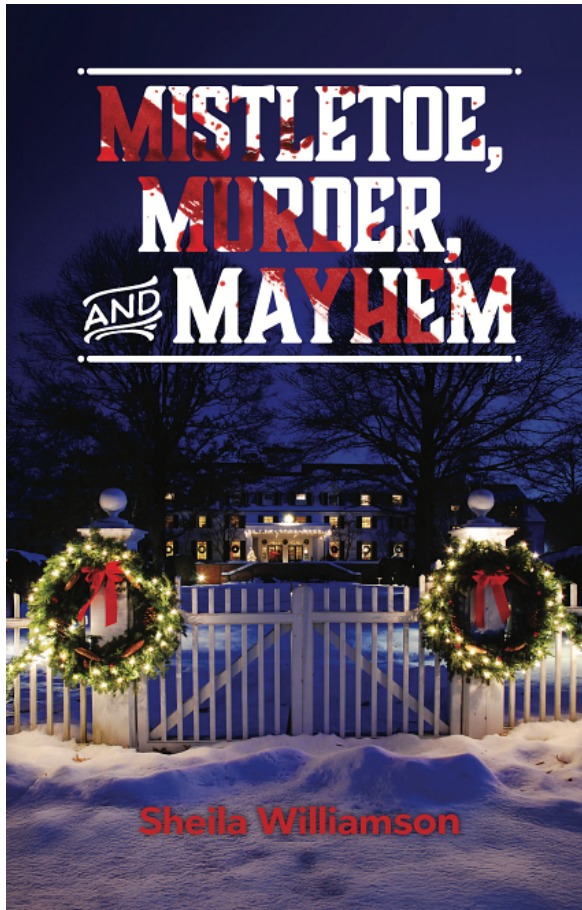




It is Christmas in Texas. The Mistletoe Inn is fully booked for a holiday themed weekend. Guests are treated to Christmas activities and treats until one of them is murdered. Will Detective Chestnut be able to solve this before New Years?

Mistletoe, Murder, and Mayhem

By Sheila Williamson

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MISTLETOE, MURDER, AND MAYHEM



Sheila Williamson

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Prologue: September 5

As Lawyer Jeff Willingham III shuffled paper on his desk, there was a knock at the door. He spoke, "Come in, Mr. Fathom. I have been expecting you. Please take a seat."

Mr. Fathom, a well-dressed, middle-aged man, came in, and took the seat offered to him across the desk from Mr. Willingham. He said, "What is this all about? I don't believe we have met. I currently have no need for an attorney."

Mr. Willingham answered, "Mr. Fathom, as you may or may not know, I represent your uncle, Mr. Cooper, in all his business interests, and his estate as well. He has asked me to have this meeting with you regarding his failing health. In fact, he was placed on hospice care this week and he asked me to convey his last wishes to you as he is not sure how much time he has left."

"I am sorry to hear of this downturn in my uncle's health but I'm still unclear what this immediately has to do with me," said Mr. Fathom.

"Your uncle just recently sold his company to an industry giant and this, added to his already significant wealth, makes him incredibly wealthy. You, Mr. Fathom, are his sole heir." Mr. Willingham paused to let this news sink in, and then continued. "However, your uncle has followed your career quite closely for some time and, for this reason, he has some stipulations on your upcoming inheritance."

Mr. Fathom, genuinely surprised, and feeling more ill at ease by the minute, asked, "What stipulations?"

“Mr. Cooper has given you the task to make things right with five individuals from your past. These individuals are people that you have had bad dealings with over the years. They include a doctor, a young woman who lost both her parents in an accident, two wives, and a best friend of a former employee of yours. Here are the pertinent details.” He handed Mr. Fathom a thick file with photos and information inside.

Mr. Fathom, clearly upset and wanting to leave, started to get up from his chair as Mr. Willingham continued, “Now, Mr. Cooper is giving you sixty days to make things right with these people as he recognizes he has made many mistakes in his life, and does not want *you* to be faced with the same regrets in the last years of your life.”

Mr. Fathom sighed, and rubbed his head, clearly at a loss for words. Mr. Willingham continued, “I must stress to you the importance of this task and the great reward that will be yours upon completion. You *must* take this seriously as we will be checking. Do I make myself clear?”

Mr. Fathom sighed again, and mumbled, “Yes.” He started again to get up from his chair.

Mr. Willingham also stood, and said, “Wait. There is one more thing.”

Mr. Fathom, pale and distraught, replied, “What now?”

Mr. Willingham handed him a red envelope. He very carefully opened it to find a gift certificate for a stay at an inn. He explained, “Your uncle knows you will take care of this important task, and wishes to reward you with a stay at The Mistletoe Inn. Everything is all set for a Christmas-themed stay to enhance your Christmas spirit, which will be freed upon you making these

things right. Your uncle himself wishes he could join you, but fears he will not be up to it. He wishes *you* to go in his place.”

Mr. Fathom started to leave, and shook his head incredulously.

Mr. Willingham said, “Goodbye, Mr. Fathom.”



Chapter 1:

The Mistletoe Inn

The owners of The Mistletoe Inn were excited to see the bookings come in for the new Christmas season. They had planned and researched about how to bring in business during the holiday season and it finally was beginning to pay off. This week, from Wednesday through Sunday, they were fully booked! Both Gustav and his wife, Olive, were very excited indeed. This was a first for the inn to be completely full during the week. So, they were holding a special staff meeting with their Chef, Marta, their son, Jackson, who manned the front desk, and the housekeeper, Bambi Lynn, to make sure that everyone was on their toes for these arrivals, and that everything was in place for the upcoming holiday events they had planned.

Gustav, Olive, Marta, Jackson, and Bambi Lynn all gathered in the lobby area with clipboards detailing all the upcoming events, and their particular assignments. Gustav began, "We have a full house beginning this afternoon and we need to all be on the same page to take care of each guest. Tomorrow, after breakfast, the guests will be on their own until 7 p.m. at which time we will have a tree trimming party for them, complete with refreshments and Christmas music. Is everything in place for this event, Chef Marta?"

Chef Marta replied, "Yes. I will be serving hot apple cider and Christmas cookies."

Bambi Lynn joined in, "I will be happy to help Chef with serving the guests. May we also have popcorn and cranberries to string along for the tree? I think the guests might like that."

Chef Marta agreed, "Yes, of course! Great idea. But...may I spike the cider this time?"

Gustav and Olive looked at each other, and agreed. "Yes, that will be fine. Just notify the guests that there is alcohol in case anyone objects. We can serve them plain apple cider, right?"

Chef Marta replied, "Of course. I do not want anyone to be uncomfortable."

Jackson joined in, "I will be sure the Christmas music is on and perfect for the event. But, can we possibly have local entertainer like Charlotte Champion come and share a song or two?"

Gustav heartily agreed and Jackson offered to contact her to see if she could stop by for the event.

Charlotte was known to all the locals as a professional entertainer that appealed to all ages. She was always the go-to when entertainment was needed.

Olive said, "Great! Now, what about the game night planned on Friday? What did you decide? Charades? Board games? Scavenger hunt?"

They all agreed, "scavenger hunt for sure!" Gustav chuckled, and agreed to formulate one for the historic town square. He would make it so the guests checked out all the downtown stores in order to "find" the necessary items for the scavenger hunt. Olive was thrilled, and agreed to transport the guests downtown herself.

Chef Marta asked, "Do we want to have some treats for them when they return?"

Olive agreed and suggested, "What about hot chocolate and smores around the fire pit?"

Chef Marta immediately agreed, and noted that on her list.

Olive then asked, "Should we have a prize for the winner?"

Gustav said, "Already taken care of. Prize bag of several goodies from the square." Everyone agreed to this and then the conversation turned to Saturday evening. That would be the highlight of the weekend, with a fancy dinner and professional entertainment, as promised on the brochure.

Chef Marta started reading off her proposed menu and they all agreed on that as well. She would place her order with the supplier that day.

Gustav cleared his throat, and said, "I have a surprise announcement about the entertainment. Straight from Las Vegas, we have Elvis! Well...an Elvis impersonator anyway and he is supposedly quite good. He had a break in his schedule and he agreed to perform for us! Isn't that fantastic?"

All agreed that this was something completely unexpected and, at the same time, hoped he was as good as people said. Everyone would need to transform the dining room into a holiday banquet, with décor and place settings. They all wanted this event as perfect as possible, resulting in the 5-star reviews they are hoping for. Since the inn had been struggling for a while, all their hopes were riding on those reviews. Reviews are the lifeblood of online bookings and The Mistletoe Inn was seriously in need of more bookings!

Gustav spoke out one more time, "All right, does anyone have any questions? If not, then let's all get started doing everything we can for these guests, and make sure all their stays are simply magical." With that, everyone dispersed, and went on about their day's work.

Jackson formulated an itinerary for each guest, listing all the special events, as well as information about the historic town square, and some other excursion ideas.

Since the guests would have so much free time, Jackson detailed all the things close by that he could think of to entertain them. Nature walks, shopping, wineries, historical landmarks and many more, all within close proximity to the inn.

Later that day, Olive approached Gustav saying, "I am very excited about this weekend. This may be just exactly what we need to put The Mistletoe Inn on the map for good!"

Gustav replied, "I certainly hope so. We cannot go on the way we have been. I'm not sure how much longer we can last without an uptick in bookings. I am trying everything I know to do, Olive, but this may be our last hurrah if it doesn't work." They hugged and Olive tried not to tear up. She knew exactly what Gustav meant. Their finances had been dwindling for some time now. A lot was riding on this first of their holiday-themed weekends but, for it to be a sell out was more than they could have dreamed. She was so hopeful that this is a sign that more good times were coming.



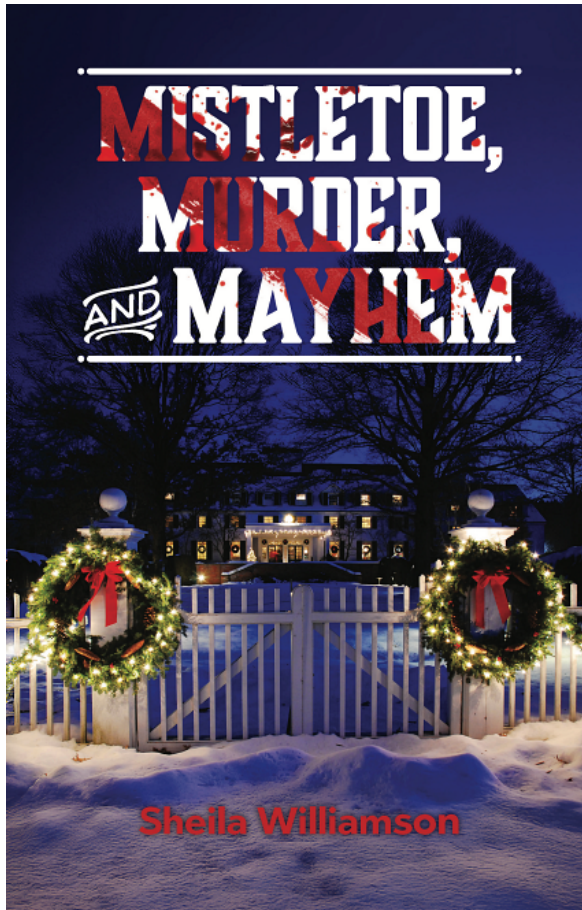
Thank you for joining me at The Mistletoe Inn. I hope you enjoyed your stay. I hope you can join me next year for *Roses, Truffles, and Revenge*, set in The Pink House Bed & Breakfast, the second novel in The Texas Bed & Breakfast Series.



About the Author

Sheila Williamson is a wife to Jeff, mom to Chad, and friend to many in McKinney, Texas. This is her first Murder Mystery and the first in the Texas Bed and Breakfast series. Sheila is an avid reader herself, with mysteries always being her favorite since she was very young.

Sheila's first book "Two Calls Blossoming Faith: Keeping Hope Alive" is their family story of a tragic accident, subsequent drug addiction, homelessness, incarceration, rehabilitation, and redemption. Sheila wrote it to help families experiencing the most unthinkable to offer them hope and resources to help them.



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