



Red Velvet Cupcake Murder

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This summer has been warmer than usual in Lake Eden, Minnesota, and Hannah Swensen is trying to beat the heat both in and out of her bakery kitchen. But she's about to find out the hard way that nothing cools off a hot summer day like a cold-blooded murder. . .

Features over Ten Cookie and Dessert Recipes from The Cookie Jar, including Red Velvet Surprise Cupcakes and Chocolate Covered Peanut Cookies!

"Culinary cozies don't get any tastier than this winning series." --*Library Journal*

"Loaded with mouthwatering recipes and clever plotting, the latest Hannah Swensen mystery delights." --*RT Book Reviews*

"If your reading habits alternate between curling up with a good mystery or with a good cookbook, you ought to know about Joanne Fluke." --*Charlotte Observer*

Red Velvet Cupcake Murder Details

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Author : Joanne Fluke

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From Reader Review Red Velvet Cupcake Murder for online ebook

Kavita says

This REALLY is literally one of the worst books I have ever read. I had been waiting to read one of the books from this series for a long time now since they had a good rating. But there isn't one single good thing about this book!

First of all, my main problem is the misogyny in this book. The detective keeps berating herself for being a few kilos overweight. Everyone is having liposuction and filling their faces with Botox. WTF! The villainous women are made to talk like some sexy vamp of the 30s. "I've got Roger right where I want him. I'm very good with men like Roger, too. And Roger can give me so much more than Norman ever could." Sure, you are, dear. Because all men are dumb and women have to marry them to achieve a status in life – and that woman a dentist, no less! Has anyone informed the author we are in 2013? Anyone who isn't absolutely sickening sweet is eeevilll and their evilness shows in their enticing men and marrying them. It might be news to the author but women these days are too busy building careers to play the vamp in the hope of netting the richest catch.

The detective keeps criticising other women for their looks and lack of cooking skills. Her mother FORCES her out to go shopping and CHOOSES her clothes for her? And I thought Hannah was an adult in her 30s! Even Nancy Drew books of the 1980s had Nancy choosing her own clothes and NOT commenting on how other women look. Of course, you need to give women champagne and chocolates to make them more compliant. Complaint to what exactly? Buying favours from women now, are we? Cos, of course, women are for sale.

Second, the dialogues are horrible. There is simply no way anyone actually SPEAKS like this. Many of the scenes are actually not realistic. "Sorry, Mom. I'll go to the kitchen and get some more lemonade so the adults can talk." Show me a kid who actually talks like this?! And who allows a six year old to wander around the town all by herself and take lifts in people's cars?! Hannah's sister, that's who!

Third, there is no friction AT ALL. People are clearly good or bad. Hannah tries to get along with everyone. Except those she doesn't get along with – and they are the eeevilll people! It's also puzzling what exactly Hannah's mother goes and sits in her not-yet-lover's office ALL the time for! I'd scream and call security if someone I was dating sat in my office all day long. And what kind of hospital would allow a layperson to 'take over' a qualified nurse's shift? Utter, complete crap!

Fourth, Hannah is irritating in the extreme. She is judgemental and swans around with her stupid inner mind conversation which invariably is all about insulting people in a way that would get her jaw smashed if she dared to say it out loud. I can understand if this happens to people she dislikes, but honestly, doing it to FRIENDS? Moreover, in order to bring in the recipes, the dialogue often veers right away from something interesting and they start talking about cookies out of the blue.

Fifth, so much time is taken up by mindless judgements and stupid gossip that even halfway through the book, there is no actual investigation done. The characters are half baked and most of them seem half witted, dropped on the head as babies. It took Hannah herself half the book to realize that 'brother' could also mean half-brother. Seriously, I thought of that as soon as it became clear that there was no 'brother'.

So much time is taken up with discussing cookies that the plot suffers because of it. The transition between one to the other is not seamless enough to make it work. 70% of the book seems to be people talking about food and recipes, 20% spent in inane gossip and judgements and 10% devoted to the actual story. The last

couple of chapters had some good suspense, but that's too little, too late.

Mae says

I find the first few pages to be rather slow and annoying because (Shocker!) the man in Hannah's room is her cat, which if you've been dedicated to the series and read all the books (this is book 16) you'll immediately know. I have no clue why Fluke wrote the first chapter all about panty hose, since it's rather dull and I ended up skimming the chapter. Honestly, describing the ways to put them on? It's as if she needed to reach her quota, so she wrote chapter one.

Hannah (naturally) finds the body and works on finding the killer, by logically following the leads. It's as if the police have no way of solving a crime without her. Realistically they'd make her keep her nose out. Later, when Hannah's a suspect, I'm baffled that she's so upset. She (or a close family member) find bodies all the time and Hannah's food is always there. Did it not occur to anyone that it seemed a little suspicious? This is the first time anyone stopped to think "Huh. The body finder girl finds another body maybe *gasp* her food was poisoned and that's what killed the person." No small town has this many murders, I can't help but wonder what will happen since almost every character that's introduced is killed and she has to keep introducing new character's to keep the story flowing.

And the love triangle is still trudging along. It's getting to the point where it's unrealistic. The books started in 2000-it's 2013, there's been 16 books. Assuming she's having two books (or even three) represent a season, a good 5-8+ years have passed; Hannah's in her late 30's and nearing 40. At this point, she just needs to make a choice before both Mike and Norman leave her. I assumed after the Dr. Bev incident she'd realize that she needs to make a choice, because one day she won't get one. Nope. She's still dating both, even though Norman is clearly more reliable. Mike makes a nice fling, but he isn't Hannah-husband material. There's one point where she's thinking something along the lines of "I bet Mike's out with ___ (enter the waitress' name. Misty?)" and she's mad, even though she's doing the exact same thing to him. She isn't exclusive, why does she expect them to be?

Mike was married with a baby on the way, then his wife was shot. You'd think he'd be wanting to start a family again, which obviously won't happen with Hannah. I still don't understand why he likes her in the first place. I'm rooting for Norman, but in this book I honestly wanted her to just pick someone, I didn't care whom. If she doesn't pick one of them, which is plausible, she'll be a real witch (which is a common term in this novel) for wasting almost a decade of both men's lives. Hannah's older and I really don't see her getting any closer to marriage and a family, I see her as an old crazy cat lady.

The dialogue is very blunt and straight forward. There's quite a few conversations that go like this.

"You are wearing make up. You look good in makeup." Mike observed.

or

"Would you like to ___?"

"Yes, I would to ___"

or

"Ha ha." Hannah laughed.

"What?"

"Well, Lisa, I realized that you used three cliches in a row! Hilarious!" Hannah seems to be a grumpy old English teacher who isn't exactly likable and corrects everyone all the time. I understand that Hannah has a pet peeve concerning the English language and grammar, but she's coming off as annoying.

Second to last, when Dr. Bev is murdered nobody mentions Diana. Nobody. I understand that she was a deadbeat mother, but you'd think that they'd at least be concerned a little for the poor kid; both her parents are dead. Diana gets mentioned very little in the novel, the only time she is goes like this:

"I have to go pick something up from the city." Bev said.

'I bet the something isn't your daughter who you dumped on your mother.' Thought Hannah.

On the subject of children, Tracey is cute, but she almost comes off as a smart alec at sometimes when she says something or it seems like an adult brain trapped in a 7 year old's body. I wish Bethie (who's 2!) would make an appearance, since she hasn't yet. Bethie hasn't contributed a ton to the overall plot and is rarely mentioned at all; I don't expect a baby to be out solving crimes, but maybe having Andrea bring her along to see Hannah one day at the bakery might be nice.

Lastly, how does someone in their 30's not use a cell phone or laptop or computer? I'd understand if this was the early 2000's but it isn't, it's 2013. Every time Hannah wants to use her cell phone-oops! Battery isn't charged, because she uses it so, so often and it takes a lot of power to sit in her purse turned off. The technology aspect seems like it was written from someone who just learned about it a few days ago and is reluctant to give in to the "fad".

Overall: Hannah has some weight/clothing related issue, she goes to some event, someone's murdered, the police are helpless without her instructions (I'm surprised she isn't employed there; she's solved every case they've had), she uses logic to solve the murder, she gets in some confrontation with Mr/Miss. Murderer, Mike/Norman saves her.

Tamara says

The Triangle that will not end. Hannah finds a body. Hannah solves the murder. Hannah wears pantsuits and pantyhose. Hannah and Andrea have these long exciting convos: "Hi Hannah. Hi Andrea. And the back and forth continues.

It's not bad, per se. It's just not even half as good as it used to be.
These books are library books from now on.

My review: [Traveling With T](#)

James says

In the 16th book in the Hannah Swensen cozy mystery series, Red Velvet Cupcake Murder, written in 2012 by Joanne Fluke, Hannah's under suspicion for killing the competition for her love-interest. Could she have done it? Did she finally go bonkers and make a decision between Norman and Mike? Nah... she just looks guilty. But you'll have to read more to find out who actually committed murder.

The book starts off with an old-favorite, Barbara, the secretary at the police force we've come to know over the years, taking a tumble off the roof of a new hotel. Was she pushed, did she fall, or was it suicide? Given another mystery from the last book involved suicide (and spills over into this book), we know that didn't happen twice, but the truth takes a while to come out. Fluke weaves together these storylines until we get a clearer picture of the sinister and shady on-goings around Lake Eden.

I'd give the book 3.5 stars, and I'll round up on Goodreads, but down on Amazon. As a mystery plot, it lacked multiple suspects. There was only 1 new character introduced and suspicion was never cast on anyone other than Hannah. It needed more red herrings. As a fun story about the townspeople, it was overly sweet-and-simple when it came to Barbara's head injury. To be honest, it felt like we were dealing with Rose Nylund from the Golden Girls... whom I love... but is always funnier in smaller doses. Pages of dialogue trying to associate names and playing word games was a distraction.

But I adore Hannah and her family. I like getting lost in this world, so the series will always be something I want to read. I just may not like some of the books as much as others.

Marian says

Hunh. A quick review of other reviews leaves me a bit confused. Normally I'm right there, leading the pack of fans clamoring for Hannah to pick Mike or Norman (or dump them both) but this time around I don't think it really mattered to the plot.

I enjoy the Hannah mysteries because I like most of the characters, I'd love to work at The Cookie Jar, and there's usually a recipe or two I want to try. They're fluffy reads and there's no shame in that.

The plus with mysteries is that if the series goes on long enough, characters you dislike are bound to wind up dead. :P Doctor Bev is our victim and what could have been a "finally!" moment is upended by the fact that Hannah is the one to find the body. Hannah seems in shock for a good chunk of the book afterwards and I kind of like that. I'd imagine trying to save someone you didn't particularly like would take something out of you and it was refreshing to not just have it played off as "oh, Hannah found another body."

I'd imagine that if you pay any attention at all you'll figure out the bad guy (who, why, and where they'll attack Hannah) so the real fun here is watching Doc and Hannah's mother dance around one another. Also: Moishe.

Really, any book where Moishe takes down a monster automatically earns an extra star. I'm pretty sure it's the law.

That said, Hannah? Pick someone. And don't let it be Mike. You can choose not to pick Norman OR Mike, but don't let it be Mike.

Karen Blinn says

Hannah Swenson and her bakery have returned to solve another murder in Lake Eden, Minnesota. The book begins at the grand re-opening of the Albion Hotel, now converted into condominiums, that Hannah's sister, Andrea, is trying to sell. The party screeches to a halt when a party-goer plummets off of the roof of the hotel. Then, Dr. Bev, Norman's former fiancée, arrives back in town to move into the penthouse. (She is

supposedly going to marry the developer.) Of course, the love triangle of Hannah, Mike and Norman also continues to limp along. This has probably gone on for a couple of more books than necessary and has started seeming pretty stale. Hannah needs to make a decision and get on with her life. There were some really good-sounding recipes in this book, which is a definite plus. If it's your first taste of Hannah and her bakery, you will no doubt love the book. If you are a series regular, it is more of the same, which is not a bad thing. It's just kind of starting to seem a little stale.

Joanna Warrens says

I was sent an advanced copy by Kensington and it was a perfect Saturday afternoon read. I have read almost all of this series and enjoyed them. This is a pretty standard cozy but the recipes set them apart. Fluke provides a lot of recipes and for a culinary cozy reader it's a standout.

Minx -The Genre Minx Book Reviews says

Okay, the cozy mystery element was spot on! I found that I followed this mystery very closely and even though it had a bit of a love triangle. I liked the food elements but ending each chapter with a cooking recipe was not something I cared for AND it also made me hungry! lol

Katie Bee says

I am laughing out loud reading some of these reviews. I agree with all of the criticisms, especially that ummmm HELLO Joanne Fluke it's 2013. I think Joanne Fluke might be a total weirdo... I honestly had to double check when this book was written because I couldn't believe it was written after 1990! I read a couple of the older Hannah Swensen books and they're still talking about TAPING things on TV. Really... do they even sell VHS's anymore? And the idiots in this town don't know how to use them?

Speaking of electronics, what 30 year old woman isn't ALWAYS on their cell phone? Especially when you almost get murdered every 6 months. I am 30 and I couldn't live without it just to text and play Candy Crush!

And who has 2 boyfriends for several years? Maybe if they didn't know each other... Aren't the dudes tired of this ? She doesn't seem that great honestly so why are they sharing her and why are they friends when they're competing for the same chick? They're not even getting any lol. She's too busy with her stupid cat...blah blah its the same in every book, he hates her mom, he loves his food, who cares he is a dumb cat. I just imagine all the happy fat cat ladies reading this book out loud to their cats and loving it. Also, Hannah will probably end up a sad old fat cat lady.

Ok and I know they're in the midwest, but if you listen to the audio version, the reader is SO obnoxious with the accent. I can't tell you how many times they say rational (RAAAAAASHOONUL) in this book. Ridiculous. And I shouldn't be able to hear the woman swallowing and making weird noises with her mouth either! Retape that ish!

All this being said, there was nothing else to rent electronically for my 1.5 drive home everyday from work, so after I listened to this book and hated it the whole time, I rented the first one and now I'm probably up to the 4th or 5th. It's this or fall asleep at the wheel! These books are stupid but at least it's free!

p.s. I went through the whole Sookie Stackhouse series (which was amazing) and now I have to listen to this. Wah!!!

Melodie says

I have had it, had it, HAD IT with this series!! Don't know why I am being so generous by giving it 2 stars! Guess I just can't bring myself to give an old friend 1! 16 books and this beyond stupid "love triangle" is still going on!! And NO ONE is having sex?? C'mon.....I get the general idea that Mike's a "horn dog", if he wasn't getting it from Hannah after all this time, he'd be SO out the door instead of asking her to marry him! And I have no idea in what universe 2 grown men who are supposedly "in love" with the same woman would be "besties". I discovered this series in 2002 during a voluntary period of unemployment. I fell in love with the characters and the stories. Now the books just piss me off. I had decided not to read this one, but got a great deal that let me get the book for less than \$5.00. I should have stuck to my original intentions and saved the \$4.80 and the headache! Figuring out "whodunit" was way too easy, and even the recipes didn't sound that good this time. Oh, and Delores must be about my age, and I don't know ANYONE who talks or dresses like her. I wouldn't be caught dead in a pantsuit!! It was truly a joy to read these books for quite some time. Now Hannah has become an annoying, condescending, grammar Nazi who's obviously frigid and I've come to the conclusion that I must have missed the fact that Norm & Mike are eunuchs! I will not read another of these jokes until something is done about the triangle and Hannah turns back into the person she used to be.....even if it's FREE!! NOT RECOMMENDED TO ANYONE!!

Jennifer says

Well...another murder in Lake Eden...another struggle between Mike and Norman. It's getting old. I was a huge fan of this series, but after reading 16 of them, I can pretty much predict who is the victim and who is the killer after about the first two chapters. I'll still read them, because they're quick reads and cute, but so dated it almost makes me want to throw the book (or my Kindle) through the window. Why does Hannah always feel the need to cook dinner for Mike? He's got a good job, can't he pick up something on his way over, always at some inconvenient time when Hannah is dead tired? And Hannah should really just make up her mind already - maybe "bad boy" (term used loosely!) Mike might be good for her. And she also needs to stop letting her mother pick out her clothes - I don't care that she doesn't like shopping, but really - pantsuits?? What about a well-worn pair of Levi's and a t-shirt? I don't know anyone in their 30's that wears pantsuits in 2013. She's a successful business owner, get her up with the times!! I also agree with other reviews about her relationships with Mike and Norman - it's getting increasingly difficult to believe that these relationships have gone on for 2 years with basically no physical contact other than a nice side hug! I get that these are mysteries and not hot romance novels, but that area is in serious need of updating as well! Here's hoping that Ms. Fluke reads these reviews and brings The Cookie Jar and Hannah into the 21st century in her next novel! PLEASE!

Melanie says

Joanne Fluke was the first cozy author I liked. I thought all her books were exciting, fun and familiar. I am going to list my pros and cons about the book. I will not continue this series. I am done! I also have to note that my review is not unique. I have read similar reviews, so I hope Mrs. Fluke is listening.

Cons

I am tired of the love triangle! I have had enough. Why doesn't Hannah pick someone? It's been too long. The men are stupid to stick around with no hint of her marrying either one. And Fluke has never made mention of either men spending the night. IN. TWO. YEARS. Come on!

Hannah dresses odd. Who wears pant suits? Her sister is supposed to be a fashion expert but still wears a French twist. No one wears their hair that way. Fluke really needs to get fashion advice for Hannah and other characters. She does not have to be a fashion guru but gosh, dress Hannah like she lives in 2013!

Her sisters daughter talks like she is an adult and she is seven! I know Fluke wants to portray her as smart but seven year olds do not talk like that even if they are smart.

Pros

Fluke still writes a great mystery. I always have fun trying to solve her mysteries.

I love how fluke always writes about food in each chapter that later tie to the recipe at the end of the book.

Conclusion

I am going to quit this series because the Cons outweigh the pros. Good bye Mrs. Fluke you have been a good author and I used to look forward to your next book, but I just cannot take anymore! If Fluke starts a new series that address some concerns of a large population of her readers, I am so there!

Lorna says

Well, I knew I was in for a wild ride when the book started out with almost a whole page devoted to ... wait for it ... putting on pantyhose. Yes. The rest is standard Hannah fare except for a new obsession with clichés, which is hilarious because this whole series has become clichéd.

I'm beginning to think Kensington must pay by the word. I can think of no other reason why she constantly uses ten words where she can use three, especially in the recipes. My daughter once had a science assignment where she had to pick a couple of different tasks and write out the steps like it was for someone who knew absolutely nothing. The recipes are like that. I think most people can figure out to set down a pan somewhere after it comes out of the oven. I picture some poor woman wandering around her kitchen with a hot pan, wondering what to do since Ms. Fluke didn't give out that information.

I will give it two stars for the cute storyline involving Lisa's dad.

Erin says

Joanne Fluke was the first cozy author I liked. Heck she was the first author to introduce me to the 'cozy' genre. And actually, she's the only author I stuck with having given up on Diana Mott Davidson long ago (and very short into the series). I enjoyed this series for a very long time even though each book was pretty much the same and the writing started getting simpler and simpler. I tried to stick with it though, which brings us to now.

Another reviewer wrote: I am tired of the love triangle! I have had enough. Why doesn't Hannah pick someone? It's been too long. The men are stupid to stick around with no hint of her marrying either one. And Fluke has never made mention of either men spending the night. IN. TWO. YEARS. Come on!

- I completely agree. For one thing, Mike would be sleeping with someone else for certain. Norman might maintain the Hannah induced celibacy, but I think even Norm would have moved on.

Another reviewer wrote: Hannah dresses odd. Who wears pant suits? Her sister is supposed to be a fashion expert but still wears a French twist. No one wears their hair that way. Fluke really needs to get fashion advice for Hannah and other characters. She does not have to be a fashion guru but gosh, dress Hannah like she lives in 2013!

- Again, I agree, but at the same time I do realize that Minnesota is it's own little world and people do tend to be in a time warp. But Hannah's cheap mentality gets grating after a while. Seriously woman, buy yourself something NEW once in a while, and why be so proud about a Formica table you got at the thrift store. Seriously, that isn't something to be proud about.

Another reviewer wrote: Her sisters daughter talks like she is an adult and she is seven! I know Fluke wants to portray her as smart but seven year olds do not talk like that even if they are smart.

-This has bugged me for a while. Even more so, the people of Lake Eden talk like idiots.

The recipes are starting to bother me as well. Why does every book have to have a recipe or two that _has_ to use 'Real Cool Whip' (nothing else will do, not diet, not Real Whipped Cream) I've been grossed out by many of the recipes before, again I chalk it up to Minnesota taste (Reminded of How I Met Your Mother and the 7 Layer 'Salad' that uses 16 cups of Mayo, has gummy bears and potato chips- blegh) I used to love the recipes, I've even tried a few. But I don't think there was a single one that I really wanted to try from this one.. But that could be just because I was listening to it on an audio book.

Speaking of which, the audio book was HORRIBLE. This was the first time I'd listened to Hannah's world, and I will not do it again. I don't know if it is what colored my opinion of it. Normally when I read this book, I can finish it in one day. The audiobook took me two days at work, and let me tell you, it dragged.

It made the very dumbed down and detailed writing (Really, did I need to know every single step of Hannah making a pitcher of canned lemonade? Every.Single.Step.) so much worse.

The narrator aged several of the characters, made Mike sound like an absolute idiot (not just the words, but the way he sounded). And every single female other than Hannah sounded like a blonde idiot.

I figured out who the killer was basically in the first chapter. I figured out where the final showdown was going to happen also at the beginning. I figured out the 'twist' half way through the book. The end 'surprise' wasn't much of a surprise as it was beat over our heads repeatedly (regarding Delores).

I don't know if I'm REALLY ready to give up the series, but I'm not going to rush out for the next one, and I certainly won't listen to it as an audiobook.

Nancy Narma says

“A Cozy Filled With Mystery, Murder and Surprises”

If you enjoyed Ms. Fluke's “Cinnamon Roll Murder”, you're going to be over-the-top thrilled with this action-packed volume. Lake Eden is all abuzz with excitement as the Grand Opening of the poshly-renovated Albion Hotel is about to begin—complete with eye-popping condos and a jaw-dropping, bank account draining penthouse fit for a king, complete with a domed tropical rooftop garden and breathtaking view. Owner, Roger Dalworth (From the “Cities”) spared no expense in creating the high-

priced, elegant housing and asked Andrea to handle the Real Estate listings and sales, of which she gladly agreed. However, Roger brought an “Ill Wind” to Lake Eden along with his business plans—in the person of the much detested Dr. Bev, who is his Fiancée. She wastes no time flirting with every male in Lake Eden, Norman included! Will Norman fall victim to her wiles again? And when she’s not flirting, she’s her old nasty self to everyone, especially Hannah. “The Cookie Jar” has created the scrumptious, surprise-filled Red Velvet Cupcakes for the festive gathering, and while the crowd mingles, but before they can enjoy the delicious offerings, Sheriff Bill Todd’s Secretary, Barbara Donnelly falls from the lavish, but unfinished penthouse garden terrace. Was this an accident? Or was the plunge at the hands of another? Adding to Mike Kingston’s case load is the unsolved, untimely death of Clayton Wallace, devoted bus driver for the “Cinnamon Roll Six Jazz Band” whose passing was first considered a murder, and now a suicide. But was it?? And if it is, the insurance company will not honor his policy and pay the much-needed funds to his ill son. Hannah dons her sleuthing cap once more with assistance from Lisa, Andrea, Michelle, Hannah’s Mother Delores, Norman, Doc, her beloved fat-cat Moishe and reluctantly, her sometimes boyfriend wannabe Mike Kingston. There are other surprises in store that I will not divulge..I’ll just say we’ve waited a long time— and you’ll sigh, boo, hiss, get disgusted, shake your head in disbelief and cheer more than once. Hannah, Lisa and friends share 26 yummy recipes, with everything from mouth-watering appetizers and comforting main dishes to decadent desserts. There are many twists and turns within this mixed bag of mystery that you don’t want to miss. The most difficult part of this book is getting to the last page and having to wait for Hannah’s next adventure. Be sure you add this volume to your TBR list— you will not be disappointed!

Nancy Narma
