

Daredevil's Apprentice

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The day my friend Lucie Dreadfulwater killed Dale Nowlin, the November wind rattled the rafters of the barn in which they faced each other. Only the two of them could say what happened that day, and they're both dead. No one is left to tell their story except me.

So begins the mystery tale narrated by Viv Powers, Lucie's best friend, as she uses her journalism skills to try to solve the tragedy of Lucie's death on the windswept plains of Oklahoma. The police think that the Cherokee woman committed suicide, but Viv is doubtful. She receives a package in the mail that Lucie had sent shortly before she died. Her ghost seems to call for justice. Someone had been trying-unsuccessfully-to buy Lucie's land. Did that have something to do with her death?

Viv's suspicion that Lucie has been murdered compels her to begin a tenacious investigation. Soon, her questioning creates a furor among tribal members and local police officials. More than one person is hiding something that might explain the deaths of both Lucie and Dale Nowlin. When another man is found dead, Viv risks her own life to find out the answers. Ancient legends of the death-witch, Utlunta, intertwine with the disappearance decades ago of Lucie's grandfather, further entangling the multi-layered knot that Viv must unravel. Has Utlunta returned to wreak more havoc on the townsfolk? Or does the answer lie behind the eyes of one of her neighbors, perhaps even someone she knows quite well? As Viv moves closer to the truth and danger assaults her, she senses that she will indeed have to confront Utlunta, in one evil guise or another, before Lucie's spirit can find peace.

The author has splendidly crafted a stellar murder mystery, peopled it with complex characters, and set it all into motion with a tale as real as an Oklahoma sandstorm. She has a prior novel to her credit, *Tulsa Time*, which also has Viv Powers as its protagonist. With her crisp yet detailed writing style, the author provides a powerful and compelling narrative voice. This is a superb novel.

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