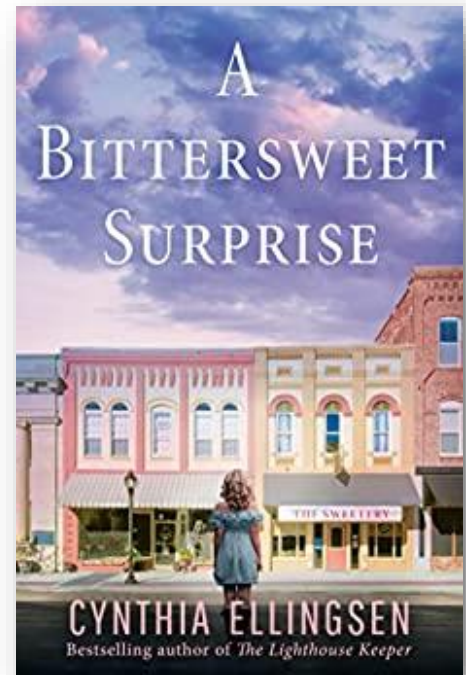**A *Bittersweet Surprise* by Cynthia Ellingsen**

Book Review by Maureen Lang

As you open the first few pages of *A Bittersweet Surprise* by Cynthia Ellingsen, you can just about smell the sugary sweet aroma of the candy shop. Emma, the proprietor's daughter will wait on you with a smile and a willing attitude to make this visit just as special as she can make it. This is a great book to read after all those Christmas goodies we have overindulged in. Lots of sweetness with no subsequent calories!

Emma has known a lot of heartache in the past through losing her father to a heart attack when just a little girl, being shoved on her grandmother when her stepmother Gillian does not seem to want her, struggling through her fiancée's tragic death just before their wedding, and now with the threat of the Sweetery being sold to a big candy conglomerate. It had always been the dream that Emma and her father would run the Sweetery together, thinking up new candies to tempt all those visitors to Lake Michigan's shore during the tourist season. Now all of Emma's dreams of carrying on her father's legacy are in danger of never being fulfilled.

Emma has a heart of gold and throughout the book is sharing and reaching out to those in need, sometimes at risk to herself. Who is the woman and child who are sleeping in that beat up car parked outside the shop? Should she really be making herself so vulnerable to those who might take advantage of her? Is the painting that hangs inside the shop a masterpiece or just a sweet memento of kinder days? Is Gillian as selfish as she seems, or does she have a good reason to be just looking out for herself? Could there be any future between chocolate loving Emma and that health guru Cody Henderson?

All these answers and more can be found when you sit down and savor this delicious book. You will find it satisfies the desire for a sweet, light, and fulfilling read to start the New Year right.