problems. Mrs. Maisie Zumstein is an elderly woman who has been acting strangely. She dumped a bag of bricks out of upper window (startling Ginger) and then Ginger hears strange popping noises (reminiscent of gun shots). Eric Zumstein claims his grandmother has a fascination with mystery novels (methinks there is more going on). But then Maisie takes a fall down her stairs and claims Eric is responsible. Cissie Voight is a new mother having trouble coping with a new infant and her household responsibilities. Her husband wants a clean home, a dolled-up wife, and a hot dinner when he arrives home (unrealistic with a newborn). When Ronald Voight is not pleased, he takes it out on Cissie. Can Ginger help Cissie and Maisie? Ginger is offered a job as a part-time babysitter for George Elliot's (friend fixed her up with George) grandson, Jack. Ginger enjoys taking care of Jack, but soon discovers that the parents have a secret. In between DIY projects at her daughter's house, Ginger delves into the situations. Can she help Cissie escape an abusive situation? Did Eric harm Maisie? What is up with Jack's parents?

For Better or Worse is the first book I have read in A Ginger Barnes Main Line Mystery series. All the information I need is provided in the book. The POV switches between various characters in the book. I wish the author had told the story in third person or from Ginger's point-of-view. It is confusing when the POV switches regularly. A reader must stop to figure out which character is now talking. This took me out of the story (and had me frustrated). I felt that the story lacked focus. While there are several mysteries or "problems" in the story, they are not the main focus. More time is devoted to Ginger and her dog, Fideaux (they go for many walks). The author does address some serious issues in the book and handles them well. I was a little baffled as to why Ginger was scared of the "census guy" (as she called him) and the man walking his dog. I found it odd and did not seem to go with Ginger's character. Ginger comes across as a strong, determined, independent and friendly woman who likes to help people (she is a people person). She tackles situations head on, but she can be reckless at times. The ending felt incomplete. Some questions remained unanswered. While For Better or Worse tackles some sensitive (tough) issues it does contain light hearted

humor (this is a light cozy mystery). Many cozy mystery readers will enjoy For Better for Worse and A Ginger Barnes Main Line Mystery series.

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### **Debra says**

I read this ARC for a honest review from NetGalley. This is my first book from this author, it was good not your traditional cozy,spouse abuse,elder abuse,I will go back & read the first book since This was #8 ,I felt kinda lost with the characters. I love the cover,it attracted my attention from the start.

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### **Kerrie says**

I spent my time in this book exasperated by Ginger Barnes and her tendency to interfere in the lives of others, and in admiration of her willingness to do so.

There is another plot strand: Ginger agrees to take on some childminding while a young mother seeks work. However the child's father is at first opposed to the scheme and then reluctant in his agreement. Gin has the feeling that he is following her and watching her.

The three main plot lines intermingle nicely with the connecting point being Gin's daughter.

There is a lot in this book about how men treat their wives, some thought provoking stuff.

A good read. Probably better if I had met Ginger Barnes before.

Due for publication January 10 2018, available for pre-order. (Amazon)

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### **Linda Buzard-Moffitt says**

A good read for My 1st book from this Author. I usually don't read books from a series out of order, but I wasn't lost at all. I would love to read more from this Author. I really liked the story and the characters especially Ginger Barnes. This was an attention keeping story with a bit of suspense.

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### **Debbie Wainey says**

There are several stories at play in this novel, including domestic violence, elder abuse, widowhood, child custody, and dealing with an empty nest. What could be a recipe for disaster is actually well-handled by the main character, Gin, as if it were all in a day's work to juggle so many hot issues. Gin assists family, friends and neighbors in a kind and insightful manner, demonstrating that paying attention and not rushing forward can prove most beneficial in many situations.

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## **Darinda says**

I received an ARC ebook from NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.

Ginger Barnes is working on a DIY project at her daughter's house when she gets involved with some of the neighbors. One is a frazzled young mother with a controlling husband. The other is a young man who is helping to care for his grandmother, who ends up in the hospital after a fall down some stairs. Meanwhile, after Ginger's best friend tries to set her up with a new fella, Ginger finds herself working as a babysitter for the man's grandson... though Ginger suspects something is off with the parents. With all these new people in her life, Ginger tows the line between being nosy and keeping her mouth shut versus stepping in when something is really going on.

Ginger Barnes is a widow with a recently married daughter and a son in college. She enjoys walking her dog and working on DIY projects... and occasional sleuthing. Ginger seems to question most everyone and everything she encounters. This was a well-written character that seemed real, with real life worries and concerns.

This was a quick, lighthearted book. Great for fans of cozy mysteries. Though the story is written in an easy reading and lighthearted way, some difficult topics are discussed, namely domestic abuse.

This was the first book I've read in this series. It was a good read, and I look forward to reading more about Ginger Barnes and her amateur sleuthing.

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## **Peggy says**

Overall this was a good book. There were a few things that I did not like in it. I found Gin, the main character of this mystery novel to be a little annoying. She likes to stick her nose into other people's business and then tries to fix them to how she sees fit. Yes, there are real people like that in the world but I find them annoying too. :-) However, that aspect of the character does not completely overwhelm Gin. She does have other likable qualities and the annoying ness is what advances the plot. My other complaints are (without giving away the plot) a few people who in their professions should be keeping things confidential (by ethics and legally) just break that confidentiality to someone they have just met. (Again, it advances the plot but those type people in real life get in major trouble for those type things.) I also found the timeline to be difficult at times to follow. It was very choppy. Sometimes things that normally would take a few weeks in real life seemed to happen in a day in the book and other times, the plot suddenly skips ahead by a few weeks. It isn't horrible and doesn't truly affect the plot but it is one of my pet peeves.

All that said, I enjoyed this book. Most of the characters were likeable/relatable and the ones that weren't, were not supposed to be. The plot moves along decently. I liked that Gin realized she knew very little about domestic violence (but I was not thrilled with the implication that all victims have low self esteem and that is how they get trapped in a relationship. Domestic violence can happen to anyone. Although many abusers do find someone who starts out with low self esteem, many start with a confident victim and whittle away at that confidence until the victim has none left.) I LOVED the inclusion of the real hotline at the end of the book but I would have liked to see the actual number included in the plot too. The more times people see it,

the better! The issue of spousal abuse was handled well. It was just heavy/serious enough to get the reader to think without being too graphic or changing the nature of the book. It is tough to find that balance in a book that is supposed to be entertaining but the author did it.

This book was the 8th mystery in the Ginger Barnes Mainline Mysteries series but the first I have read. It read very well as a stand alone book and I don't feel like I was missing anything but not having read 1-7 first. But maybe I just don't know what I missed too. Good series do that! I am planning on reading the others to find out. I enjoyed this book despite my little annoyances and will seek this author's work out again. Give her a try!

(I received a free copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.)

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### **Diana Hockley says**

The is the first Ginger Barnes mystery that I have read, and I enjoyed it so much that I downloaded the first in the "Ginger" mysteries – and liked it just as much!

Ginger Barnes is a thoroughly likable heroine, someone with whom I could imagine being friends - nosy without being over the top, as the heroines are in so many "cosy" mysteries and her dog is a delight! Having said that, this is not really a "cosy" as such and the plot tackles a very serious social problem – domestic violence. The author obviously knows her subject but manages to convey the realities of this crime with grace.

The characters in this novel – particularly Eric – are interesting and Ms Murray gives them due attention, so much so that I am anxious to know if the aforesaid achieves his full potential in the next novel.

In fact, this reader felt as though she was standing in the circle of their conversations, so vivid the imagery.

A really fine read!

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### **Annarella says**

Source: Netgalley in exchange for a honest review

A cozy mystery that is something more. A good view on social problem like domestic violence and illness with a lot of empathy for the victims.

It was my first book from this author but I will go a look for other one. Not what I was expecting but an interesting discovery

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