

Ventura Book Reviews

Where will
the next book
take you?

That Old Black Magic

by Mary Jane Clark

Clark



That Old Black Magic, by Mary Jane Clark, is #4 (not counting books 1.5 and 2.5) in “The Wedding Cake Mystery” series. I was not aware of that fact until I was about halfway through the book; therefore, I have not read the first chunk of these mysteries. They are about an aspiring actress and cake decorator named Piper Donovan. I cannot say anything about the earlier books in the series but it seems like this character is continuously getting caught in unfortunate and deadly situations that always end up with the

killer going after her. Like I said, I did not know that Clark had written 5 novels prior to *That Old Black Magic* or I probably would not have read it. But I am glad that I did not know because I actually enjoyed the novel and had a hard time putting it down.

The novel is set around Saint Patrick’s Day in New Orleans and Piper Donovan has only just arrived when the strange Hoodoo killings begin. The chapters constantly change from multiple characters’ points of view which provides the reader an intimate perspective from many angles. Clark subtly repeats characters’ jobs or backgrounds and has them interact enough so that the reader never has to stop and think, “Now who is Aaron again?” Clark also provides clues as to who “The Voodoo Killer” is, which entices the reader to read just one more chapter to see if they were right. I was completely surprised when I discovered who the killer was. But by that time it was too late for me to jump through the page and warn Piper myself so my only other option was to read the rest of the book immediately. There are references to an incident in the past that nearly killed Piper that Clark does not let the reader forget. Every time it is mentioned the reader learns a little more about what happened to her and why it is affecting her so much.

Although I enjoyed *That Old Black Magic* there were some parts where the dialogue seemed forced or the scene did not seem natural, especially at the end. It was as if Clark just wanted to end the novel but also wrap up everything with all the characters. So for me (someone who does not plan to read the other books in the series) the ending was lousy and too easy. But for someone who has read all of the series and plans on reading book #5, this ending could have been a perfect “until next time” moment.

Reviewed by Grace Ventura