ForeWord Reviews

MYSTERY

In the Moors: A Shaman Mystery
Nina Milton
Midnight Ink
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Access to the spirit world brings a refreshing angle to the detective genre.

In the Moors cheerfully follows the sensual and independent Sabbie Dare into the markets and boot sales of Bridgwater, the wetlands of Somerset, and the therapy sessions Sabbie leads for clients seeking to journey into past lives or buried memories. The novel's prose is a bit uninspiring with too many flat phrases, including "blood pumping under my temples" or "hardened my muscles" to describe fear. But its remote and sometimes eerie setting is engaging, and the good procedural detail of spiritual guidance and healing helps to keep the narrative fresh. *In the Moors* is an enjoyable read for those who love detective stories with strong and enviable female leads.

Spiritual shaman Sabbie Dare isn't looking to get tangled up in a romantic relationship any more than she is in the callous machinations of a murder investigation, but when children of the Somerset Moors begin to disappear, and Detective Sergeant Buckley asks for her help, she finds herself ensnared by both, and the novel's pleasant ride begins.

Sabbie has worked hard to build a rich and self-sufficient life for herself. As a child of foster care and a survivor of a severe car accident, she has known hardship and sometimes finds herself tempted, as she says, to "trade 'tough times,'" in conversations with new friends. But when readers are introduced to her, she has succeeded in establishing her own personal version of the good life. It's only when the body of the first missing child turns up and she's brought together with the intriguing DS Buckley that Sabbie is reminded of the ways in which a person's life can take a sharp turn, for better or worse.

Nina Milton's narrative sticks closely to Sabbie as she goes about her life as a spiritual guide and resident of Bridgwater, and the novel is as much about its heroine and the town she's come to call home as it is a detective story. Even as the mystery unfolds, Milton takes the time to include a number of supporting characters that are a part of Sabbie's network of family and friends.

None of which keeps her from getting pulled into the murder investigation, and the novel falls into a familiar trajectory that relies on Sabbie's stubborn refusal to listen to the advice or warnings from those same friends. Both the narrative's momentum and the investigation itself rely heavily on Sabbie's ability to access a spirit world and, depending on tastes, readers may find this either a too-convenient tool for discovery or a refreshing angle into a traditional story form.

Jennifer Williams