



# 'Twas the Knife Before Christmas

*Jacqueline Frost*

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A Christmas delight, *'Twas the Knife Before Christmas* will charm the stockings off readers of Joanne Fluke and Leslie Meier.

*It's out of the cupcake tin, into the fire for Holly White's best friend, Caroline. Can Holly clear Caroline's name in time to go caroling?*

When a body turns up in the dumpster behind Caroline's Cupcakes, Holly White is horrified to learn her best friend Caroline is the main suspect. Everyone in town, including Mistletoe, Maine's sheriff, saw Caroline fighting with the victim on the night of his death. Worse, Caroline's fingerprints are all over the murder weapon, a custom-designed marble rolling pin.

Now, just ten days before Christmas, Holly's up to her jingle bells in holiday shenanigans and in desperate need of a miracle. Juggling extra shifts at her family's Christmas tree farm and making enough gingerbread jewelry to satisfy the crowd is already more than she can handle—and now she has to find time to clear her best friend of murder. Add in her budding relationship with the sheriff, and run-ins with an ex-fiancé looking to make amends, and Holly's ready to fly south until springtime.

But her Sherpa-lined mittens come off when Caroline is taken into custody. Can Holly wrap up the case in time for Christmas...even after she gains the true killer's attention? Find out in *'Twas the Knife Before Christmas*, Jacqueline Frost's second pine-scented Christmas Tree Farm mystery.

## 'Twas the Knife Before Christmas Details

Date : Published November 13th 2018 by Crooked Lane Books

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Author : Jacqueline Frost

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## From Reader Review 'Twas the Knife Before Christmas for online ebook

### Becky says

This is my favorite Christmas series. It's so fun and FULL of Christmas! Holly sure gets herself in a lot of trouble trying to prove her best friends innocence. Author Jacqueline Frost sure does know how to write great characters and a perfect cozy town. To Reindeer Games to additions being made, Holly isn't the one spying through out the town. Come see what all is going on in Mistletoe this time!

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### Berit??? says

*A charming Christmas cozy dripping with holiday cheer!*

*A town called mistletoe, a Christmas tree farm called Reindeer Games, and a cat named Cindy Lou Who are just a few of the things that make this a Christmas must read! This is the second book in the Christmas Tree Farm cozy mystery series... it can be read as a standalone, but I would strongly encourage you to read the first book as well! This really is a cozy mystery series packed full of Yuletide joy!*

*Holly has settled in after being home in mistletoe Maine for the past year.... when a body is found in a bowl full of peppermint candies and Holly's BFF Caroline is the number one suspect... Holly is on the case to prove her Bestiess innocence... this was a smart mystery that made me put on my sleuthing cap...*

*The setting of this book is holiday perfection, the characters are fun and festive, and the mystery was marvelously plodded... I strongly encourage you to add this charming series to your holiday TBR, and you have an entire year to get caught up on the series, until the next book!*

*\*\*\* many thanks to Crooked Lane books for my copy of this book \*\*\**

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### Kimie says

I have been looking forward to this book since I finished The Twelve Slays of Christmas last year, and was thrilled when this one came out in time for the holidays. I loved the main character Holly White. She is the queen of multi-tasking, as she juggles helping her parents run the tree farm during the busy holiday season, taking over as head decision-maker for the new inn (currently under construction), managing her in-demand jewelry business, and trying to clear her best friend of murder charges.

The mystery itself was a good one...plenty of suspects, and I liked that Holly actually goes out and tries to pro-actively interview people and learn things, instead of just occasionally stumbling onto a clue, like some cozy heroines are prone to do. Maybe the police should consider hiring her as a "special consultant". I also enjoyed the fact that the police were actually competent, and arrived at the same conclusions themselves.

I love this series enough to read it even without a crime. I enjoy reading about the (non-sleuthing) activities of Holly and her friends and family just as much as the mystery element of the story. I'd happily pick up each new installment around Christmas just to enjoy all the fun and excitement at Reindeer Games!

As an added bonus, this book included the mysterious contractor Christopher, who \*may or may not\* bear more than a passing resemblance to a certain red-clad visitor we all look forward to at this time of year. I hope he pops in at some point in a future book!

Five out of five giants hunks of extra-sharp cheddar!

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## **Juli says**

It's Christmastime in Mistletoe, Maine once again. Holly White is gearing up for all the holiday festivities and helping out with the family business, Reindeer Games Christmas Tree Farm. They are renovating and expanding to add an Inn for guests, but construction is way behind schedule. She's also trying to cheer up a friend who just had a really bad experience at a benefit dinner. Her date, the son of a local judge, behaved badly...and they had a fight. To kick off the holiday season, everyone goes to the town's tree lighting ceremony. What should be a fun holiday gimmick -- guessing the number of holiday mints in a giant glass bowl -- turns for the worst when Caroline's handsy date is found dead inside the glass bowl, covered in Christmas candy. Not only is that a terrible waste of lovely mint candy.....but Caroline is a murder suspect. A knife from her cupcake business emblazoned with Caroline's initials is the murder weapon. It might just take a Christmas miracle to prove that Caroline didn't stab Derek.....

This cute, enjoyable holiday cozy mystery got me in the mood for the Christmas season. :) I love the background theme of a Christmas tree farm...especially in a small town named Mistletoe. :) Finding the murder victim in a huge dish of candy was also a nice touch. I wanted the killer arrested not only for killing Derek the Handsy Jerk, but also for ruining the lighting ceremony and huge glass container of candy gimmick. I just kept imagining how pretty that big glass bowl filled with peppermints under all the lights would have been....until a body was stuffed into it. What sort of grinch does something like that? All is revealed by the end of the book! The mints however were a lost cause....

I enjoy this series. The characters are fun...from Holly White the main character clear down to Theodore the pet goat. I'm always a sucker for holiday themed cozy mysteries...and this series never fails to entertain me. The mystery is nicely paced....it's just Christmas-y enough to be fun....and there are enough twists and turns to keep the plot interesting. And, a couple special Christmas miracles are thrown in for good measure. All in all, an enjoyable holiday cozy with lots of feel-good moments. I will definitely continue reading this series!

Ho, ho, ho....Merry Christmas! :)

\*\*I voluntarily read an advanced readers copy of this book from Crooked Lane via NetGalley. All opinions expressed are entirely my own. My guess....there were 20,947 candies in the giant bowl before the addition of a Dead Derek.\*\*

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## **James says**

It's Christmastime both in my current reality and in Mistletoe, Maine... but a whole year has passed since the debut book in the 'A Christmas Tree Farm Mystery' series by Jacqueline Frost. This second book, 'Twas the Knife Before Christmas, picks up with Holly's eventual settlement back home, a new friendship with reporter Ray, adventures with best friend Caroline, and romance with sorta boyfriend Evan (the sheriff!). Life's good until Derek, a guy who was too handsy with Caroline, ends up knifed in a candy display. Did Caroline kill him in revenge? Her high-powered father? A stalker crush who seems to want to protect her? Or some

colleague of Derek's who thought he was a threat? Holly is determined to protect her bestie but she starts getting threatening notes again just like last time. Are the crimes connected?

I won this book through a cozy giveaway, but I went back and ordered the first one on my own so I could be ready and current on the series. I'm thrilled to have stumbled upon it and would definitely recommend the series as a definite holiday read. Holly is a great protagonist who only has a few pushy moments while trying to solve the murder; they're necessary and make her even more relatable. The town is visibly pictured as a result of Frost's wonderful descriptions and writing style. The little fun factors (Theodore the goat, Cindy Lou Who the cat, Cookie the rich neighbor... the list goes on) make it even more enjoyable.

The murder is clever. The list of suspects is believable. The investigation is paced well -- not too slow, not too fast. The way the criminal is captured is kinda cool. And the resolution to all the stories is a great end to the book. I am thrilled about the character of Libby. She seems like she could really be an asset in the town but also shake it up a little. Only 23 but quite smart and worldly already. I'm very excited about this new series but sad I'll have to wait a full year to read the next one. I'm also curious if the series will skip a year again or pick up sometime mid-year. Kudos to the author and publisher for providing a copy thru the giveaway contest. 4.25 stars!

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## **Carrie says**

'Twas the Knife Before Christmas by Jacqueline Frost is the second book of the cozy A Christmas Tree Farm Mystery series. Each book in the series has it's own mystery to be solved so they can be understood as a standalone. However, the characters do return from the first book so there is a bit of character building carried over from book to book.

In the first book of the series Holly White had returned back home to her parents Christmas Tree farm in Mistletoe, Maine after her fiance had broken up with her two weeks before their wedding. After jumping in and helping her parents to take her mind off of her troubles Holly had begun to feel at home again and decided to stay in Mistletoe.

Now a year later Holly has made plenty of friends in the small town and has a slight love interest in her life with things going well for her and her parents business. However when a body is discovered that Holly's friend Caroline had been seen fighting with the night before along with her monogrammed knife Holly finds herself again looking to find a killer to clear her friend's name.

A Christmas Tree Farm Mystery series is definitely one for those that absolutely adore the Christmas holiday. Each book is just filled to the brim with holiday goodness from the events going on to Holly's pet cat, Cindy Lou Who. As silly as some may seem it never fails to put a smile on my face and buried within all of the over the top holiday happenings there's also a pretty solid mystery to solve to keep readers guessing and turning the pages. Can't wait to see what happens next to Holly and the residents of Mistletoe.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

For more reviews please visit <https://carriesbookreviews.com/>

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## **Eve Recinella (Between The Bookends) says**

Unfortunately, I didn't quite love this one as much as I did the first book in the series. The mystery aspect was well done. I still really enjoy that setting and the overall festive feeling. It has a great cast of characters. Holly is still a very likable heroine.

However, the whole Ethan and Holly "romance" was just odd. At the end of the last book they kissed, and it seemed like they were headed towards Coupeville, then at the beginning of this book, you find out that after that kiss they have barely said two words to each other for the entire year. Halfway through you find out the reason why (and it was kind of a weak excuse in my opinion), then things seem to be more on track (we even get a kiss AGAIN), and then at the end Ethan basically tells her the next year is going to be the same as the previous one. He will be gone a lot so they won't see each other much. He won't be able to talk to her about it. At this point, I would rather see Holly get with Ray since they seem to have WAY more chemistry together as friends than her and Ethan.

Last, I said this in my last review, but this book would have been a bit more special if the author had included some of the recipes for the things mentioned in the book. All in all, it was an OK read, and I enjoyed it enough to pick up the next book in the series.

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### **Shelly says**

I love holiday themed cozies and *Twas the Knife Before Christmas* was no exception. The book is endearing and overflowing with Christmas spirit. The characters are fun and likable. The story takes place in Mistletoe, Maine where Holly makes jewelry and manages her family's Christmas Tree farm and friends Cookie and Caroline own a successful bakeshop. Caroline is suspected of murder after a very public disagreement with a man who got quite "handsy" with her is found dead in the town square. Holly is determined to clear her best friend's name, even if it means putting herself in danger. I love the author's descriptions and engaging writing style.

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### **Melissa Rose says**

After having finished *Twelve Slays of Christmas* last week, I decided to head back into Mistletoe immediately and read *'Twas the Knife Before Christmas*, the second instalment in the Christmas Tree Farm Mystery series.

I was not let down.

First off, once again, the descriptions of Mistletoe and the Christmas Tree farm were beautifully cosy; I deeply regret that I couldn't just hop into my book and see Reindeer Games for myself. All of the details from the farm's decor to the smells of the Hearth put me right into a festive mood.

As for the characters, they were all fun to return to and follow on this adventure - despite a few minor annoyances that I had with Holly.

However, what I enjoyed most about 'Twas the Knife Before Christmas was the obvious improvement of the author since the first book. This instalment felt more intense and dangerous in a way, but not so much so that it would be out of the 'cozy' category.

Finally, What really brought the spark of life to this novel, was the return of Allyson Ryan as the narrator; her expert ability to create separate character voices (including male) brought another dimension to the story.

Overall, there is nothing of note that I disliked about 'Twas the Knife Before Christmas; the improved writing, the cozy setting, and fantastic mystery, all make this a wonderful story to settle in with during the Holiday season.

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### **Sabine says**

Grab a delicious hot drink and get cozy on your comfy couch. Once again it is time for an intriguing mystery set in Mistletoe, Maine.

At the big tree lighting ceremony in town, Derek, a local investor is found dead in a big glass bowl filled with peppermints. He was seen on TV having a quarrel with Caroline, Holly's friend, the night before and of course this makes Caroline the top suspect. When Holly starts asking questions to find the real murderer she starts getting threats and it escalates quickly from there.

Mistletoe is a wonderful setting to this fast paced mystery and the cozy Christmas magic that is spread is unrivaled. The characters are so likable and fun that I wish I could visit Mistletoe and celebrate Christmas with them.

I requested this book from NetGalley and am thankful that Crooked Lane Books and the author provided me with an advance copy.

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### **Linda says**

Reindeer Games is a beautiful Christmas Tree Farm in Mistletoe, Maine, and it's the perfect winter wonderland to escape to for lots of fun and relaxation. Construction is underway for the new Inn that Holly White will manage, and her family hopes it will be ready by Christmas Day.

Alarm bells start ringing when a local investor, who's also a womanizer, is found dead in a huge bowl of peppermint candy at the tree lighting ceremony. Caroline, Holly's best friend, is the top suspect, so Holly starts asking questions around town even though Sheriff Evan Gray, her boyfriend, tells her to let him handle the investigating. I found the writing top-notch as the author skillfully ribbons suspicious characters, including Santa Claus's, throughout the brilliant plot. Threats to Holly snowball as the real killer's tension

escalates.

The story is a pageturner! Rich in details, the originality of the setup of the town of Mistletoe and the Reindeer Games Tree Farm is simply captivating. I want to visit and stay at the new Inn! The characters are written so friendly and likable, or they're detestable. I loved the magical ending for Holly. I'm excited about book three and looking forward to reading it.

I reviewed a digital arc provided by NetGalley and Crooked Lane. Thank you.

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### **Tari says**

All I can say is this was the most magical Christmas book I've read this season! I love that Holly and Evan are growing closer. Now Ray, the guy from the first book who has been puppy-dog friendly to Holly but she made it clear she didn't want to date him, has finally found someone a little closer to his own age. And so has his mom, but he's less than thrilled over that.

It was getting close to Christmas and a guy that Holly's friend Caroline was seen with arguing at a benefit dinner was found dead in the big bowl of peppermints by the town's Christmas tree. With Caroline as the prime suspect, Holly couldn't help but investigate this one. But the killer apparently knew she was on to them, since Holly had a few close calls herself, and the showdown to end all showdowns!

I loved the side story with Evan's sister but the magical part came closer to the end of the book. I think Holly truly believed that Santa Claus had granted her and her family the perfect Christmas! I highly recommend this book (and the first in series) as just the perfect Christmas cozies!

Disclaimer: I voluntarily read and reviewed an ARC of this book provided by the publisher and NetGalley, and my opinions are my own.

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### **Lisa Morin says**

Mistletoe, Maine sounds like the perfect Christmas paradise. Unfortunately for Holly White, things are far from perfect.

Her romance is on the rocks and her best friend is accused of murder.

In *Twas the Knife Before Christmas*, the second in this wonderful series, you will become involved in a devious murder mystery that will keep you reading until you finish.

There are so many laugh out loud moments that I couldn't put the book down.

All the characters are fun and colorful and I simply cannot resist a Christmas themed cozy.

This book hit the spot and I can't wait to see what's in store next for my friends at Reindeer Games.

I volunteered to read and review a copy of this book provided by the publisher and NetGalley.

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### **Brenda says**

Holly White's best friend, Caroline had stood up for herself even though the argument had been public and heard by everyone. But when the next morning, Derek, the person she'd been arguing with, was found

stabbed to death, thoughts immediately went to Caroline. It was made much worse by the discovery of her fingerprints on the murder weapon – and only hers. But the marble handled knife, which had her initials on it, had come from her shop – Caroline’s Cupcakes – so of course her prints would be on it...

Holly was determined to prove her friend’s innocence – but in the process directed attention to herself. The ongoing threats escalated with the Sheriff of Mistletoe demanding Holly keep away from the investigation and keep herself safe. But that just wasn’t in Holly’s nature – what would happen just a few days before Christmas in the little town of Mistletoe?

*Twas the Knife Before Christmas* is the 2nd in A Christmas Tree Farm Mystery series by Jacqueline Frost, and it was delightful! I laughed out loud on occasion, often smiled, and thoroughly enjoyed the mystery. My first by this author, and it won’t be my last! I was impressed with the way she set the scene and left small hints here and there, then threw in a twist or two! Great stuff! Highly recommended.

With thanks to NetGalley and the publisher for my digital ARC to read in exchange for an honest review.

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## **LORI CASWELL says**

### Dollycas’s Thoughts

Mistletoe, Maine, the perfect place to celebrate Christmas. Holly White’s family’s tree farm is a magical place this time of year with its Reindeer Games. All kinds of treats and festivities are planned and a contractor named Christopher has promised their new inn will be ready to open by Christmas Eve.

The first big Mistletoe event is the annual tree lighting. Everyone is gathered in the town square but when the big moment arrives the night turns from Merry to Scary. There, next to the tree is a huge candy dish full of peppermint candies and a dead body. The man was stabbed with a monogrammed custom made knife. A knife that belongs to Holly’s best friend Caroline. The deceased is the same man that got handsy with Caroline at a recent dinner and the whole town was witness to her dressing him down. With all the evidence it isn’t long before Caroline is behind bars. Holly knows her friend is no killer, she just has to prove it. But the killer is watching every move Holly makes and leaving her special warning gifts. When the gifts escalate to real harm Holly just hopes she will survive until the killer is caught.

I loved the first book in this series, *Twelve Slays of Christmas* last year, so I put this book on my reading calendar several months ago. I was so excited to start reading and the author exceeded all my expectations.

The White family are such wonderful characters. They make everyone feel right at home and try to make their tree farm experience as merry as possible. Holly hands her hands full as she has been put in charge of all the building choices for the new inn, in addition to helping her mother in the cafe and making her glass jewelry, a business that has really taken off.

I wanted to sit back with a couple of cups of hot chocolate and savor my visit to Mistletoe, but there is so much happening that was impossible. The author sets a brisk pace and fully draws the reader in. Chasing down clues, running from a creepy Claus, keeping up with the tourists, Holly takes on a wild ride, at times literally! The pages were flying.

Ms. Frost’s descriptions really take us there. A sleigh ride around the tree farm was described in such vivid detail, I was enjoying the scenery and after a scary moment, I was feeling chilled to the bone and was pulling

a blanket over myself. The blindfolded games played were also described so well. I easily pictured what was happening and was laughing at loud. Great ideas for family get-togethers too. I also enjoyed the details along the way as the inn neared completion and the entire subplot was heartwarming. I am ready to call in my reservation today.

This was an exciting holiday read, cozy mystery lovers will be overjoyed. It will also get you truly into the holiday spirit. Fun and entertaining, a book you will not want to put down. I loved it and I can't wait for next year. I already have saved a date on my calendar and added this story to my Best Reads List for 2018.

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