

Beware False Profits

Reading guide

1. Aggie Sloan-Wilcox and her husband Ed are enjoying themselves during a weekend in New York when a call from a church member sends them on a wild goose chase to find the woman's missing husband. Are there other professions like the ministry where no day off is a sure bet?
2. Mayday! is an annual fundraiser to benefit Helping Hands, the food bank that serves Emerald Springs and nearby counties. Up until a murder is committed, did you think Mayday! was an event you might like to attend? Would you let Junie tell your fortune?
3. Hazel Kefauver, the mayor's wife, was introduced in Blessed is the Busybody. Given that she is portrayed as unsympathetic and meddling, was she the perfect murder victim? Do cozy mysteries demand an unsympathetic victim? Can you think of any in which a likeable character was killed instead?
4. Who was your first choice for murderer? Were you surprised by the real one?
5. Did you think that Joe's disappearance and Hazel's murder were connected? Did you expect to find that Joe was either the murderer or another victim?
6. Ed is particularly unhappy that Aggie is continuing to investigate murders, even when the suspects are not related to her. Do you sympathize with Ed, or with Aggie who feels called to do this, just as he feels called to the ministry?
7. Ed and Aggie are vegetarians. Some readers have suggested the author include vegetarian recipes in the back of the novels. Would this be a welcome addition or too far off topic? (Recipes to go along with most of Emilie's novels are included on this website because Emilie loves to cook.)
8. Like all the Ministry books, this story is "suggested by" an Old Testament story. Given that Emilie was tired of trying to explain this to readers, she made the connection much plainer in this novel. Did you see the tie-ins to a well-known Biblical tale? A story of deceit and reconciliation among brothers?
9. The missing Joe Wagner lives in a section of Emerald Springs known as the Village. Is there a place in your own hometown that is so storybook perfect? Maura Wagner is likened to a Stepford wife by Aggie, who finds Maura's devotion to her house and garden a bit spooky. Would you, like Maura, enjoy dressing life size dolls on the front porch to suit the occasion?

10. Fern and Samuel Booth are Ed's greatest detractors, now that his supreme detractor, Gelsey Falowell, is dead. (See Blessed is the Busybody.) Does constant criticism and surveillance drive ministers or other professionals to better performance? Or does it grind away their enthusiasm for the job? Is it simply a fact of life in any organization?