

MYSTERY

Once Is Never Enough

Margie Gosa Shivers

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Three Stars (out of Five)

A mysterious suicide a failing detective agency a corrupt politician and a love affair form the framework for Shivers' second suspense novel *Once is Never Enough*. After Chicago detective Lester Miller's affair with the married Cara Fleming ends and his second marriage dissolves he decides to fold shop and move away to work for the FBI. Before he leaves however he agrees to help a friend and colleague solve one last case. What he doesn't know is that investigating the months-old suicide will mean getting to know his ex-wife's current flame as well as will bring him close to Cara once again.

In this sequel to her first novel *Anonymity* Shivers has crafted an intricate story that leaves few questions unanswered. Unfortunately the reader may at first be distracted by the shifting narratives. While Lester begins the story in his own voice many chapters are told by Cara and others by an omnipotent third-person narrator. But the alternating points of view eventually pay off; Shivers technique allows the reader to gain insight into the characters' complicated relationships with each other.

Once is Never Enough features a multitude of characters each carefully introduced and developed which makes them easy to distinguish as they are revisited later in the story. The large cast allows for exciting twists in the plot's development like the strange e-mails his colleague Sonny receives after Lester notices his assistant lurking with a shadowy stranger. Even the suicide victim's mother becomes a suspect when she tells Lester about her daughter's life insurance policy: "Seems my daughter increased the value a year before her death by paying an extra premium [...] she wanted to make sure I was well taken care of in case something happened to her."

The book could have been improved by a thorough proofreader and the dialog often rings false with an odd combination of overly formal and conversational slang. While Shivers divulges important details about the characters' respective pasts she also includes unnecessary specifics that lend nothing to the narrative such as a canceled dentist appointment.

Despite the book's flaws readers will enjoy the suspenseful story and sympathize with good-guy Lester as he attempts to prove that the apparent suicide was in fact a murder and fights to win back his love Cara.