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# Gruel and Unusual Punishment

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#### From Publishers Weekly

Though this 10th Pennsylvania Dutch mystery installment's blend of intrigue, wit and recipes will likely satisfy Myers's fans, it's unlikely to win new followers. In her latest outing, Magdalena Yoder, the Mennonite keeper of the PennDutch Inn, joins forces with the Bedford, Pa., police to investigate the death of a prisoner in the local jail. Clarence Webber, credit-fraud perp and predator of wealthy women of a certain age, has been poisoned with arsenic in a meal provided by the PennDutch Inn. Magdalena, who is anxious to clear her name, starts interviewing the visitors he had in prison, and she soon has a list of suspects, each with an ax to grind. Neglecting her inn and her newly acquired foster child to follow clues to Maryland, Magdalena throws herself wholeheartedly into solving the mystery of Clarence's death. She must be getting close, because on the return trip, someone runs her car off the road. But the resilient Magdalena wraps her broken ribs with duct tape and keeps searching for clues. Unfortunately, the characters are generally distasteful and it's Magdalena herself who's the worst. She may love one-liners there are about three per page but she's the only one laughing; she comes across as a spiteful, judgmental woman in the midst of a weak plot and a sloppy story line. Myers has, however, devised a group of recipes for grits, that staple of Southern breakfasts, that proves there can be more to gruel than meets the eye.

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In the tenth book in Myers's popular Pennsylvania Dutch mystery series, an imprisoned con man gives up the ghost after sampling one of Magdalena Yoder's most famous dishes-and lands Magdalena in the middle of a grueling mystery.

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Features

• Great product!

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Most helpful customer reviews

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Another Hit for Tamar Myers' PennDutch Series!

By Peggy Morgan

I love Magdalena Yoder - I admit that I'm more attracted to the quirky characters and the one-liners than to the mystery itself, but I thought the saga of the late Mr. Webber and his marital shenanigans was clever and intriguing. Magdalena's developing romance with Abe the Babe continues to fascinate; one hopes she will have better luck than she did with Aaron.

Although I followed Magdalena's investigation of the murder with interest, I was a little disappointed that the author didn't develop the relationship with Alison a little more fully - particularly since the chapter that introduced Alison was used as the "teaser" in the back of the paperback edition of The Crepes of Wrath. I was expecting more and hope Alison's story will be developed in future PennDutch Inn books.

I have read several reviews of other PennDutch Inn books in which the reviewers complained that Magdalena "wailed" too much - and indeed, she does seem to wail quite a bit. I was amused to see at least three places in Gruel and Unusual Punishment where another character said to Madgalena, "You sure do wail a lot," or words to that effect.

The only fault I will find with Gruel and Unusual Punishment is sloppy editing. Early in the first chapter, Magdalena says that she got the recipe for the shrimp and grits dish that did the unfortunate Mr. Webber in on her "vacation in Charleston, South Carolina." Later she remarks on having been to the Inland Sea in Tennessee on her "only vacation." These two statements aren't necessarily contradictory, since it would be entirely possible to visit both Charleston and the Inland Sea on the same vacation from Pennsylvania, but when Magdalena is preparing to go to Maryland in the course of her criminal investigation, she states that "the only time I'd been out of Pennsylvania was to go to Ohio." Ms. Myers' editor should have caught this. All in all, I enjoyed Gruel and Unusual Punishment as much as I enjoyed all the other PennDutch books - which was a lot. I look forward eagerly to the next one.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Light hearted and heavy handed

#### By JOHN A. BROUSSARD

Con man Clarence Webber has had a long and checkered career, which ends with his death by arsenic poisoning in Hernia's city jail. Magdalena Yoder becomes involved, since her inn supplies the jail's food, but it is soon evident that the poison was placed in the Shrimp and Grits (recipe provided) after the meal arrived in Webber's cell. Since the town's inept police chief is completely mystified, Magdalena volunteers to run down the perpetrator among the four persons who were known to have visited the prisoner. As she retraces Webber's trail through south central Pennsylvania and into Maryland, she soon discovers that the victim left more than empty wallets and broken hearts behind-to say nothing of a long list of individuals who had more than enough other reasons to do him in. GRUEL AND UNUSUAL PUNISHMENT is, as the title would indicate, a light-hearted novel, replete with outlandish descriptions of eccentric people. The story sometimes lapses into heavy-handed humor, but the overall effect is still a positive one. While Myers passes along more information on cooking grits than the average reader might want to know, that doesn't seriously detract from an amusing work.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

#### Good Book

By S. Garn

I thought this book was the best out of the Pennsylvania-Dutch mysteries Tamar Myers has written. In my opinion, it kept me interested right to the end. I especially like the part where Magdalena's ex-husband shows up. I liked how more of the town was involved, it gave the plot a nice twist. I recommend this book to any who enjoys a good humored mystery.

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