



Gemini Girl Murders

Torena J O'Rorke

Torena O'Rorke (Nov 9, 2013)

\$12.00 (376pp)

978-0-615-83473-3

A flawed but likable protagonist and her charming companion make this twist-and-turn mystery a joy to read.

When one of probation officer Christian Vargas's juvenile parolees is murdered, Vargas and her partner, Daniel, mount their own investigation into the motive and suspects. The mystery twists and turns and eventually leads them to a powerful church and its sect-like youth groups.

Teenager Cassie Maltos and her mother are dead, and her father is the prime suspect in their murders. Vargas knows the father is not responsible, but who is? Crafted from author Torena O'Rorke's work as a probation officer, the character of Vargas rings true. She is initially drawn further into the case because she left her cell phone at the Maltos house, and if she would have returned earlier to retrieve it, she could have perhaps stopped the murder. Vargas is shaped by her emotions and drive, and works very hard to bring the case to its conclusion, even confronting a popular youth pastor. O'Rorke writes a strong female character and deftly navigates the world of probation and law enforcement.

One charming aspect of this mystery is O'Rorke's use of Vargas's dog, Bear. He is a huge mixed breed and a constant companion. In fact, he is well known in the town for being an excellent tracker; he once found a lost five-year-old and was hailed a hero. Bear figures prominently in this story, and his friendly presence acts as a comfort to Vargas and the audience.

The book's packaging is in need of some work. The cover photo is a flower surrounded by purple edging. The text of the title is on the photo of the flower and the author's name is below, making them difficult to read against the background. The font used on the back cover gives the impression that the volume is formatted in large print.

Spelling and grammatical errors pepper the text. For example, "parameter" is used instead of "perimeter," and cakes were removed from the "freeze" instead of the "freezer." Overwriting is also an issue that distracts: "Many traveled with various accoutrements including illegal substances which impaired their judgment."

Style problems aside, this is a solid start for O'Rorke. Vargas's character is likable and flawed, and her companion, Bear, adds to her appeal. Mystery fans and lovers of police procedurals will appreciate this freshman effort and look forward to the next book.

LYNN EVARTS (January 23, 2014)

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