



Final Sentence

Daryl Wood Gerber

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In need of a change, Jenna Hart leaves the high-pressure world of advertising to help her aunt, Vera, open a culinary bookshop and café. Back with her family in Crystal Cove, California, Jenna seems to have all the right ingredients for a fresh start—until someone adds a dash of murder.

As a marketing expert, Jenna wants to make sure the grand opening of the Cookbook Nook draws a crowd, and no one is better at getting attention than her old college roommate, celebrity chef Desiree Divine. But when Desiree arrives in quiet Crystal Cove to do a cookbook signing, the diva stirs up more trouble than business...especially when she turns up dead.

Known for stealing husbands and burning bridges, Desiree left behind plenty of suspects—including Jenna. Though the celebrity's life always appeared to be an open book, Jenna will have to read between the lines in order to clear her name, and catch a killer before another body is served cold.

Final Sentence Details

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From Reader Review Final Sentence for online ebook

Vicky says

Let me begin by saying I read. A lot.

Chapter one had me hooked but then chapter two comes along with a jumble of characters and incidents that results in the 3rd chapter having Jenna in a haphazard rush, run and exhibiting totally rude behavior. The author fails to explain how "everyone else" knows that Jenna's husband was having an affair with Desiree. the author just puts things out there and the reader is supposed to swallow the illogical chain she is trying to devise. Random people showing up in random places.

Conversations between the characters are unrealistic. Timing is way off. Author is trying to make things happen with no solid ground to base those happenings on. The plot does not flow in any logical fashion.

the author puts random things out there without explanation i.e.: why would Jenna's father, "being the stand-up guy he is", offer financial support to another woman?

If the advertising genius is Jenna - who apparently can't cook but owns a cookbook store (logical huh?) - how can she market a cookbook store? How? Because it is Katie, her chef, with all the ideas.

Then having the author toot her own horn by referring to other novels she has written under a pseudonym is repulsive.

Things are assumed to the max in this novel. The author obviously creating character descriptions because so many just happen to look like someone famous i.e.: Jenna's father is Cary and looks like Cary Grant, and Rhett looks like Rhett Butler of GWTW.

Recipe stealing is a pure motive in Jenna's mind despite the fact that Desiree's is different that Tito's.

Jenna has no control over her business such that she doesn't even know what her own chef is serving, let alone her abilities.

I read enough of the book to the point that I have to trash it. So many ridiculous events and comments and childish behavior turns off readers.

By the way, a cookbook store - yeah, just not going to be that busy. Borders, Walden, even some Barnes and Nobles closed due to lack of business so a small town bookstore that has mostly cookbooks? It is just not going to be the bustling haven the author alleges.

No more of this series for me.

Bea Charmed says

I very much enjoyed the first half of this book. It was a quick, easy read with a nice light tone, and good characterization. I had read this author before under another name and wasn't impressed so I was happy that this book seemed a better match for me. But, some niggles from the first half and problems in the second half brought down my enjoyment of the book and in the end it was a struggle to finish.

There were some improbabilities - the supposed similarities between Jenna's father and actor Cary Grant; the intense hatred Pepper, a store owner and the police chief's mother, has for Jenna and her family; very convenient timing several times during the book; the conflict between Jenna and her father, honestly I thought it was a joke at first. Grief changes people and they do hurtful things to each other but I just couldn't buy it. Also, Jenna was remarkably unencumbered by her responsibilities as store owner; she has little to actually do with it except when it suits the story. The dialogue was occasionally stilted and some of the characters, such as Jenna's father and her aunt Vera, needed better fleshing out.

I did like the setting and Gerber's use of it, it was almost another character. I really liked the portrayal, for the most part, of Jenna's amateur investigation into the murder when she is the prime suspect. It felt like a realistic portrait of what the average person with no police or legal experience might do if they undertook an investigation. There were some unlikely coincidences but overall it was more realistic in that regard than most cozy mysteries. We see very little of the police investigation and Jenna feels utterly left out; which as a suspect, she would be. The chief is not one to conveniently share info, but neither does she she have an active dislike for our heroine, as you often see in cozies.

Still, the second half of the book dragged, the improbabilities piled up, and I rapidly lost interest. Gerber does give us lots of red herrings and false clues, but by the end I just didn't care anymore.

Nicky says

Couldn't finish this book. I gave it the college try, but there was no flow and the dialogue was horrible. The Aunt has to be the most annoying character I've ever read. I normally try to plug through a book, but I just couldn't do it.

Suzanne says

"Final Sentence" is a great cozy mystery for those who love Avery Aames, Cleo Coyle, Krista Davis, Laura Childs and other writers of this genre. I fell in love with Avery Aames' Cheese Shop mysteries and am delighted that she has chosen to write a new series, focused on the proprietors of a cook book shop in a cozy coastal California town near San Francisco, under Daryl Wood Gerber!

In "Final Sentence" Wood Gerber takes us to the town of Crystal Cove, the hometown of Jenna Hart. After losing her husband in a tragic boating accident, Jenna comes home to help her aunt Vera launch a cooking book shop in the town's scenic shopping district. Before the opening day, her best friend from college, and a famous television cooking personality, Desiree Devine, is brutally murdered. The town's chief gossip, Pepper Pritchett has it in for Jenna due something that happened years ago, and Jenna gets the feeling that she is being pegged for the murder. In an effort to vindicate herself, she starts looking into suspects and finds plenty to choose from.

This zany cozy mystery is very entertaining, and I can't wait for the next one!

Kevin says

This was a pretty good cozy, had a good plot and interesting mystery that had me guessing to the very end.

But as far as character development even Jenna the main character isn't really developed much at all. We know she's widowed and returned home but really learn hardly nothing about her personality, hopes and dreams then she has a new shop to run. I'll probably read more books in the series but I'm not in a rush to binge read them.

* Jennifer says

I'm wavering between 3 and 4 stars after reading this first instalment of a new series, so we'll go with 3.5. The beginning started off clunky for me - I really struggled the first few chapters to figure out the characters' voices and as a result, the dialogue really didn't flow at all. And the first half of the book was overly peppered (ha! cooking reference!) with specific examples of how Jenna was an ace marketing executive in her previous career. These stuck out and felt horribly awkward to me and were quite a turn-off. But about half to 2/3 of the way through the book, the story found it's groove, the dialogue started flowing better, the awkward horn-blowing stopped and I found myself really interested in the book. I'm withholding judgement on the characters until the next book, as their personalities didn't feel established. The two exceptions being Rhett and Tigger - both charmers from the get-go! Oh, and someone needed to drown Pepper before the book even started.

The plot of the murder mystery was well done: some symbolism, a few red-herrings, lots of suspects. I wasn't able to guess the murderer until the author wanted me to - right along with Jenna.

I'll also say that I found there to be too much internal dialogue, but I think that's just my personal cross to bear since I think just about every book has too much internal dialogue. :)

I'll be looking for the next book to see where things go from here.

Judith says

I'm sorry to say that this book was a disappointment although the premise is a good one for a cozy. Jenna Hart, a young widow still in mourning for her husband who drowned, comes back to her home town to open a Cookbook shop and café with her aunt. She has left her former life as a prize winning advertising executive, and after two years of mourning the loss of her young husband, she wants to start over. Her old college friend, a cookbook diva, and a star on a foodie show, comes to town for the grand opening of the shop and is murdered. Her body is buried under a sand sculpture on the beach, and suspicion falls on Jenna because there was gossip that Desiree had an affair with Jenna's late husband.

Unfortunately, the good premise never really gets off the ground because of poor writing; the dialog is very stilted and the character descriptions lack depth. I found it a struggle to finish this book. Half way through it, I ceased to care about the murdered Desiree, or even whether her murderer is ever brought to justice.

However, there are a couple of nice things about the book, one is the descriptions of the many cookbooks that Jenna carries in the shop, some new, some vintage, and some collector's items. The other is the description of the shop and café, it sounds so warm and charming. I wish that the author could have given her characters the depth and charm that she gave to the shop and café.

I try to give new mystery series a second chance, so I'll read the next book in the hopes that there is improvement in the second book.

Deana Dick says

What a great way to start a new series with funny characters, a lovely new cookbook shop and a very famous celebrity chef.

Jenna has lost her husband in a tragic boating accident and decides she needs a fresh start. She finds herself at her hometown where she feels content with family and friends around her. The story focuses on Jenna and her aunt opening a cookbook shop. The author does a superb job of using real cookbooks in her story which helps readers connect to the storyline. After reading the vivid description of the new shop, it seemed to be a very inviting place to shop and get to know the locals of the town. For their grand opening, Jenna has lined up a very famous celebrity chef from the Food Network to make a grand appearance at the opening.

Desiree , the celebrity chef has it all. She is gorgeous, a fabulous chef and fame that others envy. The town is all abuzz about her appearance . But alas, there seems to be an untimely murder about to take place. Who will be the victim? Why do certain people point accusing fingers at Jenna as the suspect? The character development is good and introduces readers to a quirky assortment of townspeople who will have you intrigued.

The author's choice to have the setting in a small town is a welcome treat . She describes the town and the people much like those from Mayberry. It gives the reader a sense of peace and tranquility. If you are looking for a light hearted book with fun characters, gossipy noisy townspeople and a great murder mystery, this book is for you. I loved the banter between the characters and the drama surrounding who really committed the unthinkable crime. At the end of the book , the author has graciously included recipes and a snippet of her next book in the series, "Inherit the Word." I look forward to reading more cozy mysteries from this author.

I received a copy of this book from the author for an honest review

Kirsti says

An enjoyable start, but I felt like that was the thing that was forgotten in this book; that it was the start. It felt like there were too many characters, too many clues, too much lying, too much questioning. Then it finally all comes out and the mystery wasn't as good as I'd hoped. Still though, there were enjoyable parts, and I do sympathize with Jenna's lack of cooking ability. I couldn't even make the 'simple' recipes she tries- I'm a defrost and reheat kind of girl.

The first in the series- I might have to look into reading more of them. Three stars.

Melodie says

I really wanted to love this book, but I didn't. I've read a couple of Ms. Gerber's Cheese Shop books written as Avery Aames and just can't tolerate them. They're very well written, but the extreme cheese talk just turns my stomach due to my cheese aversion. While this book didn't have that, it had some annoying problems.

Let's see, Jenna owns a cookbook shop, but she can't cook? Why does this strike me as weird? Her dad looks like Cary Grant and his name is Cary? The love interest looks like Rhett Butler and his name is....wait for it.....RHETT! Seriously? How did EVERYONE know the rumor that Desiree had an affair with Jenna's husband?? Did Sabrina call a town meeting and say, "Oh, BTW, my sister was schtupping Jenna's husband??" Pepper had to be one of the most hateful, over-the-top characters I've read in awhile and someone should have shot her just to do the world a favor. And if Jenna's dad wasn't Cinnamon's dad why in the WORLD would he have offered them financial support when the person who was supposed to be Cinnamon's dad split? And lastly, and more of a nitpick than anything, Aunt Vera's habit of saying "too-ra-loo" just put my teeth on edge. The best parts of the book were the cookbook & foodie mystery talk. Maybe I was in a bad frame of mind while reading this and if my mind-set had been different the things that annoyed me wouldn't have bothered me so much. I will probably try the next one in the series.....maybe. I would really like to like something Ms. Gerber (Aames) writes because she seems like such a nice, personable lady. I guess we'll see.

Rosemary K says

Jenna Hart lost her husband a year ago. She needs to start living again so she's opening a culinary book shop and café. Crystal Cove is the perfect place since her family lives here. For her grand opening she asks her old college roommate to appear. Desiree Divine is a celebrity chef. Things don't go as planned when Desiree is murdered and the police think Jenna did it. This is not the way to begin again. Jenna is an interesting character. She's smart and determined to find who killed her friend. Who knew that being a marketing expert would help her track down a killer? Her Aunt Vera is a great help with her psychic abilities. This character appealed to me. I liked that she lived life on her terms and didn't worry what others thought. Daryl Wood Gerber wrote characters that are unforgettable. I either liked them or wanted to kick them in the shins. It was so easy to be pulled into this cozy mystery. There are plenty of suspects who had reason to want Desiree dead. This is a well told story that had plenty of surprising twists. I was left guessing until the very end. Daryl Wood Gerber gave us a tale that was exhilarating and exciting. This is a great start to her new series. I can't wait to see what happens next in this small California town.

Lisa Ks Book Reviews says

FINAL SENTENCE is the first book in the Cookbook Nook Mystery series. It is also the first book I've read by Daryl Wood Gerber and it won't be the last! (I did read the next book in the series – INHERIT THE WORD – you can find that review on the book's page.)

I knew from page one that I was going to enjoy this book because I instantly fell in love with protagonist Jenna Hart and her Aunt Vera. I loved the surroundings of The Cookbook Nook, Jenna and Vera's store, and the attached café. I could envision myself spending many hours lost there, just as I became wonderfully lost in the book. Indeed, I enjoyed my visit to Crystal Cove so much that I was disappointed when I closed the book and found myself back in my own town.

The mystery of who killed celebrity chef Desiree Divine was well written and I was left with plenty of suspects to throw me off the trail of the real killer. And no, I didn't guess who did it.

If you like mysteries with cozy settings, memorable characters, and surprise endings, this is a must have book for you. And you'll also be delighted with the fantastic recipes included. I sure was!

Susan says

Maybe it's a case of wrong place, wrong time, but this book really rubbed me the wrong way. From a entrepreneurial heroine who doesn't ever seem to do much work, an amateur sleuth whose modus operandi is dashing up to people and accusing them of crimes, to a style that's speckled with grammatical errors, I just could not find myself liking this at all. Next time, I stop reading sooner if it seems unbearable. If you really must know, widowed Jenna goes into business with her psychic aunt opening a cookbook store, only to have her college roommate, now a celebrity chef who's come to the store opening, murdered. An embittered storekeeper constantly accuses Jenna of murder and other crimes; oops, her daughter is chief-of-police. What can Jenna do? Well, she can always find the real killer and clear herself that way.

Cindy says

Aunt Vera is a colorful, entertaining side dish, but Jenna is the main course in the first title of the Cookbook Nook series. Jenna Hart returns to her home town after the death of her husband and has little time to savor her new endeavor; the bookstore/café The Cookbook Nook. Her college friend, a successful celebrity chef, is murdered and left to be found sculpted into sand art on the beach. Jenna becomes the prime suspect in her friend's murder and attempts to find someone else for the police chief, and the chief's spiteful mother, to accuse.

Jenna is a character that you understand and sympathize with when she is angry at the rumors about her dead husband, distressed at the sudden brutal murder of her friend, and fearful of being wrongly accused. The supporting characters include her eccentric Aunt Vera, her former FBI analyst father, and a few childhood friends. Her aunt proves to be an engaging character on her own and as the story line develops you find out more about Aunt Vera's past, as well as the father that Jenna is reconnecting to as an adult. Both characters have intriguing pasts and I look forward to finding out more about them in the subsequent titles in this series.

The storyline progresses well, with suspenseful moments artfully intertwined with side storylines. The pace is evenly balanced between action and plot development with just the right amount of description of the setting and characters. And the author's use of references to cooking, music, and literature are like sweet little treats spread throughout the story, waiting to be savored.

As a cozy mystery, this story falls a bit more on the spicy side of the romance spectrum, without being graphic or vulgar, but including some innuendo and suggestive vocabulary. I appreciate the author foregoing a recent trend by authors to add unnecessary profanity to cozy mysteries.

Final Sentence is an engaging mystery with interesting characters and a plot that kept me guessing as it continued to develop. My best gauge of how good a mystery this is: Do I want to read the next book in the series? I already have it on top of the stack.

I received this book from the author in exchange for a fair and honest review

Nancy Narma says

“Cookbooks, Crimes and Clues Abound”

“Hoo-Boy!!” (You’ll understand when you read the book). In this first of a new series by Daryl Wood Gerber, we are introduced to Jenna Hart, former advertising executive, as well as a young widow, who moves back to her roots, (Crystal Cove) to “Find her smile”. With beloved Aunt/co-owner Vera, they open the “Cookbook Nook”—a charming cookbook & culinary item shop/café. As a grand opening draw, Jenna and Vera secure an appearance/book-signing by Desiree Divine, an old college friend of Jenna’s and a well-known culinary personality and cookbook author. Desiree arrives with her quirky entourage in tow—including her Sister, Sabrina. This stirs up the commercial district, especially the Police Chief’s ascerbic Mother, Pepper Pritchett. Before Desiree gets a chance to greet the public, confrontations arise, with some deadly results. When Jenna stumbles upon the disguised remains, fingers point in her direction—nastily, some more than others. With support from Aunt Vera and her ex-FBI Father, Cary, Jenna dons her sleuthing as well as entrepreneurial caps and proceeds to gather evidence to prove her innocence. Who could have done this dastardly deed? Was it a crime of passion, hatred or jealousy?? Or maybe a way to cover debts? The Author has created a cozy village with colorful characters who you will be anxious to re-visit again and again—especially hunky Rhett! Cat lovers will want to scoop up “Tigger” for a cuddle or 3. A fast, enjoyable cozy, a bit reminiscent of “Murder, She Wrote” which many have enjoyed, (except I can’t quite picture Angela Lansbury in a flowing caftan.) Some of Chef Katie’s yummy recipes have been included as well as a snippet of the next Cookbook Nook Mystery, “Inherit the Word”. Make room for this one on your shelf—you won’t be disappointed!

“Too-ra-loo!” Nancy Narma
