The Meg Langslow series
by Donna Andrews

**Murder With Peacocks** [1999]

Three Weddings...And a Murder

So far Meg Langslow's summer is not going swimmingly. Down in her small Virginia hometown, she's maid of honor at the nuptials of three loved ones—each of whom has dumped the planning in her capable hands. One bride is set on including a Native American herbal purification ceremony, while another wants live peacocks on the lawn. Only help from the town's drop-dead gorgeous hunk, disappointingly rumored to be gay, keeps Meg afloat in a sea of dotty relatives and outrageous neighbors.

And, in whirl of summer parties and picnics, Southern hospitality is strained to the limit by an offensive newcomer who hints at skeletons in the guests' closets. But it seems this lady has offended one too many when she's found dead in suspicious circumstances, followed by a string of accidents—some fatal. Soon, level-headed Meg's to-do list extends from flower arrangements and bridal registries to catching a killer—before the next catered event is her own funeral...

**Revenge of the Wrought Iron Flamingos** [2001]

Every year, Yorktown, Virginia, relives its role in the Revolutionary War by celebrating the anniversary of the British surrender in 1781. This year, plans include a re-enactment of the original battle and a colonial craft fair. Meg Langslow has returned to her home town for the festivities—and to sell her wrought-iron works of art. Except, of course, for the pink-painted flamingos she reluctantly made for her mother's best friend—she's hoping to deliver them secretly, so she won't get a reputation as "the blacksmith who makes those cute wrought-iron flamingos."

Besides, she has taken on another responsibility—making sure none of her fellow crafters ruin the historical authenticity of the fair with forbidden modern devices—like wrist watches, calculators, or cell phones. She's only doing it to keep peace with the mother of the man she loves. And Michael himself will don the white-and-gold uniform of a French officer for the re-enactment—what actor could resist a role like that?

Meg's also trying to keep her father from scaring too many tourists with his impersonation of an 18th century physician. And to prevent a snooping reporter from publishing any stories about local scandals. Not to mention saving her naive brother, Rob, from the clutches of a con man who might steal the computer game he has invented. It's a tough job—at least, until the swindler is found dead, slain in Meg's booth with one of her own wrought-iron creations.

Now Meg must add another item to her already lengthy to do list: "Don't forget to solve the murder!"

**Murder With Puffins** [2000]

In an attempt to get away from her family, Meg and her boyfriend go to a tiny island off the coast of Maine. What could have been a romantic getaway slowly turns into disaster.

Once there, they are marooned by a hurricane and that is only the beginning of their problems. Meg and her boyfriend arrive at the house only to discover that Meg's parents and siblings, along with their spouses are all there. When a murder takes place, Meg realizes that she and her boyfriend can no longer sit by a cozy fireplace, but must instead tramp around the muddy island to try and clear her father who is the chief suspect.
Crouching Buzzard, Leaping Loon [2003]

Poor Meg Langslow. She’s blessed in so many ways. Michael, her boyfriend, is a handsome, delightful heartthrob who adores her. She’s a successful blacksmith, known for her artistic wrought-iron creations. But somehow Meg’s road to contentment is more rutted and filled with potholes than seems fair.

There are Michael’s and Meg’s doting but demanding mothers, for a start. And then there’s the fruitless hunt for a place big enough for the couple to live together. And a succession of crises brought on by the well-meaning but utterly wacky demands of her friends and family. Demands that Meg has a hard time refusing – which is why she’s tending the switchboard of Mutant Wizards, where her brother’s computer games are created, and handling all the office management problems that no one else bothers with. For companionship, besides a crew of eccentric techies, she has a buzzard with one wing – who she must feed frozen mice thawed in the office microwave – and Michael’s mother’s nightmare dog. Not to mention the psychotherapists who refuse to give up their lease on half of the office space, and whose conflicting therapies cause continuing dissension. This is not what Meg had in mind when she agreed to help her brother move his staff to new offices.

In fact, the atmosphere is so consistently loony that the office mail cart makes several passes through the reception room, with the office practical joker lying on top of it pretending to be dead, before Meg realizes that he’s become the victim of someone who wasn’t joking at all. He’s been murdered for real.

We’ll Always Have Parrots [2004]

Meg Langslow travels with her fiancé Michael to a fan convention for Porfiria, Queen of the Jungle – a cheesy cult TV show on which Michael has a minor role. Michael hopes the weekend will give him a chance to talk Miss Wynncliffe-Jones, the show’s temperamental leading lady and executive producer out of enforcing a certain provision in Michael’s contract.

Of course, Michael’s not the only person whose career the dictatorial star has manipulated. So when the star is found murdered, the police have plenty of suspects. Trouble is, Meg doesn’t believe they’re going to arrest the right one. Soon she finds herself following the murderer’s trail through a hotel filled with egotistical actors, costumed fans, and a motley flock of monkeys and parrots who, rebelling against their role as live scenery, have escaped from their cages to take an active (and noisy) role in the festivities.

Owls Well That Ends Well [2005]

Meg Langslow was actually looking forward to renovating the old Victorian mansion she and her boyfriend Michael bought. But she wasn’t thrilled by the lifetime of junk accumulated by the house’s eccentric previous owner, Edwina Sprocket. The easiest solution: hold the end-all and be-all of gigantic yard sales. But when the event attracts the late Miss Sprocket’s money-hungry heirs, the over-enthusiastic supporters of some endangered barn owls, and customers willing to go to any lengths to uncover a hidden treasure, Meg suspects things have gotten a little out of hand...

Then an antiques dealer is found stuffed in a trunk with his head bashed in — and the yard sale turns into a day’s-long media circus. Even worse, the suspect arrested for the crime is the person Michael needs to secure academic tenure. Now, Meg is juggling an ever-growing list of suspects. And she’s going to have to outthink and outwit one clever murderer who lives by "everything must go..."

No Nest For the Wicket [2006]

Croquet is a genteel game, usually played on a summer afternoon on a tranquil green lawn. Extreme Croquet is a whole other story. That's what Meg Langslow and her new friends (whether she wants to call them friends or not) are playing on the several-acre farm of her new neighbor. It’s a countryside studded with rocks, steep hills, and placid, seemingly immovable cows.

Extreme Croquet is the current rage in Caerphilly, where Meg and her fiancé, Michael, have bought a house. While this society game can get quite warm, it hasn't reached the stage of actual homicide – at least not until Meg knocks her ball down a small cliff and encounters the body of a dead woman. Her head has been bashed in,
illustrating, perhaps, one of the many uses of a croquet mallet. It turns out that Michael knew the woman from years before. Meg finds herself further drawn in when it's discovered that the woman was seeking to expose the bad dealings of a certain local society lady's ancestors.

In the meantime, the old house needs many basic improvements and swarms with an entire family of working men, including countless second cousins, sawing and pounding away. Meg's father is the overseer but is easily distracted since he has a tendency to become wrapped up in his current animal charges — this time it's ducks.

The Penguin Who Knew Too Much [2007]

Okay, maybe there are people in Antarctica with penguins in their basements, but in Virginia? Only Meg's dad could manage that one. A body down there — well, that's somewhat more likely.

It turns out that explaining the penguins' presence is easy — Meg's dad volunteered to take care of the birds until the future of the bankrupt local zoo could be determined. But identifying the body in the basement proves a harder task — could it be, as Meg fears, that of the vanished zoo owner?

In the small southern town of Caerphilly, rumors fly quickly, and all the other well-meaning citizens who have agreed to take in zoo animals are now worried that they might be stuck with their guests indefinitely. So when Meg's dad generously offers to help out anyone who can no longer care for their four-legged charges, a parade of wild creatures begins to make Meg and Michael's newly renovated house look more like Noah's ark.

Meg and Michael have been planning to elope in order to avoid the elaborate wedding their mothers have begun to organize — a plan that's threatened by both the murder investigation and the carnival of animals. The only way to set things right, Meg decides, is to identify both their uninvited visitor and the killer who put him in their basement.

Cockatiels at Seven [2008]

When her old friend Karen drops by with two-year-old son Timmy, Meg Langslow reluctantly agrees to babysit "just for a little while." But when nightfall comes, the toddler is still in residence and Karen isn't answering any phone calls. Meg decides she must find out what's happening, so the next morning, with Timmy in tow, she retraces her friend's footsteps — and begins to suspect that Karen's disappearance is tied to at least one serious crime. Has Karen been killed or kidnapped? Is she on the run from the bad guys? Or is she one of the bad guys? The police don't seem to care, so Meg once again plays sleuth — this time with a toddler as her sidekick.

As usual, Meg's extended family adds to the complications in her life. What covert animal welfare project are Dad and the curmudgeonly zoologist Dr. Montgomery Blake working on — and will Meg have to make another late-night trip to bail them out of jail? Why does Meg's brother keep disappearing — is he merely trying to avoid babysitting, or is he involved in something more mysterious? Will taking care of Timmy dampen newly married Meg and Michael's enthusiasm for starting a family of their own? And are any of Meg's relatives reliable enough to be trusted with a two-year-old — especially a two-year-old whose whereabouts might be of interest to some very dangerous people?

Six Geese A-Slaying [2008]

Meg and Michael's house is serving as the marshaling point for the annual Caerphilly Christmas parade. The theme is "The Twelve Days of Christmas," and it features twelve drummers from the school marching band, eleven bagpipers, ten leaping lords costumed in medieval finery from the college drama department, etc. There are also assorted Christmas-themed floats, a live nativity scene on a flatbed truck, the Three Wise Men on Caerphilly zoo camels, and Santa Claus in a bright red horse-drawn sleigh (eight reindeer were beyond the zoo's scope).

Meg has been volunteered to organize the parade, which is to proceed from her house to the local campus, where Santa will take up residence to hear the Christmas wishes of the town's children. Of course, getting all the camels, pipers, leapers, and drummers in order is proving every bit as difficult as Meg feared it would be. Then her
nephew Eric, wide-eyed and ashen-faced, whispers, "Meg, something's wrong with Santa."

The local curmudgeon, whose beard and belly made him a natural for the role, has been murdered. Now Meg and Chief Burke, who is playing one of the wise men, are faced with the two-fold mission of solving the murder and saving Christmas!

**Swan For the Money** [2009]

Meg Langslow's eccentric parents have a new hobby: growing roses and entering them in highly competitive shows. Dad's gardening skill and Mother's gift for selecting and arranging the blossoms should make them an unbeatable team — and Meg is relieved they've taken up such a safe, gentle hobby. She even volunteers to help when the Caerphilly Garden Club sponsors its first annual rose show. But after a few hours of dealing with her parents' competitors, Meg is worried. Rose growers are so eccentric that they make Meg's family seem almost normal, and so competitive that they will do nearly anything to take home the show's grand prize — making them prime suspects when Meg discovers that someone is attempting to kill the wealthy woman on whose estate the competition is being held. Of course, the intended victim had other enemies — her treatment of her farm animals had aroused the interest of several animal welfare activists, including Meg's zoologist grandfather. Meg tries to leave the detecting to the local police and focus on protecting her parents' chances to win the coveted Black Swan trophy, but she soon finds herself compelled to solve the crime before any more rose growers die.

**The Real Macaw** [2011]

During a 2am feeding for her four-month-old twins, Meg Langslow hears an odd noise and goes downstairs to find her living room filled with dozens of animals—cats, dogs, hamsters, gerbils, rabbits, guinea pigs, and a stunningly foul-mouthed macaw. She soon learns that financial woes have caused the local animal shelter to repeal its no-kill policy.

Her kindhearted father, her zoologist grandfather, and other like-minded citizens have stolen all the shelter's animals, both as a gesture of protest and to protect them until the hated policy can be repealed. But the volunteer who was to transport the animals to new homes has been murdered. Was it the victim's tangled love life that drove someone to murder? Or the dark secrets behind local politics? And will Meg ever succeed in finding homes for all the animals that have landed in her life?

**Some Like it Hawk** [2012]

Meg Langslow is plugging her blacksmith's trade at "Caerphilly Days," a festival inspired by her town's sudden notoriety as "The Town That Mortgaged Its Jail." The lender has foreclosed on all Caerphilly's public buildings, and all employees have evacuated — except one. Phineas Throckmorton, the town clerk, has been barricaded in the courthouse basement for over a year.

Mr. Throckmorton's long siege has only been possible because of a pre-Civil War tunnel leading from the courthouse basement to a crawl space beneath the bandstand. The real reason for Caerphilly Days is to conceal the existence of the tunnel: the tourist crowds
camouflage supply deliveries, and the ghastly screeching of the tunnel's rusty trap door is drowned out by as many noisy activities as the locals can arrange. But the lender seems increasingly determined to evict Mr. Throckmorton – and may succeed after one of its executives is found shot, apparently from inside the basement. Meg and her fellow townspeople suspect that someone hopes to end the siege by framing Mr. Throckmorton. Unless the real killer can be found quickly, the town will have to reveal the secret of the tunnel – and the fact that they've been aiding and abetting the basement's inhabitant. Meg soon deduces that the killer isn’t just trying to end the siege but to conceal information that would help the town reclaim its buildings – if the townspeople can find it before the lender destroys it in a gut-busting caper that will have giggles and guffaws coming as fast as a four-alarm fire.

The Hen of the Baskervilles [2013]

Meg Langslow is helping Mayor Randall Shiffley organize the Virginia Un-Fair, Caerphilly's entry in the race to replace the old state fair (which has gone bankrupt). Before a line can even form outside the ticket booth, however, a pair of Bantam Russian Orloff chickens are stolen from their coop in the chicken tent. Soon, a rash of vandalism crops up at the fair, showing no heritage farm animal, prize vegetable, or artisanal craft to be safe.

While patrolling the fairgrounds, determined to catch the perp, Meg runs into her friend Molly, who has been building a successful business making goat cheeses. Molly is terrified that she may lose her farm because her idle husband Brett has left her for Genette Sedgewick, a rich hobby winemaker, and is demanding his half of the land. Meg enlists Mother's help to find Molly a divorce lawyer, but later that night, Brett is found murdered and Molly is swiftly accused as his killer.

Meg is convinced that her friend wouldn't so much as harm a fly, but can she find the real killer before it's too late? Will she track down the vandal who has been terrorizing – however creatively – the fair's participants? And will Michael be able to convince her to add members of his new favorite heritage breed to their growing menagerie?

Duck the Halls [2013]

A few nights before Christmas, Meg is awakened when volunteer fireman Michael is summoned to the New Life Baptist Church, where someone has rigged a cage full of skunks in the choir loft. The lengthy process of de-skunking the church requires its annual pre-Christmas concert to relocate to Trinity Episcopal, where Mother insists the show must go on, despite the budget-related protests of Mr. Vess, an elderly vestryman. Meanwhile, when Meg helps her grandfather take the skunks to the zoo, they discover that his boa has been stolen – only to turn up later during the concert, slithering out from the ribbon-bedecked evergreens. The next morning is Sunday, and the congregation of St. Byblig’s, the local Catholic church, arrive to find it completely filled with several hundred ducks.

It's clear that some serious holiday pranksters are on the loose, and Meg is determined to find them. But before she can, a fire breaks out at Trinity, and Mr. Vess is discovered dead. Who would have murdered such a harmless – if slightly cranky – old man? Who has the time during the busy holiday season to herd all of these animals into the town's churches? And will Meg ever be able to finish all of her shopping, wrapping, cooking, caroling, and decorating in time for Christmas Eve?

The Good, the Bad and the Emus [2014]

Go ahead...make Meg's day. It's not as if her life could get any weirder. Meg's long-lost paternal grandfather, Dr. Blake, entered her life a few years ago after seeing Meg's picture in the paper – she's a dead ringer for her grandmother, Cordelia, after all. Now local private investigator Stanley Denton has been hired to track down Cordelia's whereabouts...only to find that she mysteriously passed away within the year. And Meg's newly found cousin, Annabel, claims it was murder. So much for a festive family reunion...

Stanley and Meg agree to help track down the killer and get justice for Cordelia. Dr. Blake has an idea about how to distract the locals from their investigation: He'll stage a rescue of the feral emus that have escaped from an abandoned local farm. When murder strikes again, Meg suspects that the killer may indeed be among the flock of rescue volunteers...but what now? While her grandfather
pursues that lead, Meg continues to investigate both murders with a lot of help from Annabel, who can shed some light on some long-buried family secrets. But will they solve the case before the killer strikes again?

**The Nightingale Before Christmas [2014]**

'Tis the season for tree trimming, mistletoe-dangling, and a cut-throat competition that has everyone in Caerphilly on edge. Whatever happened to the simple joys and magical spirits of Christmas? Meg Langslow’s own mother is among those participating in a holiday-themed design extravaganza in which each room in an untenanted show house is decorated for the public to view. All the proceeds go to charity—so why are all the contestants fighting tooth and nail to win first prize?

That is the question Meg is trying to answer after Clay Spottiswood, the most haughty and hostile of the designers, turns up dead. With tempers flaring and fears on the rise, can Meg sort through the tinsel-strewn mayhem and solve a murder...before the killer strikes again?

**Lord of the Wings [2015]**

It’s another holiday and Mayor Randall Shiffley has turned Caerphilly, Virginia into Spooky City, USA. The residents are covering every window with cobwebs and roaming the streets in costume to entertain the tourists, and Meg’s grandfather is opening a new "Creatures of the Night" exhibit in the zoo. When a real body at the zoo and a suspicious fire at the Haunted House threaten to mar the town’s creepy fun, it’s up to Meg Langslow to save Halloween.

**Die Like an Eagle [2016]**

Meg is Team Mom and Michael is coach of their twin sons’ youth baseball team, the Caerphilly Eagles. Meg tangles with Biff Brown, the petty, vindictive league head. On opening day, Biff’s lookalike brother is found dead in the porta-potty at the ball field. So many people think Biff’s scum that it would be easy to blame him, but he has an alibi—and Meg suspects he may actually have been the intended victim.

**Gone Gull [2017]**

Meg Langslow is spending the summer at the brand-new Biscuit Mountain Craft Center, helping her grandmother Cordelia run the studios. But someone is committing acts of vandalism. Is it the developers who have found a new tactic to pressure Cordelia into finally selling the property? Or is the real target Meg’s grandfather, who points out that any number of environmentally irresponsible individuals could have it in for him—and his flock of gulls? Then, just as Meg seems to be making headway in her search for the culprit, a dead body turns up at the center. A murderer is waiting in the wings...Does Meg have what it takes to turn this case into a soaring success?

**How the Finch Stole Christmas [2017]**

Meg’s husband has decided to escalate his one-man show of Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol* into a full-scale production with a large cast including their sons Jamie and Josh as Tiny Tim and young Scrooge and Meg helping as stage manager.

The show must go on, even if the famous—though slightly over-the-hill—actor who’s come to town to play the starring role of Scrooge has brought a sleigh-load of baggage and enemies with him. And why is Caerphilly suddenly overrun with a surplus of beautiful caged finches?

**Toucan Keep a Secret [2018]**

Meg Langslow is at Trinity Episcopal Church locking up after an event and checking on the toucan her friend Rev. Robyn Smith is fostering in her office. When she investigates the sound of hammering in the columbarium (the underground crypt where cremated remains are buried), Meg finds the murdered body of an elderly parishioner. Several niches have been chiseled open; several urns knocked out; and amid the spilled ashes is a gold ring with a huge red stone.
The curmudgeonly victim had become disgruntled with the church and ranted all over town about taking back his wife's ashes. Did someone who had it in for him follow him to the columbarium? Or was the motive grave robbery? Or did he see someone breaking in and investigate? Why was the ruby left behind?

While Chief Burke investigates the murder, Robyn recruits Meg to contact the families of the people whose ashes were disturbed. While doing so, Meg learns many secrets about Caerphilly's history – and finds that the toucan may play a role in unmasking the killer. Clues and events indicate that a thief broke into the church to steal the toucan the night of the murder, so Meg decides to set a trap for the would-be toucan thief – who might also be the killer.

Lark! The Herald Angels Sing  [2018]

It’s Christmastime in Caerphilly and Meg, full of holiday spirit, is helping out with the town's festivities. While directing a nativity pageant and herding the children participating in it, she finds a surprise in the manger: a live baby.

A note from the mother, attached to the baby girl’s clothes, says that it’s time for her father to take care of her – and implicates Meg’s brother, Rob, as the father. And while a DNA test can reveal whether there's any truth to the accusation, Rob's afraid the mere suspicion could derail his plan to propose to the woman he loves. Meg quickly realizes it's up to her to find the baby's real identity.

She soon discovers that the baby – named Lark according to the fateful note – may be connected to something much bigger. Something that eventually puts a growing number of Meg’s friends and family in danger. And before long, Meg realizes she can’t fix things single-handedly. Meanwhile, a war is brewing between Caerphilly and its arch-rival Clay County—and it's not a snowball fight. Can Meg bring everyone together in time for the holidays?

Terns of Endearment  [2019]

Meg Langslow's grandfather has been booked by a cruise line to give lectures on birds and other environmental topics as part of their ship’s education/entertainment itinerary, and Grandfather has arranged for a passel of family members to join him.

The passengers’ vacation quickly becomes a nightmare when they wake up to find themselves broken down and in need of repairs in the Bermuda Triangle. To keep the stranded passengers calm, Meg’s family and friends band together to keep things organized and provide entertainment. Some even take up the cause of nursing an injured tern back to health.

But things get even worse when a crew member announces to all that a woman has jumped overboard, leaving behind her shoes, shawl, and a note. The note reveals she’s the mortal enemy of group of writers who came on board for a retreat, and the group is split on whether suicide is in-character for her. Meanwhile, grandfather’s assistant Trevor seems to have gone missing too!

The captain decides not to investigate, saying he’ll notify American authorities when they reach their destination. But Meg's father thinks they should find out whether there was foul play while the prime suspects are all stuck on board. Who wanted the writer dead? Why doesn’t the captain seem concerned? What happened to Trevor? It'll be a race against the clock to solve these mysteries before they make the necessary repairs and return to shore.

Owl Be Home For Christmas  [2019]

It's a few days before Christmas, and Meg's grandfather is hosting a scientific conference on owls at the Caerphilly Inn. Most of the family are there, helping out in one capacity or another, including Meg's grandmother, Cordelia – invited by Grandfather in rare gesture of peace-making – to share her expertise on rehabilitating large birds, including owls. An unexpectedly severe snow storm traps the conference-goers in the hotel, and one of the visiting ornithologists is murdered. Even if Caerphilly is able to clear the roads in time, Chief Burke doesn’t want the various suspects to scatter to half a dozen continents before he identifies the killer, so there’s a very real possibility that none of them will make it home for Christmas...at least not unless Meg comes to the rescue.
When a workaholic techie misses work for several days, his friend, Turing, does the only neighborly thing and checks in on Zack. She checks to see if he's logged in from home. No luck. Then she skims the databases of local banks. Nothing. Next she searches hospital records throughout the state. No Zack.

Turing is no crazed stalker: she is an artificial intelligence personality of Zack's creation. But, unlike other AIPs, Turing is sentient - and she senses foul play. She finds clues, but Zack's enemies may well lie in the real world - outside the realm of the AIPS - where Turing has no ability to move.

Ray Santiago's friends from work know him as a brilliant but easygoing systems engineer who spends a lot of time on his favorite online role-playing game. But the game is over for Ray: his colleagues from work, Maude, Tim, and Turing, have just found out about Ray's murder in a dark alley. He was shot, and his laptop stolen. It could be just another D.C. street crime. But if Turing's password was in that computer - and it's fallen into the wrong hands - she could be in terrible danger.

With Turing's Web-searching powers and Maude's and Tim's access to the outdoors, the trio starts looking into Ray's death, tracing their colleague's life from that fatal night, backspace by backspace. But this project leads to more questions than answers - because Ray seems to have fabricated his life story, even his name.

And now their quest is growing even more crucial. For as they sort their way through Ray Santiago's various personas, online and off, danger lurks in the lab - perhaps within the very computer in which Turing lives.