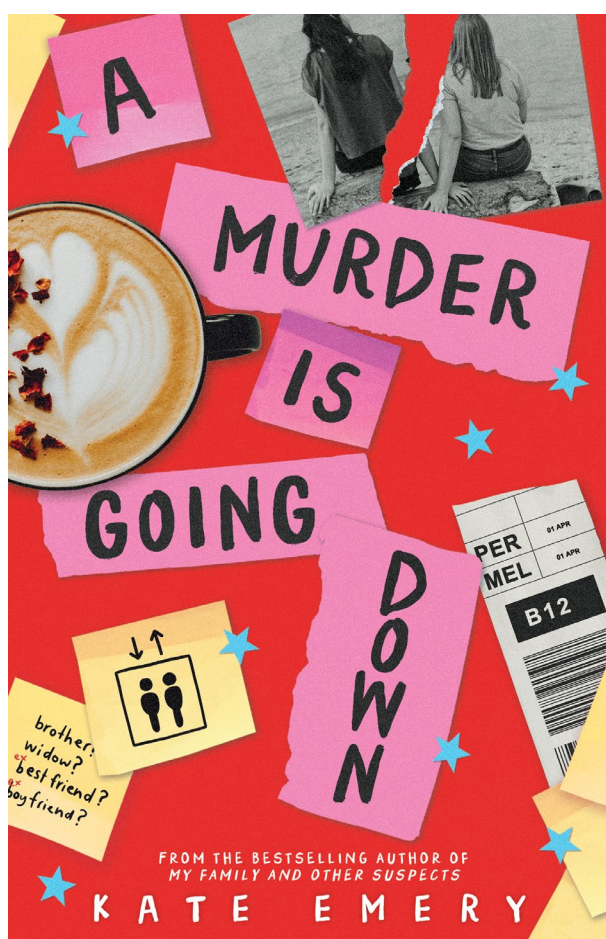


A Murder is Going Down

By Kate Emery



A brilliant and hilarious cosy YA crime from the author of *My Family and Other Suspects*, with a mystery that will keep readers guessing to the very last page. For fans of Karen McManus and Holly Jackson.

RECOMMENDED FOR

12 – 16 (Lower and Upper Secondary)

THEMES

Family, crime, love, romance, murder, humour, mystery, publishing

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SYNOPSIS

Heidi's meant to be having the time of her life on exchange in Switzerland, but instead she's cold, alone and on an involuntary dairy-free diet. So when she hears the news of her brother Felix's death, she's quick to jump on the first plane home to Perth.

To be completely honest, Felix wasn't that much of a brother, so Heidi's not crying buckets – but she's not exactly happy either. Thanks to an epic betrayal by her (ex) best friend and (ex) boyfriend, Heidi has absolutely nothing to do and no one to talk to. No one, that is, except Patrick, the wisecracking younger brother of Felix's widow, who convinces her that they need to investigate her brother's mysterious demise.

Can Heidi and Patrick get to the bottom of Felix's death – and do they really want to?

Kate Emery is the queen of cosy crime and the bestselling author of *My Family and Other Suspects*, which won the John Marsden Book of the Year for Older Children at the 2025 ABIA's and the 2025 Indie Book Award for Young Adult Fiction.

NOTE FROM KATE EMERY

'Sibling relationships are a big part of this book and a big part of my life. I'm one of three and my husband is one of four, so we have a whole lot of brothers, sisters and in-laws between us. I loved the idea of writing a murder mystery that also looks at the value of relationships between siblings – and what it can be like when your own family life doesn't look that way.

'I also straight-up wanted to write a book featuring not one but two moments where people get stuck in lifts. It can be such a cliché in TV, where people are always falling in love or having babies in lifts, but it's a cliché for a reason: the claustrophobia and the fear of the drop below is so creepy to me. It's the perfect setting for a murder mystery.'

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Credit Kelly Pilgrim-Byrne

Kate Emery lives in Perth and works as a senior reporter for the *West Australian*. She is the author of *The Not So Chosen One*, which was shortlisted for the Text Prize and the Aurealis Awards, and *My Family and Other Suspects*, which won the 2025 Indie Book Award for YA and the John Marsden Book of the Year for Older Children at the 2025 ABIA awards.

IN-CLASS DISCUSSIONS AND ACTIVITIES

Cover Discussion Questions

- **Title & Tone:** What kind of story do you expect from the title *A Murder is Going Down*? How does the phrasing set the tone compared to more traditional mystery titles?
- **Visual Clues:** What might the torn photograph of two friends suggest about relationships and motives in the story?
- **Design Choices:** How do the bright colours, sticky notes, and playful design elements change your expectations about the type of murder mystery this might be (e.g. cosy vs. dark thriller)?
- **Character Suspensions:** The sticky note lists 'brother? widow? best friend? boyfriend?'. What does this suggest about the kinds of suspects we might meet, and how does it encourage you to speculate before even opening the book?
- **Symbolism:** Why do you think the designer included items like a coffee cup, sticky notes, and a boarding pass? What do these details hint about the setting or themes?

- Target Audience: Based on the cover design, who do you think this book is aimed at – teens, adults, or both? What design elements make you say that?

Title

- The title *A Murder is Going Down* plays on the double meaning of Felix's death and Heidi and Marianne being trapped inside a lift. How does the use of a lift – both as the setting for *Now* and as part of the murder story in *Then* – add to the drama of the novel?

Chapter Endings

- Chapter endings in a murder mystery are crucial for maintaining suspense, engagement, and the overall pacing of the story. Find examples in *A Murder is Going Down* where the chapter endings:
 - foreshadow what is about to happen
 - describe an unexpected turn of events
 - heighten the readers' sense of tension and drama

Structure

- This novel moves between 'Now' (two characters trapped in a lift) and 'Then' (the murder story). How does this shifting structure shape your reading experience? Does it build suspense, cause the reader to question what is real, or change the way you view the characters – and why?

Characters

- Who was your favourite character in the story? What attracted you to them?
- Who was your least favourite character, and what didn't you like about them?
- Why do you think the dynamic of the amateur sleuth and their sidekick – in this case Heidi and Patrick – is important to a murder mystery? Did you find the dynamic between Heidi and Patrick compelling?

Sibling Relationships

'Is it expensive?' I ask, because it looks like it is.

'It's Patrick's,' he says, then grins. 'So what am I even worried about?'

'What's it like, the two of you living together in Melbourne?'

'Better now I don't have to pack his school lunchbox,' he says.

'You guys have lived together since your mum died?'

'Yeah, Patrick was only twelve, I think. Elena and I hadn't lived out of home for that long, so we moved back in. We've always been close.'

'Still, that was sweet of you,' Lilia says.

'What else could we do?' Michael says, bending over to tie a loose shoelace with all the speed of a six-year-old who's just learned how. 'It wouldn't be fair on the foster system to inflict Patrick on them.'

I laugh.

'Not every brother would do it,' Lilia says, and I know she's thinking about Felix.

'Do you have brothers or sisters?' Michael asks her, finally straightening up. (p 246)

- Kate Emery says that she loved the idea of writing a murder mystery that also looks at the value of relationships between siblings – and what it can be like when your own family life doesn't look that way.

Compare and contrast Patrick and Heidi's experience of family and how it affects their actions in the novel.

Red Herrings

- Where does the term 'red herring' come from?
- What do red herrings add to a murder mystery?

- Can you identify any red herrings in *A Murder is Going Down*?

Humour

'Going outside in the middle of a party for a nature walk – that's weird,' Patrick says.

'Not if he was thinking about killing himself.'

He looks at me. 'You're not what you'd call a sentimental person, huh?'

'I have my moments.'

'Me neither,' Patrick says. 'I don't think my family does sentiment.'

'Elena literally works with special needs kids. She's all sentiment.'

'Maybe it skips a generation.'

'You're the same generation,' I point out.

'You're very argumentative today.'

'Not just today.' (p 55)

- Why do you think murder mysteries often include a healthy dose of humour in the plot? Does the humour add to or take away from the tension?

Resolution

- A compelling resolution is crucial in a murder mystery as it delivers the final answers to the intricate questions and puzzles presented throughout the story. It not only satisfies the reader's curiosity by clearly revealing the identity of the culprit and the motives behind the crime, but also ties together all the narrative threads, ensuring a coherent and gratifying conclusion.
 - Did you find the resolution in *A Murder is Going Down* satisfying? Why/why not?

- Do you think there were enough clues laid into the story to justify the resolution?
- Did you feel any sympathy for Felix or did you think he deserved his fate? Why/Why not.

Genre

- Cosy murder mysteries have become a very popular subgenre today, with their mix of crime, humour, and everyday settings. Why do you think readers are so drawn to cosy murder stories now, and how do they differ from darker or more violent crime novels?