

Just Add Nauseam, Susan Woldenberg Butler

What lurks beneath the surface down under Down Under? Asylum seekers save the day in Tasmania! Eco-terrorists! Old wills! Egotistical chef! Climate change scientist as murder suspect!

What's simmering just below the surface at Hornbeam Hall? A weekend at an estate in modern Tasmania — a distant outpost of the British Empire that time forgot — a stylish blue-food dinner party, a hostess with deadly allergies and lethal secrets she's determined to divulge: the stuff of a life snuffed short before the Murdering Mange, Fatal Fudge and Terrorist Bombe course. Gentleman Quaminus Frye lifts the lid off the bubbling stew and exposes us to a new dish in a timeless setting: murder in a country home, twenty-first century-style. Harboring asylum seekers and climate change ... old grudges and death aboard an eco-warrior ship ... cybercrime and computer hacking ... the ingredients for a traditional recipe with a modern twist. Tasmania's amateur detective uses handwriting analysis to ensure that justice is served along with Turquack and Lavender Mash.

Bring my killer to justice!

In "Just Add Nauseam" Caterina Hungerford begs Quaminus Frye to "Bring my killer to justice." The murderer could be anyone: the flamboyant widow of a distant Hungerford relative who never travels without her stuffed giraffe and Toblerone chocolate; a tight-lipped tennis-playing sister-in-law who would do anything to protect the family name; her property developer husband of dubious antecedents and elastic ethics; Caterina's childhood friend who elbows desperately at the guilty ties that bind; her paleoclimatologist husband who depresses dinner partners with talk of catastrophic climate change; and Caterina's no-nonsense farmer husband, with his chat-room alter ego of Mr Diddy P.

All know about their hostess's life-threatening G6PD deficiency and have ample opportunities to insert a deadly fava-bean flower into a centerpiece on the dinner table. The secrets Caterina holds provide motives a-plenty for her death after exuberant youth turns respectable, including prostitution, poisoning and an old will never found. In his quest to "Bring my killer to justice," Quaminus grills a brace of characters across scenic Tasmania, from an old druggie in a beach shack to an egotistical chef in an urban slum, and finally cracks the case with the help of an ambitious ex-convict turned computer whiz aided by a computer programming asylum seeker from the Middle East and his brother, who was a senior policeman back home.

Justice ... At what cost? Is it worth it?

Quaminus emerges victorious from a battle with his conscience when he decides to tell Detective Sergeant Boyle of Tasmania Police a version of the truth — and there are so many — that will allow them both to sleep at night, thereby ensuring that justice is served, and the meal is blue.

Audience: those who like a traditional detective story told with sass and verve, with teaspoons of blood and guts and tablespoons of contemporary relevance, picturesque scenery seen from the dark side ... and foodies!