



Death Plays a Part

Vivian Conroy

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With high tide comes murder...

When her beloved London theatre closes for renovations, costume maker Guinevere is excited to start a job at Cornisea castle, a centuries-old keep on a small tidal island off the coast of Cornwall. Imagine a whole summer full of stories of hidden treasures, fab food and long walks with her perky dachshund Dolly.

But when a reenactment of a medieval trial in the castle dungeons ends in real-life murder, and accusations threaten the castle's future, Guinevere and Dolly dig deep into the island community's best-kept secrets to unmask the killer and save their Cornish summer.

Death Plays a Part Details

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From Reader Review Death Plays a Part for online ebook

Elaine says

What a brilliant closed door murder mystery this proved to be - I loved it! The Cornish Castle is on the island of Cornisea, linked to the mainland by a causeway during low tides and it is to this castle that Guinevere is going to work for the summer. She usually works as a theatrical costume maker but the theatre where she works is closed for renovations and one of the crew encouraged her to apply for this summer post cataloguing books in the castle library. She arrives to discover there's a reenactment planned portraying the trial of Branok the Coldhearted and she looks forward to seeing if she can help in any way. What she and the other islanders didn't anticipate is one of them being murdered whilst locked in a cell in the castle dungeon! With all the evidence suggesting the castle owner, Lord Bolingbrooke, is the killer it is up to his son, Oliver and Guinevere to uncover the islanders secrets and discover the perpetrator!

The big mystery in this case is how someone could carry out the murder. Oliver and Guinevere work well together, with the help of her delightful dachshund, Dolly, and the support of the investigating detective. I was impressed how applying logic and Guinevere's previous experience of murder mysteries in the theatre all slowly reveal more clues. It is somewhat reminiscent of a modern day Agatha Christie mystery with younger sleuths applying their little grey cells in a constructive manner to work out just how the murder was carried out and by whom!

The setting for the series is brilliant, the characters well developed and easy to relate to, the plot is well structured with plenty of puzzles to confound the reader along the way. I highly recommend this delightful murder mystery and I can't wait to read the sequel, Rubies in the Roses, and I'm so glad it is due to be released next month so there won't be a long wait!

I requested and was given a copy of this book via NetGalley and this is my honest opinion after choosing to read it.

Mystereity Reviews says

With her theater closed for renovations, Guinevere lands a summer job cataloging books at a castle on Cornisea, a small island off the coast of England. Together with her little dachshund Dolly, she sets off, expecting an idyllic summer exploring the tiny island. When she arrives, she's delighted to learn that the castle is hosting a re-enactment of a historic trial, but when a man is found murdered in the dungeon and her new employer is accused, Guinevere jumps into action to find the real killer, uncovering a greedy plot and family secrets.

Thoroughly enjoyable first in a new series, with a charming location, rich plot and of course, an adorable Doxie. What more can you ask for in a cozy? I loved this from the very first page, I felt like I was right there along with Guinevere as she got off the train heading for Cornisea, I could almost feel Dolly tugging at the leash! The pace was perfect, introducing the characters with just enough detail to make them jump right off the page and setting up the puzzling plot full of twists and turns that kept me glued to the book. I enjoyed watching it all unfold, locked room mysteries are my favorite and I really appreciated Guinevere's thought process in solving it, no sudden AHA! moment for our girl, she sat down and figured it all out rationally. Go LOGIC!

Overall, Death Plays a Part charmed the socks off me and I can't wait for the next book to come out in

August. Will Oliver and Guinevere let their sparks fan into a relationship? Will Lord Bolingbrooke ever catalog all of his books? Will the treasure be found? I'm gonna stay tuned for more!

***Avonna says**

Check out all of my reviews at: <http://www.avonnalovesgenres.com>

DEATH PLAYS A PART (Cornish Castle Mystery Book 1) by Vivian Conroy is the first of a new cozy mystery series featuring Guinevere Evans and her adorable dachshund, Dolly. It is a clever locked room cozy set in an old castle on a tidal island off the coast of Cornwall.

Guinevere is a costume designer for a London theater that has to close for renovations over the summer. She receives an offer to work and live at Cornisea castle cataloguing their library. She is excited to have a summer of island adventures with Dolly to tell all of her theater family about in the fall.

When she arrives on Cornisea, she is immediately thrown into the mix of players that are producing a reenactment of the medieval trial of Branok the Cold-hearted. Arthur Haydock is playing Branok and is locked in a cell in the dungeon for the rehearsal and found stabbed to death by the cast. Only Lord Bolingbrooke has a key to the cell, but he swears he is innocent even though he and Haydock were at odds. Guinevere and Dolly, with the help of Oliver, Lord Bolingbrooke's son who has returned after traveling the world, work to uncover all of the players' secrets and motives for wanting Haydock dead.

I enjoyed every aspect of this story. The plot was tightly woven and had me guessing until the end, even though I suspected who was responsible, I could not figure out the "How". The pacing is steady and as you read the story, you are always given some new piece of the puzzle that makes you want to continue on. The setting of the castle and village on the tidal island was vividly described and a unique setting.

Guinevere is a main character that I am looking forward to reading more about. We gets peeks into her past, but some things are still unclear. She is mature and steady even though she is only 24 years old, which could come from being raised by her grandmother and/or being on her own. One thing is certain, she and Dolly are a great pair. Oliver, Lord Bolingbrooke's son, makes an interesting co-sleuth and possibly more in future books? Ms. Conroy portrays the islanders vs. the main landers mentality realistically and shows how it effects the characters' moods and actions.

I am looking forward to more Cornisea adventures with Guinevere and Dolly.

booksofallkinds says

DEATH PLAYS A PART by Vivian Conroy is the first book in this utterly captivating, new cozy mystery series, and I am eagerly awaiting the second instalment.

When the London theatre where Guinevere works as a costume designer, closes for the summer, she is delighted to have secured a position as a book cataloguer in Cornisea Castle off the coast of Cornwall, to while away her days. Along with her four-legged companion, Dolly, Guinevere is delighted to spend time in such a historical treasure trove, and the stunning scenery and friendly village all combine to make Guinevere feel welcome and settled. But when a medieval re-enactment up at the castle goes awry and one of the actors

is found murdered, Guinevere must unravel many secrets and lies to discover the killer. But who can she really trust?

As always with Vivian Conroy's stories, the descriptive settings really come alive and I could picture myself standing at the castle window, or walking along the shoreline as the sun set over the village. The characters are a motley crew that are really likeable and unique in their own ways, and I enjoyed getting to know Guinevere who throws herself wholeheartedly into whatever situation she finds herself and wants to help wherever she can. Knowing little of her own family history, we can see how this has affected her in her decisions.

With plenty of mystery, twists, turns, and misunderstandings, DEATH PLAYS A PART by Vivian Conroy is exactly what you want in a good book, and I imagine it would translate perfectly onto our TV screens. I am hooked on this new series and I invite you all to come and join the mystery tour - you won't regret it!

*I voluntarily reviewed this book from the author

Karen Mace says

This is the first time I've read anything from this author, and it won't be the last! Have had a blast being entertained by Guinevere, Dolly and crew and cannot wait for more!

Guinevere is part of a theatre group and they've become her family. She gets the opportunity to head to Cornwall for the Summer to work at a castle and help catalogue the book collection there - sounds like my idea of heaven!! So off she sets with her faithful companion, Dolly the Dachsund, for a new adventure!

Soon her adventure turns to tragedy though as there's a murder at the re-enactment that she and some of the fellow villagers are taking part at. And the victim has annoyed an awful number of people so the clock is ticking to track down the murderer and Guinevere is up for the challenge! When she starts delving into the locals she finds out there's a lot of bad blood and tensions dating way back and it is fun to see her working out who to trust and what to believe.

I've not read many cosy mysteries before as it is a genre that has never appealed much, but after this one i'll definitely be looking out for more as it was such a fun, enjoyable read.

Karen says

This weekend while I was away finished Death Plays A Part by Vivian Conroy. This British Cozy was a breath of fresh air, a fun and light. A great start to this first in the Cornish Castle Mystery Series. A main character who has accepted what some would think is a very boring job cataloging books, at a castle away from everyone and everything, however Guinevere is perfectly at peace and she and her dog look forward to the summer ahead. That ideal summer is foiled by a murder during a reenactment that sees Guinevere working to vindicate her new boss with the help of his son. This was a lovely armchair traveler read.

Katherine Sunderland says

Conroy's novels are always packed full with the right ingredients for a perfect cozy crime story. She strikes a good balance so that when you've finish reading you don't feel stuffed, over indulged or filled up with extra spoonfuls of sugar but instead you are left wanting just a little bit more to satisfy your growing appetite for this author's books!

There are traces of things like the Ladies's Detective Agency or something equally appealing from the ITV Sunday evening schedule in Conroy's writing but there is also a lot of evidence of the influence of Agatha Christie in her books. Conroy's writing is warm, familiar, entertaining and well paced, but also show a secure understanding of how to set up and execute a good mystery story. She is able to manage the plot and characters effortlessly so that the reader is hooked and caught up the drama. For me her novel epitomises the cozy crime genre.

This is a new series from Conroy and having read several of her other novels set in various countries and historical eras, it is fun to start with a new cast of characters and embark on a new journey with her. The Cornish setting is an inspired choice as not only does it remind us of summer holidays and Aidan Turner, it also reminds us of Du Maurier and other gothic novels set in the landscape which can be brooding and full of history. Even though the novel is set in a fictional location, it feels believable enough and it's a clever ploy to have an island, a causeway, the sea and a castle as this holds a delicious and enticing appeal for the reader. A new series and a new protagonist - meet Guinevere! As with Conroy's previous novels, the main character is a female and once again, she is likeable, pleasant and a perfect fit for this novel. Conroy is able to create characters who are full of energy, colour and spirit and it is easy to visualise and imagine the people and the scenes conveyed on the page.

As it is a crime story, I'm not going to talk about the plot but I would recommend this book to anyone who enjoys cozy crime, to anyone looking for a new series to follow and anyone looking for an easy read to pass away a sunny Sunday afternoon or a few days on holiday. Just like it's bright, colourful and stylistic front cover, Death Plays a Part will not only entertain and engage you but will also give you a bit of a mental workout from the comfort of your sun lounger as you attempt to solve the mystery before all is revealed.

Juli says

Guinevere is a costume designer for a London theater company. When the theater closes for renovations, a friend helps her secure a temporary position on Cornisea Island on the Cornish coast cataloging the book collection of Lord Bolingbrooke. When she arrives, she discovers the local historical society is preparing for a re-enactment of an old island legend. Arthur Haydock, who is playing Branok the Cold-Hearted in the re-enactment, is also leading a push to take the castle and surrounding lands from Lord Bolingbrooke and open the island and castle up to the public as a tourist destination. When Haydock is discovered stabbed to death in a locked cell in the dungeons of the castle following a practice for the re-enactment, suspicion falls on Lord Bolingbrooke. Guinevere and Bolingbrooke's son, Oliver, team up together to solve the case before Lord Bolingbrooke is charged with murder.

This was a fun, quick read. The island characters are quirky and interesting. The mystery is well-plotted (despite a few cozy tropes -- slightly bumbling cops who need amateur sleuths to help them solve the case, stereotypical village residents, etc. But what's a cozy without a bit of trope?) with plenty of suspects, twists and turns. The ending was exciting and believable -- not overdone. I always enjoy a good locked-room mystery, and this one fit the bill! The story was a bit light (no in-depth characterization, no gory details about the crime, no hard-core investigation, etc) -- but this is a cozy mystery not a gritty procedural. Cozies are meant to be light, fun reads. Guinevere was a great main character....intelligent, insightful and determined. Her faithful dog, Dolly, added to the story with a bit of comic relief and a dash of doggie intuition. All in all, this was a fun, light summer read -- a perfect short book to read at the beach, on a summer trip, or on a warm afternoon lounging in the sun.

Death Plays A Part is the first book in the Cornish Castle Mystery series. A second book, Rubies In The Roses, will be published in August 2017. I will definitely be reading the second book when it comes out! This was an enjoyable, light-hearted, cozy mystery, and I look forward to reading more by Vivian Conroy. Conroy has written other cozy mystery books including the Lady Alkmene and Country Gift Shop series.

I voluntarily read a review copy of this book from HarperCollinsUK via NetGalley. All opinions expressed in this review are entirely my own.

Leslie says

This book is a mystery on many levels. The first one is why I decided to purchase it. I did apparently 12 days ago but I don't know what inspired this choice. Don't get me wrong it is not a bad book in any way shape or form. I just can't figure out what made me click buy now?

This is a fairly cute, clean little story about a young woman Guinevere and her little dog Dolly who end up on the Cornish coast at a castle for the summer. Guinevere has been hired by the Lord of the castle to help catalog his books. She needs a summer job because her regular job in a theater is on hiatus for renovations.

Dolly is a bit of an enigma, she's young, she's orphaned and without any other family. She arrives at the castle which is on an island (this is an imaginary location based on Mount St. Michael) and really insular. The Lord is a bit techno-phobic and his son, Oliver, seems to just be there to irritate him. The whole town seems a bit put out that the Lord refuses to commercialize the castle and allow them to profit from it. The local history society has convinced him to host a play about a previous villain who lived in the castle.

During a rehearsal the local actor playing the villain is murdered in the castle dungeon and the Lord was the last to see him alive. Now Guinevere has to solve the crime before her new employer is charged.

Overall the clues are pretty heavy handed and the murderer and method were pretty obvious. And Guinevere was too empathetic for me. With each possible suspect she would worry about how they and their family and businesses would react. It got kind of tedious. Also I wasn't thrilled with the dog.

Linda Hill says

With the theatre where she works closed for renovations, Guinevere has no idea a simple summer job cataloguing books for Lord Bolingbrooke will quite so dramatic.

I'm going to get a negative out of the way before I really get into my review. I absolutely loathed the use of 'doggy' to refer to Dolly the dachshund, because she is quite a strong and determined character in her own right and I felt this undermined her.

Doggies aside, I thought Death Plays a Part was a fun read – which seems a peculiar thing to say when murder is at its heart, but it so reminded me of a modern day Agatha Christie or P.G. Wodehouse. I really could see the book as hugely entertaining Sunday night television.

What struck me was the totally consistent way Vivian Conroy carries through the entire conceit of drama, from Guinevere's usual job in the theatre to her means of trying to solve the murder mystery with everything else in between. The whole structure of the story with the reliance on dialogue to move on the action made

me think of a playscript too as I read. I would have liked a little more description at times too.

I enjoyed meeting the cast of characters, and thought the way in which they were all interconnected as is typical of a small community was so cleverly organised. I think I might be a bit in love with Jago.

But it is the plot that I enjoyed the most. I have no idea how Vivian Conroy managed to plan it as she did. She drops clues and red herrings throughout so that it's very entertaining trying to keep one step ahead with Guinevere when so many others obfuscate the truth.

Death Plays a Part is a fun whodunnit with just the right balance of villains, heroes and distractions to provide great entertainment for all lovers of Agatha Christie.

Rachel Gilbey says

An incredibly tightly written closed door mystery that I didn't have the first clue how to solve. Luckily for the detective on the island of Cornisea, Guinevere happened to be working in the castle for the summer, but is normally found in a theatre, often working on murder mysteries, so has a good idea how to try to solve them.

Of course when Guinevere accepted the job in the castle the last thing she was expecting was a dead body on the first night, during a rehearsal for a historical reenactment, where most of the islanders were present. Given the set up of the murder, it was very hard to see past the obvious suspect, but yet Guinevere and Oliver between them try to prove the innocent suspect's innocence.

Unlike in some cosy mysteries, this seemed a lot less bumbling along, and instead had two reasonably intelligent characters thinking aspects of the case through logically and in an informed way. They also seemed to have the ear of the inspector running the case, which seemed odd but useful.

Guinevere doesn't go anywhere without her faithful dog Dolly, who is adorable. I loved Dolly' interactions with other dogs.

Cornisea Island is a lovely setting for a series, and I am intrigued to see where this series is going to proceed next.

Thank you to Netgalley and HQ Digital for this copy which I have reviewed honestly and voluntarily.

Holly says

Finally, another great cozy mystery from Vivian Conroy! This will likely be my 2nd favorite series of hers, right behind the Lady Alkmene books. (Which the 4th book comes out soon!!)

This introduces Guinevere, who is a costume designer for the stage, and when her job entails her to take a hiatus for the summer she accepts a position on the Cornish coast. Her job will find her working for a Lord who is quite volatile at times. However, on her first day there a murder happens! Since she's an outsider and doesn't want to lose her job so soon, she works the case to save her boss. Along the way, Oliver, the boss's son, will help her.

Its no secret that I love cozy mysteries. This one was right up my alley--great characters, a strong murder case, beautiful imagery, an isolated island in England, and, of course, a cute little dachshund. The 2nd book comes out in August and I can't wait to see what's in store for this cast of characters!

**Thank you to the publisher and Netgalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Amy says

All of my reviews can be found on www.novelgossip.com

Every once in awhile I like to change things up and pick up a cozy mystery, there's something comforting about these light mysteries that make for a nice change of pace. Death Plays a Part is the first book in a new series with an adorable and sweet lead character named Guinevere. Fans of this genre will adore her, she's just a lovely character with that perfect combination of curiosity and charm that's so appealing.

This was a quick read with fairly fast pacing, the action begins right away, almost as soon as Guinevere arrives in Cornisea. The setting was both pretty and slightly spooky, it has a deep history and the residents like to tell old ghost stories and legends which added drama to the story. There was a gossipy, small town feel as well, especially as many of the members of the town had secrets they intended to keep. There were plenty of suspects to choose from and Conroy really kept me on my toes trying to figure out whodunnit.

This was a good old fashioned mystery with no gory descriptions or graphic violence. Guinevere and Oliver made quite the pair of amateur sleuths and both were lovely and very likable. This was an enjoyable read with a puzzling mystery and I can't wait to see what Guinevere and her sweet dog Dolly get up to next!

Dash fan says

5? Full of Mystery, suspense, Drama & the best super sleuth Pup star of the book.... Dolly!!!

Death plays a part is the first book I have read by Viv and I'm very excited to discover more of her books.

I was thoroughly enthralled by the mystery and secrets surrounding the murder of Haydock and the island of Cornisea.

Viv created a very magical, mystical feel to the Island.

When Guinevere and Dolly embark on a summer adventure to help Lord Bolingbrooke catalogue books at he's castle. Whilst her beloved theatre is renovated back in London.

She wasn't quiet expecting to be involved in a murder investigation.

When Guinevere and Dolly arrive in Cornisea she notices that the castle and The Cornisea Historical Society are to perform a Medieval re-enactment.

They was to re-create the trial of Branok the Cold-hearted, the steward of Cornisea Castle, who had been accused of vile acts against the villagers under his care.

She was so excited as it meant her Theatrical experience could be of use.

On the day of the re-enactment tempers flare between people, particularly Lord Bolingbrooke and Haydock.

It's no secret that they don't get on and Haydock really isn't a very likeable person. He certainly seems to know how to rub people up the wrong way!

So when he is mysteriously murdered at the re-enactment everyone points the finger at Lord Bolingbrooke. I mean he was the last person to see him alive.... wasn't he??

Guinevere and Bolingbrooke's Son Oliver really don't believe that Lord Bolingbrooke killed Haydock.

So they both set out to prove that he is innocent.

Guinevere and Dolly make the best team!!

Dolly the Dachshund by far stole the star role in my eyes.

She was super intelligent, she has a nose for finding clues, and her interaction with humans and other pups is so heartwarming.

Dolly knows exactly when Guinevere is sad or when Oliver needed reassurance.

She has a huge loveable character. Go Team Dolly!!

Oliver and he's Dad Bolingbrooke have a love/hate relationship. That said he was determined to save he's Dad.

With the help of Guinevere and Dolly things start to unravel, cracks start to appear and secrets are no longer buried!

Cornisea Island has a very magical feel to it.

Stories of buried treasure and lots of secrets, make Cornisea a very intriguing place.

The characters all have their fair share of secrets and lies.... but one thing is apparent... no one really likes Haydock!

When Eal the local constable is called to the murder scene it's clearly obvious he doesn't really have a clue what he is doing.

So they call for Inspector LeFevre to come help him out.

I really liked LeFevre, he was so helpful and actually listened to Guinevere. It very much seemed like he was on their side and was willing to support their theories.

Death plays a part has so many little surprising twists I was spun around in so many directions I didn't have a clue who the murderer was. Just when I thought I had an inkling....another secret uncovered, another twist in the truth.

I loved It!!!

It was so nice not to have a clue, as it adds to the suspense and intensity.

I felt like I was also playing a detective role as my mind was on overdrive trying to piece the clues together!

Who can you trust? Who is covering for who? What secrets are just waiting to burst out?

Such an exciting, enthralling, suspenseful mystery.

Such a feel good read but still created all the tension and unease you need for a great murder mystery!

The characters were very cleverly written, with secrets to hide.

Uncovering the truth gave me tingles!

A very satisfying end!

I'm so looking forward to the next book Rubies in the Roses. Can't wait to catch up with Guinevere and Dolly again!

Would I recommend this book.....Most definitely..... Yes.... 100%

The perfect read for those who love murder mysteries, twists and turns, plenty of secrets and lies, suspenseful, page Turner, perfect cosy feel good read and best of all..... Dolly... the super sleuth pup!

I received this book from the Publisher for free via Netgalley, in which I voluntarily reviewed.

Joanne Robertson says

I do love a cosy mystery and I found this one rather better than some others I have read recently mainly due to the fabulous main character Guinevere and her adorable little dachshund Dolly who goes elsewhere with her. When they head off to Cornwall to work at the castle on the island of Cornisea they have no idea that they are about to become involved in a murder enquiry.

I loved Guinevere and the setting here on Cornisea island. Vivian Conroy has created a visual feast where I found it comparatively easy to visualise the characters and their surroundings which then lead me to think that it would make a great transition from book to t.v. drama. There was a timeless feel to it that captured the atmosphere of a more sedate bygone era, even though it's set in the modern day, making a pleasant change to the gritty dark police thrillers I have been reading recently. I found it an easy read as the narrative flowed along with the fluidity of intrigue following Guinevere and her "partner in crime" Oliver as they try to solve what should really be an open and shut case. Throw in some local legends about buried treasure, some quirky villagers and you have the perfect package for this delectable cosy mystery and one that I'm happy to recommend.
