

READER'S GUIDE

Cold Snap by Maureen Jennings

INTRODUCING *Cold Snap*

November's rain in Toronto 1936 has turned into December's cold snap. Charlotte Frayne escapes being hit by a mud-splattered car racing round the corner at Queen and Spadina. The stranger who saves her turns out to be the man her boss, Mr. Gilmore, has helped to escape Germany and is now a refugee in need of shelter.

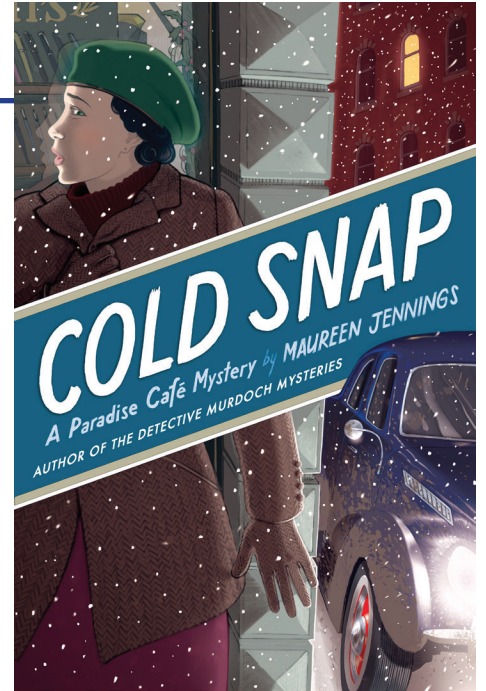
In a world still recovering from the War to End All Wars and the Spanish Influenza pandemic that killed fifty million people worldwide, and still in the throes of the Great Depression, Stephen Lucas is not just any refugee from the Nazi regime; he is in possession of information that could alter the course of history — but only if seen by persons in power and if acted upon. In a surprising twist of fate, Charlotte's estranged mother reappears, wanting assistance in locating the son she gave up at birth twenty years before. Despite her turbulent feelings about her mother, Charlotte agrees to investigate, having no idea that the two cases will connect in surprising ways.

Back at the Paradise Café, Christmas draws near and Charlotte's beau, Hilliard Taylor, and his partners are in disagreement about the holiday concert. With her beloved grandfather in the mix, there's no telling whether the show will end in good tidings or anarchy.

IMPORTANT THEMES

Anti-Semitism – Stephen Lucas has been forced to leave his home country of Germany because of the rise of the Nazi regime and the resulting religious persecution of Jewish peoples in Europe. Even after travelling to Toronto, Stephen remains in danger because of anti-Semitic organizations and movements in the city. Anti-Semitism in Toronto is witnessed firsthand by Charlotte as she investigates both Stephen and Moira's cases. The anti-Semitic sentiment has increased in the years leading up to WWII, including the Christie Pits riot, as well as the rise of Swastika Clubs.

Freedom and Incarceration – Stephen Lucas leaves his home country to escape persecution at the hands of the rising Nazi regime. Before he escapes his country he spends time in prison where he bears witness to the horrors and abuses of the concentration camp in Dachau in the years leading up to WWII. Stephen shares his experiences with Charlotte.



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you believe Moira is being honest about her motives behind enlisting Charlotte's services? How does Charlotte's perception of Moira evolve throughout the book?
2. How do Charlotte, Jack Murdoch, and Walter Arcady interact differently with the Forstners, and how do the Forstners interact with them? (Chapters 8 & 9) What does this tell you about each of the characters? About the time period?
3. Charlotte describes Hilliard as protective in a way that "didn't oppress" her (p. 204). What is the significance of this description given the time period? Can you find examples of Hilliard's behaviours that support this description?
4. Discuss the descriptions of incarceration present throughout the book. What elements are the same and what elements differ from descriptions of incarceration today?
5. How does the tension surrounding the play at the Paradise Café connect to the themes Charlotte is navigating in the cases she is working?
6. When recounting his time in prison, Stephen says: "Even in prison, it's surprising how much more comfortable life can be if you have money" (p. 237). Discuss this quote. What does Stephen mean by this? Can the same statement be said about prison today?
7. Discuss the following quote: "You cannot have true peace without true freedom" (p. 259). What is meant by this statement from Stephan?
8. Do you think that if the reports made on Dachau had been revealed to the world, could history have been diverted?



ABOUT MAUREEN

Maureen Jennings immigrated to Canada from the UK as a teenager. She is the author of the Detective Murdoch series which has been adapted into a the TV series *Murdoch Mysteries*. The series is going into its seventeenth season. Before becoming a full time writer, Maureen was a psychotherapist. She currently lives in Toronto with her husband Iden Ford and their dog, Murdoch.

Maureen is available to attend book clubs in the GTA. Please contact publicity@cormorantbooks.com for more information.