



# Once Upon a Grind

*Cleo Coyle*

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**Once Upon a Grind** Cleo Coyle

**From the *New York Times* bestselling author of *Billionaire Blend*—a mystery with a sleeping beauty that is “so much fun to read.”\***

It's Fairy Tale Week in New York City, and Clare Cosi has given her coffee truck a “Jack and the Beanstalk” makeover for the Central Park festival. Her ex-husband has contributed a bag of African coffee beans with alleged magical properties, and his octogenarian mother is giving out readings of the grinds. But Clare remains skeptical—until she receives a vision that helps her find a young model's body in the park's woods.

The police dismiss “sleeping beauty” as the victim of a drug overdose. But when Clare uncovers evidence that points to murder, she winds up with a dangerous predator on her heels and an investigation that leads right back to her own NYPD detective boyfriend. If she doesn't solve this mystery fast, those magic beans predict an *unhappy* ending.

\**Once Upon a Romance*

## Once Upon a Grind Details

Date : Published September 1st 2015 by Berkley (first published December 2nd 2014)

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Author : Cleo Coyle

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## From Reader Review Once Upon a Grind for online ebook

### Jenifer Calandra says

I happened upon this book by chance in the "lending library" of my apartment building. The concept sounded cute, so I decided to give it a chance. Yes, this is not the first book in the series, so I admit I needed more backstory to make the plot seem less fantastical and by-chance, so I made an effort to ignore those aspects while reading.

The book was cute, but my biggest beef was how poorly edited this book was. It's published by the Berkeley Prime Crime imprint of Penguin, so I know there are editors and editorial assistants and stuff who work there. So I was shocked to see spelling errors, omissions (like in the acrostic poem Esther writes in her apartment), and the incorrect usage of "your" in place of "you're." It really ruined the book for me! I felt like I spent more time trying to spot more errors (which I did) than I did actually reading and enjoying the book.

Oh, also, yes, the plot is way far into left field and super imaginative and THIS STUFF DOES NOT HAPPEN IN REAL LIFE.

I think Cleo Coyle was drinking magic coffee while writing this.

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### Debbie Lester says

The Coffehouse Mystery series continues with the latest installment by Cleo Coyle, Once Upon a Grind. Most fairy-tales start with once upon a time and end with happily-ever-after, but this book is about magic beans and murder. Coyle once again impresses with a knack for good storytelling, intelligent characters and the perfect cup of joe. Get your favorite beverage ready, along with a free evening and a cozy blanket, because once you start this book, you won't be able to put it down til the very end!

What I liked:

Two of the biggest names in cozy mysteries in one week. I'm on a roll! I love Cleo Coyle's Coffehouse Mystery series with a passion. I am a coffee drinker myself and loved the initial theme of the series and all of the interesting situations Coyle puts her heroine, Clare Cosi into. Clare, along with everyone at the Village Blend is an intelligent and resourceful character. Coyle's way with characterization is exceptional, but I think it's the overall dynamic between the characters that has kept this series just as popular today as when it first started.

In the latest addition to the series, Once Upon a Grind, Coyle uses a fairy-tale theme but imbues it with a bit of murder. Being a fan of magic and fairy-tales started young with me and a book of classic tales my sister and I poured over as children. So, I was excited by the theme of this book and was totally caught up from the first chapter. Who would want to kill a princess? Coyle has the pulse of the cozy community and publishing at large. Fairytales are all the rage, but it takes a unique spin to set any book apart from the masses and Coyle does it with style. Her book may have a magical theme but it's still all about the coffee. Loved every word of it!

Clare is once again thrown into a murder investigation when she participates in a fairy-tale themed festival in Central Park with her coffee truck. I loved the playful spirit of the festival and the reading of the coffee grinds and such. The coffee truck had a Jack and the Beanstalk theme and everything was going great, when

one of the princesses is found dead in the woods. I loved the interplay between Clare and Matteo in this installment of the series a lot. Matteo is always getting mixed up in something and this time it's coffee beans with magical properties. Their relationship Clare has developed with Matteo, who happens to be her ex-husband throughout the series is one of the best parts. I like them together, but not romantically and it works so well. Coyle gives readers intelligent and likable characters that she has developed throughout 14 books. Simply amazing!

The mystery reaches far and wide from Wall Street to the East Side and even into the past. A murder that took place as far back as the Cold War is involved and this one has lots of twists and turns to keep readers off their game. It still amazes me how cut-throat the coffee business can be and it is so intertwined with just about every other kind of business out there. There were some red herrings in this one and it was not predictable at all. Coyle once again delights readers with her latest book and keeps them coming back for more!

Bottom Line:

There are some big names in cozy mystery genre and Cleo Coyle is one of them. This husband and wife writing team has produced a long lived series that just keeps getting better with every book. Once Upon a Grind is one of my favorites out all fourteen books in the series. I loved the fairy-tale theme and the interactions of all of the regulars at the Village Blend. This is a series you can't afford to miss! From the amazing cover art to the final words of the book to the fantastic and tasty recipes, you'll be hanging on every word!

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### **Anne says**

I've read every book in this series to date, albeit only once so maybe I've forgotten some details. When did Clare become a believing tea leaf reader? She also, if I remember correctly, had visions in this book before she drank coffee from magic beans. Yes, magic beans which accentuate psychic ability, which Clare apparently has. What?!? I read A LOT of paranormal and urban fantasy books so I obviously enjoy elements like this, but not when I'm expecting to read a straight mystery. That was my first impression, however, I was able to go with the flow after my initial disbelief and dislike.

The story itself was quite complicated with Clare's home life in a bit of a turmoil, her baristas having life changes, medieval fun, a speakeasy, Russian emigres and a fairy tale thread as well as the magic beans. On top of this, we see lots of character development on several fronts (yay!).

I agree with another reviewer, there did seem to be an unusual number of editing misses for a book from Penguin, but they didn't bother me.

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### **Andrea Stoeckel says**

With this, the fouteenth Coffeehouse Mystery, I am finally caught up with Clare, Blanche, Matteo and the "family" that invade the Village Blend in this international intrigue long- running story.

Clare runs into the Fall Farytale Forest Brigade working with and within Manhattan's elite in a "Once Upon a Time" based tale of drugs, the Cold War, and a hot love life of more than one Prince Charming. It all starts with Matt and his coffee beans..... and ends with the closing of a very old international spy case you have to

read to believe.

Told in typical Cleo Coyle style, this book is just as wonderful as the other 13, and sets the stage for some changes in the future. A great story, with interesting recipes and Bosnian and Turkish coffee facts that might be very interesting.

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### **Missy says**

Fabulous! Love, love, love this series!

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### **Ronna says**

The Village Blend Coffeehouse and many many fairy tales are blended together to make a new mystery for Clare Cozi and her Village Coffee House crew. Everyone is dressed up for the Fairy Tale Festival when the Sleeping Beauty goes missing in Central Park, and Clare's ex husband, Matt, is the Prince Charming who has lost his princess.

Jack's beans might have grown a beanstalk to the giant, but Max's supposedly magical African beans made coffee that gives visions. Can these visions actually help Clare solve a mystery of the pink and red princesses? Will Clare decide weather to move to DC with her NYPD boyfriend? Will Boris capture his lady love?

This is definitely a fantastical thinking mystery, where you can let your imagination take flight in the creative adventures the coffeehouse in wonderland. Though I'm not a real fantasy or fairy tale person, I thoroughly enjoyed this story and fitting the puzzle pieces together. As always, the audible of this book added so much to the narrative.

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### **Anna Louise says**

This was an truly enchanting story and so much fun to read! I stayed up until early in the morning reading telling myself "just one more chapter" again and again. It is stories like this one that give readers like me "book hangovers" but they are so worth it.

This is a must read for cozy lovers. Whether you have read all the books in this series or this is your first Coffee house Mystery I just know you will love this story. Just a little warning – this is not a book you can read a few chapters and set it aside. Short chapters that lead right into the next one and the next one and the next one and before you know you are at the end. So don't start this book if you have to work the next morning. This is the perfect book for a lazy weekend day snuggled up in front of your fireplace in a comfy chair.

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### **Jonathan says**

I really liked the most recent installment of this series. This book led us through hidden clubs, Cold War debts, and a huge change in Clare's life.

The characters were once again great, and the mystery was, too. I never guessed the killer but when it was revealed the killer fit in nicely. I was a bit upset over the major decision Clare made in her life at the end, I don't want to reveal it because of spoilers, but it may make a huge change in the series with the next book.

Overall an entertaining book with a great cast of characters and an even better plot. I hope the next one continues to be this good!

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### **Annie says**

Step into this well-crafted cozy mystery at any book number and I guarantee you will go back to the first one to find out about this wonderful group of people at the Village Blend. While each book can stand on its own, the character development gently occurs over the course of the series. The writing is clean, smooth, and top-notch, and the characters are interesting, fun, and dimensional. Cleo Coyle introduces a new aspect to the central character and keeps it within the boundaries of believability. Scenes with Boris are a hoot, and the visions are so well done that one would assume the author had a few of those magic beans as well. (Madame must never find out about the hen and the scarf thing.) And who knew a papaya and a hot dog were related.

You may want to have your beverage at hand so you do not have to get up during a carefully constructed plot moment. Should you think sleuthing is too easy for the main character, continue reading. There are plenty of "oh no!" moments, plot twists, and re-direction of suspicion to increase your heartbeat. The resolution to the crime is delivered in a surprisingly delightful package.

The best part of this book is a tie between the funny yet very mama-wolf protagonist, the sensory-filled descriptions, and the last line "Don't miss the next Coffeehouse Mystery coming soon." Each release is just so delicious, from the liquid-brown eyes of Matteo to the smooth brew of the newest Ethiopian blend. With each tasty mention of a recipe in the story, I crossed my fingers hoping it was included in the back of the book. (It was!) I'm pretty sure Cleo Coyle added a dairy free treat in there just for me. Overall, this book was full of a great mix of ingredients, tantalizing aromas and flavors, and feelings of happily ever after.

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### **Lisa Ks Book Reviews says**

I must admit here and now that this is the first book I have read in the Coffeehouse Mystery series. Not for lack of wanting to. I just have a huge TBR (to be read) and I didn't want to add a series with so many books already in it to catch up on. Oh boy, have I ever been cheating myself out of some wonderful reading time! This book is not as good as my sister has told me the series is, it's ten times better!

By the end of chapter one of ONCE UPON A GRIND, I knew I was hooked worse than one gets on the wonderful caffeine this series is about. I felt an instant affection right away with the story's characters. Series lead Clare Cosi is someone I would like to know. And while I don't normally care for cozies set in big cities, NYC is about as big as they get, this book had a very cozy, small town feel and I greatly enjoyed it.

The fairy tale theme in the story was very well done. Author Cleo Coyle perfectly blended real life and the fairy tale aspects to create a spectacular mystery that left me breathless. I was on the edge of my seat through the twists and turns of this book. And with its brilliant conclusion, I was finally able to take a deep breath. I

am now a mega Cleo Coyle fan. Good thing my sister has the whole series!

So, grab a cup of your favorite brew and be prepared to enjoy this awesome book.

Make sure to check out the back of the book for tons of tips and recipes!

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## **Babs says**

I have been reading the Coffeehouse Mystery series for several years now. This is book 14 in the series and still keeps me glued to my seat to see what trouble Clare can get herself into. I enjoy seeing all the characters grow through out each book. There is never a dull moment at the coffee house. With Magic beans and murder you are bound to have a good time with this read.

For the Story Book Kingdom Festival Mike, asks her to look after his two children because his ex-wife, Leila, has been acting flaky. Clare loses track of the children, she drinks her ex-husband Matt's new coffee and has a vision that helps her find them. The children lost their dog and while Clare and Matt look for the dog, they find a young woman who was paired with Matt during the festival unconscious in the woods. Matt becomes the prime suspect and Clare must find a way to prove his innocence.

The author does a wonderful job with the characters especially Leila. You will love to hate her and the tension between her and Clare can get pretty heated at times but very believable. The risk Clare takes are funny at times and can lead her into more trouble with Matt and Mike.

I am looking forward to the next book in this series. This is one you will never get tired of. Great recipes to boot.

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## **Lily (Night Owl Book Cafe) says**

It's a Fairy Tale Week in New York City and Central Park is hosting the festival. To get into the spirits, Clare Cosi has given her coffee truck and its employees a Jack and the Beanstalk appeal. For the most part everything seems great until her boyfriends ex shows up and insists Clare watches the kids, her own ex-husband brings magic beans with supposed magical properties, and his mother wants to give a Clare reading of the grind. Clare doesn't want to believe it, until she has her own vision that leaves her unsettled.

When Mike's kids go missing, it's up to Clare to try to find them. Going by the hunch of her visions, Clare makes her way into the park's woods in hopes of finding Mike's kids. Her search not only turns up the kids, but looking for their little dog after had also led her to a pink princess body. Her ex Matt is immediately a suspect when the cop on the job jumps into the conclusion that just because Matt had to play her prince for the day, he must have been the only person who has seen her, and thus the last person in her presence.

Filled with interesting fairy tale visions, magic coffee beans, great characters, and crystal keys, Once Upon a Grind is an excellent read. I am from New York City myself, which is what originally appealed to me about this book. I was so curious, I found myself pleasantly surprised at how well Cleo Coyle handled the New

York City culture and blended it seamlessly into a great story.

It made me smile and it made me laugh. Clare is an awesome character. Thought caring, kind, and determined, she is not immune to flaws. Clare has her own internal battle going on about her relationship with Mike and moving to Washington D.C, which means giving up what she has in NYC, can she do it for the man she loves or does she stand to lose him?

I personally liked the addition of the magic beans into the story. It made it sort of enchanting, and really interesting. I looked forward to the visions because they were so creatively handled. I think Coyle did a remarkable job blending them into the story, where it almost made it sort of believable.

The secondary characters were awesome and really contributed to the whole story. I liked some of the sideline plots that were going on. Like personal issues with Clare's employees, and Clare meets some interesting characters. I think it added to the book and made the background secondary characters come to life. I couldn't help but allow the cast to grow on me. Thus probably why I couldn't stand Mike's ex wife Leila. I found her irresponsible and selfish, but at the same time I understood that she does the things she does because she is so self-centered that she does not know how else to live her life. When the time came to protect her children, she was one wild mother bear and that made me respect her more.

Enough of my rambling, this book was great. I found Once Upon a Grind to be a cozy mystery with a lot of heart. If you love cozy mystery with a bit of fairy tale and magic beans mixed into it, give this one a shot, you might not regret it. Though well over 400 pages, I found that I wasn't bored with the story at all and already missing it.

This review was originally posted on Night Owl Book Café

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### **Amy says**

Welcome back to NYC and the Village Blend Coffeehouse! This time the adventure starts in Central Park and keep on going. I love the fairy tale theme and how we get to find out more about Mike's ex wife and children.

My favorite Village Blend friends are back along with some yummy recipes.

Always feel like I am back home when reading this series!

Looking forward to the next book!!

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### **LORI CASWELL says**

#### Dollycas's Thoughts

This was an truly enchanting story and so much fun to read! I stayed up until early in the morning reading telling myself "just one more chapter" again and again. It is stories like this one that give readers like me "book hangovers" but they are so worth it.

Clare and the Village Blend crew are taking part in the Fairy Tale Fall Event in Central Park. The coffee truck has a Jack and A Beanstalk theme complete with magic coffee beans and coffee grind readings. All is

going well until Clare's ex-husband is pulled in to replace a Prince Charming that failed to show up at the festival. He is paired with a beautiful princess for most of the day and then she goes missing. The search is on until they find the "sleepy beauty" in the dense part of woods in the park. Only she is not sleeping, she is dead and Clare's ex becomes the prime suspect in her demise. The magic coffee beans and the visions they give Clare not only helped find the missing princess but they may help her to find the real killer.

So much happens in this story but it unfolds so naturally it is not overwhelming at all. The clues lead to a secret club and a cold case murder. Clare's boyfriend, Detective Mike Quinn, is on temporary assignment in Washington D.C. but he is still head of a task force for the New York Police Department so he is up to speed on this case. In fact his ex-wife may even be involved since the princess who died was also working as a mother's helper for her taking care of his kids. Coyle has woven quite a tangled web in this mystery linking people and events together you would never imagine and Clare is right in the middle of it all.

There are also things going on outside the main mystery. The subplots deal with some Village Blend employee drama and decision Clare is wrestling with. Matt and Clare may not be romantically involved anymore but they do work well together. I really admire the way the authors have thought outside of the box and let their characters evolve in many directions. It keeps this series fresh and each book better than the last.

This is a must read for cozy lovers. Whether you have read all the books in this series or this is your first Cofffeehouse Mystery I just know you will love this story. Just a little warning – this is not a book you can read a few chapters and set it aside. This writing team uses the same technique as suspense/thriller authors like James Patterson. Short chapters that lead right into the next one and the next one and the next one and before you know you are at the end. So don't start this book if you have to work the next morning. This is the perfect book for a lazy weekend day snuggled up in front of your fireplace in a comfy chair. 10 Starfish!!

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### **Stacey says**

Eh. I am a huge fan of the coffeehouse mysteries, but the weird CIA aspect and the hallucinations were a real disappointment.

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