



Cockatiels at Seven

Donna Andrews

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It's time for more outrageous and feathered fun in the award-winning, laugh-out-loud Meg Langslow series.

When her old friend Karen drops by with two-year-old son Timmy, Meg Langslow reluctantly agrees to babysit "just for a little while." But when nightfall comes, the toddler is still in residence and Karen isn't answering any phone calls. Meg decides she must find out what's happening, so the next morning, with Timmy in tow, she retraces her friend's footsteps---and begins to suspect that Karen's disappearance is tied to at least one serious crime. Has Karen been killed or kidnapped? Is she on the run from the bad guys? Or is *she* one of the bad guys? The police don't seem to care, so Meg once again plays sleuth---this time with a toddler as her sidekick.

As usual, Meg's extended family adds to the complications in her life. What covert animal welfare project are Dad and the curmudgeonly zoologist Dr. Montgomery Blake working on---and will Meg have to make another late-night trip to bail them out of jail? Why does Meg's brother keep disappearing---is he merely trying to avoid babysitting, or is he involved in something more mysterious? Will taking care of Timmy dampen newly married Meg and Michael's enthusiasm for starting a family of their own? And are any of Meg's relatives reliable enough to be trusted with a two-year-old---especially a two-year-old whose whereabouts might be of interest to some very dangerous people?

Donna Andrews once again proves her skill as one of the funniest, most entertaining mystery authors around.

Cockatiels at Seven Details

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From Reader Review Cockatiels at Seven for online ebook

Peggy says

This is a cozy mystery. Meg Langslow is a blacksmith who lives in a small Virginia town. She is the amateur sleuth who keeps stepping into trouble. In this book an acquaintance that Meg hasn't seen a couple of years shows up unexpectedly and asks her to babysit her toddler. Meg is not a mother and is baffled why Karen would think of her as a babysitter for her son Timmy. When Karen disappears Meg not only has her hands full with Timmy, but tries to track Karen down. As always, she is surrounded by quirky relatives who add color to the stories. Meg realizes her friend was somehow mixed up in an embezzling scheme at the local college. When Meg finds her friend's ex-husband murdered, things really heat up. Throw in some exotic bird smuggling and you get a fairly entertaining cozy story.

Jonathan says

Excellent. Love, love, love this series!

George says

#9 in the professional blacksmith Meg Langslow mystery series. Newly married Meg, husband and family are settling into the large farm house farm they recently purchased. Her all ready hectic life is turned upside down when an old friend drops by with two-year-old son Timmy, asking Meg to babysit "just for a little while" and promptly disappears.

Meg's extended family adds to the complications in her life turning the home into a mini zoo with her grandfather's covert animal welfare projects. More complications are added with murder, embezzlement and missing people.

This is mystery on the very light side.

Melissa says

I enjoyed this! It might seem a little frivolous to some by the title, but who really cares about that! I thought it was interesting with the characters well drawn. I found it suspenseful and I was quite entertained. I am looking forward to reading the entire series and to the continuing escapades of the characters.

Rebecca says

Meg and Michael are just married in this one, and have moved into their rambling old Victorian house outside the college town of Caerphilly, where Michael teaches drama. The drama this summer, though, is (as usual) with Meg and her wide extended family. First, there's her father, who is spending a lot of time with his own just-discovered father, a famous and eccentric naturalist with his own nature TV show that

sometimes lands him in jail (it's a long story). When Meg starts finding terrariums of snakes in her basement, she knows things are going too far. Then there's her feckless, accidental video game company CEO Robbie, who is sneakily moving into Meg's third floor and keeps running off with their murderous dog Spike. The most drama, however, comes from Meg's old friend Karen, whom Meg hasn't seen in two years. She shows up at Meg's house with her toddler, asks Meg to watch him for a couple of hours, and then vanishes. Struggling with a highly-active toddler (Meg has no children, and after this experience may be dubious about trying for any no matter what Michael thinks), Meg goes from frustrated to worried. The college where Karen works has no idea where she is, either—but her disappearance may have something to do with the reappearance of her ex-husband. Even with a toddler in tow, Meg decides she has to investigate, as she's not sure the police are paying enough attention. And then, of course, she discovers the dead body.

I adore this series. It is so quirky and hilarious and I so want to belong to Meg's family! Even with all their annoying quirks and tendency to get tied up with duct tape by bad guys, they are charming and loyal and never, ever dull. The mystery is pretty good here, though I was suspicious of the culprit so wasn't as surprised as I might have been. I don't really care, though—read these just for the absurdity and creativity. Just delightful, and always intelligent.

Stacy says

I think Andrews is so clever coming up with plots that are not only fun and interesting, but also apply to the over-arching story of Meg, Michael, and their families. This story starts off with Meg working at her forge when a friend (Karen) whom she hadn't seen in a couple years unexpectedly stops by and desperately asks for Meg to watch her young son Timmy for a little bit. Meg says yes, Karen disappears, and soon Meg realizes there is a big problem when Karen doesn't come back and doesn't answer her phone.

Meg learns that Karen's ex, Jasper, is back in town and that he had been involved with some kind of embezzlement at the college while he was working on setting up their systems. He had been fired a couple years ago because of it but for some reason he was back and the police were looking into the college departments. They were also searching Karen's apartment. Meg found out where Jasper was staying and went to his house but he wasn't there. She met Jasper's neighbor (a man named Aubrey) who apparently used to train/breed dogs but now was breeding rare birds.

Meg got help from Karen's co-worker, Sandie. She got NO help from Karen's boss Nadine. She learned that Nadine recently bought a brand-new, expensive house that was suspiciously empty. And Nadine was planning on leaving the country. She also knew her dad and grandfather (Dr Blake) were up to something.

Meg discovers Jasper's dead body at his uncle's house. And ultimately discovers that the neighbor (Aubrey, who is really Freddy) is selling exotic birds illegally. Rob had been taking dog-choreography lessons from Freddy's aunt Aubrey. Freddy catches them (Rob, Aubrey, a fish-and-wildlife-agent, and Meg) and ties them up. He runs. They get free and Meg chases him in her car, along with her neighbor Seth Early and Karen (who unexpectedly turned up). They trap Freddy, Karen might have a broken leg, and Meg realizes that Timmy may still be in danger as a source of leverage. So she races back home where she had left Sandie watching him.

Sandie turns out to have been the one helping Jasper embezzle the money and who had killed Jasper. Jasper had been using his part of the money to fund the smuggling of the exotic birds, and when there is smuggling drugs and weapons are usually part of it too. Which is why the DEA and FBI and the US fish and wildlife services are involved.

They manage to subdue Sandie and all the bad guys are caught. But more important, Meg and Michael got a taste of having a child and while it was a rocky start, it's clear that both will be more than ready for the challenge!

FangirlNation says

In **Cockatiels at Seven** by Donna Andrews, Meg and Michael have returned from their honeymoon and back to the real world. Just as Meg is getting started again in her blacksmithing work while Michael attends orientation at Caerphilly College where he teaches in the drama department, an acquaintance she hasn't seen in over a year, Karen, stops by with her toddler son and begs Meg to take care of Jimmy for just a short while. Then she proceeds to give Meg a whole notebook full of instructions on Jimmy's care and numerous outfits of clothing and other supplies. But as the morning passes, Karen doesn't show up to pick up Jimmy. As the day grows longer, Meg begins to become alarmed and starts trying to locate Karen, whose phone keeps going to voice mail. By the next next morning, with still no response from Karen, Meg decides to go to Karen's house to try to locate the missing mother, only to learn that Karen has moved out of her previous home and into the local projects. But when Meg arrives at Karen's new home, she finds the police there. Karen is not there, but her ex-husband is, the victim of murder.

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Sara says

I love this series, but this one touches on my nightmares. Meg is trying to settle in and get some blacksmithing done when a friend she hasn't seen in a couple of years shows up and drops off a toddler for "a little while." A little while turns into several days as murder and missing persons once more intrude on the theoretically quiet life of an artisan blacksmith.

I... don't do kids so much myself, so having a friend leave their child with me for an undetermined amount of time is nightmare fuel for me. Meg performs much more gracefully under pressure than I would thanks to her collection of well meaning family and her notebook-that-tells-her-when-to-breathe.

Andrea says

What fun this series is turning out to be! With Meg Langslow as the main character anything and everything will surely be written in her notebook that reminds her when to breathe and her endless to-do lists. What can I say the murder, madcap madness, and mayhem continue being the thread that draws you in keeps you laughing and loving the author Donna Andrews and her small town tales. The Langslow family and all the eccentric residents of Caerphilly, Virginia will not fail to entertain you.

Emily Crow says

You know that expression, "Don't judge a book by its cover?" Unfortunately, that was just what I did. But who could blame me...the cockatiels on the cover are so cute, it's like a bucket of squee!

Turns out, this is a cozy mystery. Since it's a popular genre, but one I just can't warm up to, I'm not doing an in-depth discussion here. It's like someone who hates science fiction complaining about all the spaceships and aliens.

Instead, I'll focus on the two things I really hated.

One, there are no cockatiels to speak of in the story! If you call your book *Cockatiels at Seven*, with an adorable cover to match, I expect cockatiels!

Two--and this was the real kiss of death--instead of cockatiels, the bulk of the novel (I didn't do a page-by-page count, but I would guess at least half) is dominated by an extremely annoying toddler. Now, I don't dislike children in general, or even in fiction. (Heck, I loved "The Nanny Diaries", although at least that title gave me a bit of a heads-up.)

But this particular fictional toddler...*shudder*...was overkill and a half. To back up a bit, the story begins when Meg, the heroine, is asked to babysit young Timmy by a friend she hasn't seen for a while, Karen. She agrees. By the following morning, when Karen still hasn't returned to pick him up, Meg suspects something fishy, and runs off to gossip with Karen's coworkers. (Sorry, I meant to say begins investigating her disappearance.)

For page after page, I was subjected to his bedtime tantrums, his diaper emergencies, his "cute" baby-talk and childish lisping, his stuffed animal melt-downs and attempts to ride sheep like they were ponies. Maybe someone reading this is thinking, "Well, that sounds adorable, far better than some scruffy cockatiels...what a cute idea for a mystery!" If so, I guarantee that you will love this book.

As for me, I hope it will be a long, long time before my reading involves mention of sippy cups or carseats.

Kellene says

I have read this series totally out of order, but I really do want to go back and fill in the gaps. I enjoy the books and great deal, finding the antics of Meg and her family incredibly amusing. I was more than slightly shocked at how well behaved 2-year-old Timmy was in this book, as well as how quickly he seemed to not be concerned over his mother's disappearance. But I did enjoy the story and will definitely read more in the series, hopefully from its beginning this time.

Joy says

A former friend of Meg drops off her son with Meg and disappears. Meg and Michael have been thinking of starting a family, and keeping up with the very active Timmy gives them a chance to decide whether they are ready. Timmy cramps Meg's style as she tries to find the missing mother and disentangle an embezzlement case with murder attached.

Teri-K says

Another nice cozy. I enjoyed watching Meg cope with a two year old and think about her feelings about kids. I happen to really love them at that age, but they can be a handful and I appreciated that Meg was actually trying to work out her feelings rather than just having a knee jerk reaction to love them or hate them. And the little boy was cute but not too much so.

I missed seeing more of Michael, he's probably my favorite character. If all of the plot threads came together exactly the way I expected and the surprised didn't surprise me, I didn't mind. It was still a fun read to squeeze into Christmas preparations with my own 2 and 7 year old grandsons.

Connie N. says

#9 in the Meg Langslow cozy mystery series

As always, Meg makes me laugh, not so much with her antics (because she's the sane one), but with her family and the things going on around her. This time she helps out an old friend by watching her toddler for a "little while" that turns out to be for several days. As Meg tries to find Karen, she uncovers some illegal activity, plus a dead body (of course). As a newlywed, Meg is unused to dealing with a child, but she does really well. I admire her ability to roll with the punches and adapt to the crazy life she is surrounded by. And, of course, Michael is always wonderfully supportive and another sane person in the crazy crowd. This particular book was not quite as nuts as some of them are, but there were a couple of laugh-out-loud moments, especially at the end. Very quick and fun read. I was actually quite surprised by the culprit. No shock there since I'm not usually trying to figure it all out, but still a pleasant twist that made this a satisfying read.

James Adams says

An enjoyable cozy, if a little heavy on the quirk. Not the best of the series, but a decent introduction nonetheless. Suitable for cozy fans, although bird enthusiasts will be less pleased with this entry than most.
