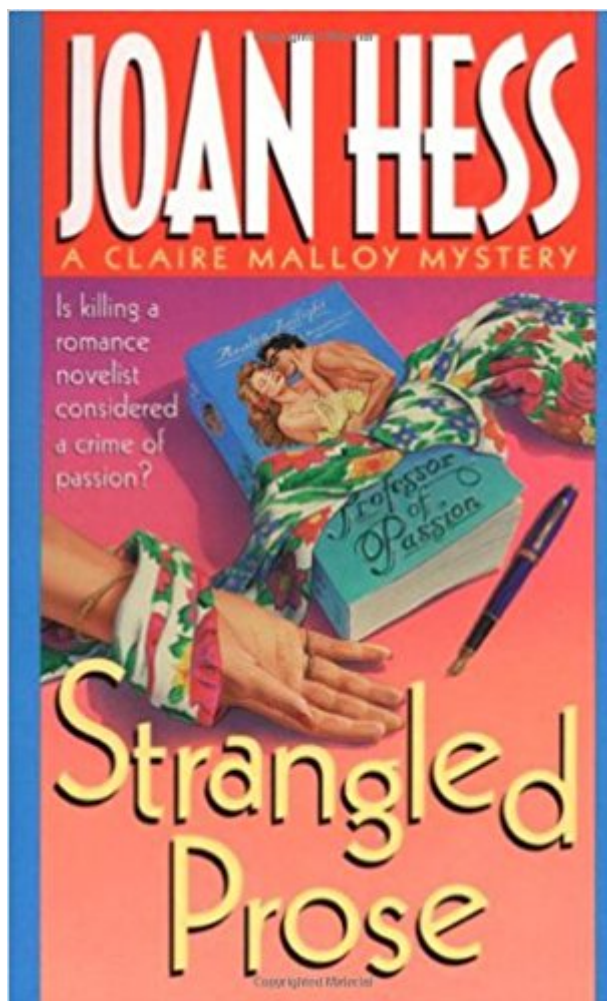


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## Strangled Prose (Claire Malloy Mysteries, No. 1)



## Synopsis

She would have killed for a bestseller--but someone beat her to it...Professor of Passion, the smutty new romance from Mildred Twiller--a.k.a. Azalea Twilight--isn't the kind of book Claire Malloy likes to hock at her bookstore, but Claire agrees to host a book party for her friend's trashy tale. As torrid as the novel is, it's nothing compared to the evening. After the party, poor Mildred is found dead in her home--strangled with a tightly knotted silk scarf. Now it's up to Clair to find Mildred's killer, and it won't be easy--the two-bit author had offended nearly every faculty member she worked with at nearby Faber College. But who could have hated Mildred with such smoldering passion? Find out in Joan Hess' first Claire Malloy mystery novel Strangled Prose.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

What a pleasant surprise! I'd read a "Maggody" mystery some time ago, not realizing there was another Joan Hess series to savor. Claire Malloy is bright, sarcastic, ironic, and funny as all get-out. The plot has enough twists and turns to keep you going... I stayed up way too late two nights in a row to finish it. Peter Rosen has definite possibilities, although his character wasn't developed quite as much as Claire's; since this was Claire's opening gambit, however, that's understandable. Loved this book, and right now I'm trying to figure out the order in which the rest were written so I can follow through properly (I always read a series in order to follow character development). Definitely have your library rustle up a copy of this one, and, I suspect, the rest of the series, as well!

... It is old-fashioned in a way. The police procedures are unrealistic and being gay can lead to being fired from an academic post. Much of the humor is heavy-handed and corny (addressing the cop as "Sherlock" for instance) but somehow I found it worked for me. It's unpretentious fun in the tradition of those old English cosies that were relaxing and easy to read if you willingly suspended disbelief.

This is the first in the series with bookstore owner Claire Malloy and while I enjoyed the mystery and the idea of the main character being a bookstore owner and former college faculty wife, I, like others, wished she was not so sarcastic about her friends, clients, daughter, etc. In fact, I didn't particularly like any of the characters. The book begins with the widow Malloy struggling with her business paperwork when she is approached by a 'friend,' a writer of popular romance novels who asks if she can roll out the latest bestseller at her store. Most business people would be happy to have an event that would bring customers to the store and create sales, but Malloy seems to be resentful about having to do this -- and this is before she finds out that the secrets of her husband and several other faculty members are brought to light in the book. Faculty whose secrets have been leaked seem to rush from the store -- as does the author and Malloy (you can't do that if you are the only employee!) -- and soon the author is discovered strangled. Everyone, including Malloy and her snotty 14-year-old daughter are suspects. And Malloy, who seems to like no one in town, seems to feel she must attempt to solve the mystery. An easy book to read and to solve early (I figured it out about 45 percent in).

I would have enjoyed this book much more had the Kindle version not "strangled her prose" indeed with errors...dozens and dozens, going on page after page. It was too distracting to concentrate on the book. Deleted words, misplaced punctuation, misspellings, truncated sentences. By the time I arrived at the climax, I was in no mood for the contrived ending.

I have read the first four books in this series and tried to like them but just couldn't. I tried this series after reading her Maggody series which are hilarious and I loved them. Wish she would write more about Maggody.

I must be in the minority to just think this book was marginally ok because it came highly recommended from people whose opinions I value. I found it left a bit of a bad taste in my mouth and I really doubt I want to continue with any others in the series. I found Claire Malloy, the main character, to be a real pain in the backside with all her snide comments and responses that were

supposed to be witty. I imagine the author was trying to make her a 30's type of wise-cracking broad but it just came across to me as nasty and uncalled for. And speaking of nasty, don't get me started on her teenage daughter and the lack of parenting skills! Ugh. The characters were stock, the plotting lame and I'm starting to wonder now if 2 stars is too much. I wish I had borrowed it and not wasted my money on even a used copy.

Joan Hess's first book is all right, but it does not come close to living up to the publisher hype, though granted, that's what publisher hype is for. The setting of "Strangled Prose" is a small town in which the college seems to be the main industry, and most of the characters are connected to that college. The protagonist is a small bookstore owner whose husband was killed in a car accident, and whose 14 year old daughter is...well, fourteen. Maybe the characters and situations weren't so pat, predictable and plot motivated in 1986 as they are now, but we can't go back to 1986, we can only read it now. "Strangled Prose" is also sold as a humorous mystery, and the author clearly thinks she's funny, but the attempts at humor come off as one-liners instead of moments of irony. There is enough there to keep you reading (not much of a commitment, since the book can be consumed in a lunch hour), but not enough to encourage you to seek out further books in the series.

Just like rice krispies, Hess' tale snaps, crackles and pops. It moves along at a snapping pace, with humorous moments mainly provided by the scotch swilling main character, Claire Molloy. Just when you think you figured out this who-dunnit, the tale crackles and takes a 90 degree turn. Characters pop up in unexpected places, further complicating the reader's and Claire's hypotheses. This is a light, enjoyable read written by a masterful plotter.

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