



Witch Way to Murder

Shirley Damsgaard

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Bewitched meets *Murder She Wrote* in this delightful new cozy mystery series featuring Ophelia Jensen, small town librarian and reluctant psychic, and her grandmother Abby, a benevolent witch.

Thirty something Ophelia Jensen wants to live a quiet life as a small town librarian. She's created a comfortable existence with her kooky, colorful grandmother Abby, and if it were up to her, they could live out their days—along with Ophelia's dog Lady and cat Queenie—in peace and quiet. But, to Ophelia's dismay, she and Abby aren't a typical grandmother/granddaughter duo. She possesses psychic powers, and Abby is a kindly witch. And while Ophelia would do anything to dismiss her gift—harboring terrible guilt after her best friend was killed and she was unable to stop it—threatening events keep popping up, forcing her to tap into her powers of intuition. To make matters worse, a strange—yet devastatingly attractive—man is hanging around Ophelia's library, and no matter how many times she tells him she's sworn off men forever, he persists. Soon this handsome newcomer reveals he's following a lead on a local drug ring, and then a dead body shows up right in Abby's backyard. And much as Ophelia would like to put away her spells forever, she and Abby must use their special powers to keep themselves, and others, out of harm's way.

Witch Way to Murder Details

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From Reader Review Witch Way to Murder for online ebook

Jess says

This is the first book in the Ophelia and Abby series. Ophelia is a librarian who is a loner, her grandmother Abby is a witch who has been trying to tell Ophelia that she can't keep denying her gift. Ophelia refuses to believe that she has any sort of gift because whenever she needed it in the past, people have ended up hurt. When a stranger comes to town (Rick) who has a lot of questions for everyone, Ophelia and Abby start to feel nervous. Why is this man here, and why is he asking so many questions. To top it off, there have been curious things that have been happening in town. Chemicals disappearing, people coming up dead and Ophelia decides she needs to figure out what's going on.

It was a cute story. I found Ophelia a little annoying, she complained and whined about everything. Rick also got on my nerves a bit. But in the end I liked both characters more, and I'm interested to see what happens next.

Sandie Laughner says

I've been having a tough time trying to get into this book. The main character is a Witch, but refuses to use her "gift". She's been traumatized by the death of a friend, so she closes herself up. I'm not really liking this book. I'll be glad when I'm done with it. I have several others in the series, but I'm planning on donating them, rather than waste my time reading them. Sigh~~ and we know how much I love reading Witch books. :(

I managed to struggle thru to the end of this book. I won't be reading any of the other 3 in this series that I own. I gave it a 1 star rating and that was for the grandmother in the story.

Crystal says

A good story idea from a first time author. I will read the next one or two in the series to see if her writing matures with experience.

I would have preferred to give it 2 1/2 stars, but since that isn't an option I went ahead and gave it 3 for her effort and excitement.

That being said, here are the reasons I didn't love it:

The backstory came too fast, too early, with too much 'telling'. It wasn't revealed so much as dumped in your lap.

Each sentence was a second in the race to the end. They tended to push each other impatiently, making the paragraphs fall pell-mell and tumble-bumble down the hill to the end. While it only took me about 3-4 hours to read, dang was it tiring. Obviously she had a lot to say and not enough pages to say it.

The MC was weak and mostly annoying for her personality vacillations and the action/characterization contradictions. She was pegged as an astute observer yet missed or overlooked too many details that should have been obvious.

The main Bad Guy was obvious from before his formal introduction.

chucklethescot says

Firstly, I do not read cozy mysteries and this kind of book usually has me running screaming for the hills. Five books in this series came to me as part of a book trade so I thought the least I could do was to try the first one. And I was pleasantly surprised!

Unlike a few of the reviewers here, I did like Ophelia. She is suffering from the guilt and trauma of her best friend's death where she was unable to use her magic to save him from a killer. Now she has turned away from her magic and closed herself off from others getting close to her. I have sympathy because I know what stress and depression can do to you and I felt for her situation, and it was fun to see her struggle with social situations and crime solving. I loved her grandmother Abby, the witch pensioner who was kind and funny and a bit kooky. I really liked Darci, the blonde bombshell library assistant who is smarter than she lets everyone believe. There were good laughs with her and the gossipy old women who torment Ophelia through the book. They lurk like vultures looking for something to feed on and her irritation with them was understandable! I also enjoyed Darci's master plan which goes horribly wrong and lands Ophelia in trouble again.

I did NOT like the potential love interests Rick and Ned. Ned seems fine until Ophelia won't share information about Rick and he goes all macho and aggressive, insulting her and being an ass. Not what I would consider dating. But Rick was an obnoxious, irritating, vain, slimy, cocky piece of crap who I would cheerfully have kneed in the nuts if he had been harrassing me like that. He was determined to be a giant pain in the butt, asking personal questions, quizzing her about her life and movements, stalking her on a daily basis and refusing to take no for an answer when she wouldn't date him. I despised him. And if you didn't guess his real identity based on his behaviour then you must have fallen asleep during the book! It was dead obvious who he was.

The author does give you plenty of suspects-angry Ned, the slimy politician, the sinister psycho shop owner, obnoxious Rick, the sheriff, the deputy we never see, the guy who hates women's fiction, the drug addict, the skulking quiet brother etc. Come to think of it, all the men in town were weird or dodgy in some way. I did find it easy to guess who was involved but it didn't spoil the story. I did find the reasons for what was going on quite interesting and Ophelia's unwanted visions were a nice touch. I also liked the idea of a witch trying to get answers on the Internet!

This is not a masterpiece of fiction or a scary thriller, nor is it really an all out paranormal mystery as there isn't magic on every page. It is am amusing, entertaining, light fluffy mystery set in a small town with some interesting characters. You could quite easily read this in one day or night and be resonably entertained. Try it if you like cozy mysteries with a paranormal twist.

Emma says

She's a Librarian, a reluctant witch, and there's a black cat on the cover. I really wanted to like this one but I just didn't. There was too long of build-up followed by "where did that come from?" Plus, and perhaps it's an occupational hazard, but I couldn't stop wondering why she had all this time to be doing stuff outside of the library and why is there, like, no programming? This seriously ran through my mind...

Mystereity Reviews says

Just...meh. I'd give it 1.5 stars if I could. The plot was ok, but I figured it out fairly early in the book. The main character needs to learn spells on How To Get Over It and Not Going To Answer Your Stupid Questions. The reporter isn't very good at his job if he goes around badgering random people for no reason by peppering them with personal questions. The "romance" was forced and clumsier than a virgin nerd at a porn convention. Note to authors: bringing up some event in a character's past over and over and over without a)explaining it or b)having it relate to the plot is really a annoying and detracts considerably from the book. So just stop it. Brainstorm some better plot ideas and character development rather than resorting to this ineffective and lazy plot device.

Cheryl says

Ophelia and Abby are grandmother and granddaughter. They are also witches, tho the later reluctant and in denial. An instance in their past left Abby's best friend Brian, dead and is the reason she shuns "the way" she is gifted with. But now the realm is askew, there is a new danger afoot. Fertilizer and anhydrous ammonia are being stolen from farmers. There is a stranger in town who asks too much, looks too hard and plays a bit too unfairly. Then the body shows up.

Abby blames herself for the death of Brian. Since that time, she has shut herself off from physical and emotional contact outside her grandmother. (A fact that is repeated way too often throughout the book.) But current events necessitate the need for a confidant and someone to watch her back. After a few beers, some pizza and a near all-nighter, that need is met.

It's kinda the cliché love/hate relationship between Ophelia and stranger-in-town Rick, but there is so much else going on, you don't mind. Abby & Darci (co-worker at library with Ophelia) are my favorite characters. Fun, bawdy and totally on the ball.

I liked Abby's use of herbs (accurately) and her gentle ways, Ophelia gets on your nerves after a while, Darci..love her, and Rick was a nice add-in. The closer to the climax of the book, the faster the pages turned. It was a one day read, due to the action-filled ending. I sure hope now that Ophelia has accepted life as it is, the next book will be less "woe is me" and more of what made this one exciting. And I do intend to read the next one to see.

Sharon says

I really enjoyed this book. I'm normally not into anything "witchy" *G*, but this book kept me entertained & I didn't feel the itch to turn to the end to see "Whodunit", as I would if I were bored with it. It's the first in a series of (Ophelia - The Librarian (capitalized for a reason) & Abby - her grandmother). There is a definite paranormal aspect to this series so fans of anything paranormal might enjoy it as well!

LJ says

WITCH WAY TO MURDER (Paranormal/Cozy-Iowa-Cont) – Okay

Damsgaard, Shirley – 1st in series

Avon Mystery, 2005- Paperback

Ophelia is the town librarian with psychic abilities, but has repressed her abilities, in spite of the encouragement of her grandmother Abby, descended from Appalachian healers. But when Richard, an attractive stranger, comes to town and dead body turns up, Ophelia begins having very disturbing dreams she can't ignore.

*** This was okay, but not great. It was a little slow. I became bored with Ophelia until the end. More time was spent on her angst and the rather annoying attention of Richard, than the mystery. Abby and Darci, the assistant librarian, were the more interesting characters, but they were in a supporting role. I was disappointed with the use of magic in the conclusion. It's a quick read, but I would hope for much more from the next book.

Jessica says

My four-sentence or less take on the plot: Ophelia Jensen is a small-town librarian with some major issues with her family, her paranormal abilities, and her personal relationships. When a mysterious and nosy "chemical salesman" comes to town and a body is found, Ophelia's world is turned upside-down. Ophelia knows she's involved (through her grandmother's visions) and is pulled in to the investigation.

Rating: B

What worked: I'm from Iowa and I can tell the author is from Iowa too. The characters are well portrayed and it never falls into the "generic hick" stereotype of so many books. The mystery, centered around a methamphetamine ring, makes a lot of sense in the setting (meth production is a major problem in Iowa).

I thought the characters of Rick (the love interest), Darci (Ophelia's friend and co-worker), and Abby (Ophelia's grandmother) were well fleshed out and interesting.

What didn't: It took me a long time to warm up to Abby. She seemed rather obnoxious and it was hard to understand why anyone would want to get to know her. I also thought her paranormal abilities were a bit confusing and could have been more fleshed out.

Weezie says

I've seen lots of negative reviews about this book, specifically on how "angsty" the MC, Ophelia, was and how creepy the main male character acted. I would like to say that while at times it IS overdone on both parts, the story would not have worked as well with both characters being 100% bubbly and bright. Ophelia's angst has to do with past trauma and if Rick hadn't been creepy... well, who would we have had to suspect in the beginning?

I enjoyed the pacing in the book and the side characters were an actual delight and had their own personalities instead of just all blending together the way a lot of side characters do. While the ending was a bit predictable, as were the bad guys, I still enjoyed reading this and can't wait to read the next book in the series.

H.L. Stephens says

I enjoyed the book. It is what I would call a lighthearted read...one that is fun, a bit campy at times and easy to fall into. There are others who criticized the repetition of certain mannerisms of the characters (hands on the hips, etc.) but don't characters reflect real people and don't real people tend to have mannerisms that they repeat? At any rate, the book held my attention and was charming enough that I would like to read the next book. Perfect read for a snowy afternoon.

catechism says

Unsatisfying. The main character is a jerk (because trauma!) who uses her special librarian powers to solve the case by really sucking at research. Said case manages to be both nonsensical and predictable, which is quite the trick. The love interest is someone on whom I would have filed a restraining order immediately. I hated him SO MUCH, ugh. (Seriously, the first day he meets her, he is really pushy and obnoxious about wanting to follow her home from work "in case something happens." Like what? Like in case some creepy stranger shows up at my office and won't leave me alone and then follows me home? I'm sorry, your tight ass doesn't get you a pass on that shit.)

THAT SAID, Mr Odious is gone and I really like the idea of this series and there were bits of promise in here, so I'll be reading the next one. Never let it be said I'm not an optimist!

Sofia says

my reviews always contain spoilers

Witch Way to Murder, a novel by Shirley Damsgaard is about the lives of Ophelia Jensen and her grandmother, Abbey; both witches in their own right who hail from many generations of women who

practiced the craft. This book is categorized in the "Cozy" genre of mystery, which essentially means a murder mystery with no cursing, no sex, little/no violence, etc etc. I don't take issue with any of those factors, as I don't necessarily find them vital to make an exciting story.

There were several things that did not work with this book. I will just name a few:

* From the very beginning of the book and throughout, there is mention of some horrible, traumatic death of Ophelia's best friend Brian, which caused her to isolate herself and fall into what sounds like a deep depression. Only, instead of being depressed, Ophelia is a completely angry, bitter, insensitive woman who treats the people around her (including her own lovely grandmother, Abby at times), like everything they say or do is irritating and a nuisance. I would say the last 20% of the book, she is not so angry, but the reader spends a lot of time with a main character who has very little, if any, redeeming or adorning qualities about her.

* Rick Davis, the new guy in town who claims to be "chemical salesman" is clumsily introduced to the reader. He shows up at Ophelia's library and IMMEDIATELY starts asking strings of (sometimes very personal) questions of her. For a woman who seemed to be irritated by every living person, I found it extremely unbelievable that she would entertain someone like that for any length of time. He starts leaving things for her, showing up at her HOUSE (which I found to be semi-stalkerish), and basically will not leave her alone. I thought his set-up was very very flat and nothing about him was believable - especially what he would see in someone as angry and unapproachable as Ophelia.

* The book finally started to pick up after about page 100, and the ending to the story was just very very silly. Adam Hoffman, the community leader hoping to run for mayor, is found to have been mixed up with stolen supplies used for meth labs to make money for a secret militia that he was hoping would "make the government what it should be"?? Really? I was really hoping for some exciting connection with the dead guy, the girl in her dreams, and the meth labs that was a central theme in the story; but there was not.

A lot of the dialogue between Ophelia and Rick seemed forced and downright silly. He seemed to get uncharacteristically mad at her at inappropriate times and for someone who was so strong and didn't take crap from anyone, at times let him boss her around like a child. I DID find her grandmother, Abbey, absolutely lovely and she was a character I liked. I also liked Ophelia's assistant, Darci -- all the other characters: Benny, Jake, Adam, Nina etc, were all very forgettable and brought very little to the story, good or bad.

Blodeuedd Finland says

See, I finally did read another cozy mystery ;)

Ophelia is a librarian. She has a haunted past. The townsfolk like her, but avoid her. Her grandmother is a witch, but only Ophelia knows this. Her only friend is a woman working at the library, and they are not even friends in a way.

Yeah, Ophelia really pushed people away. But then a mysterious hot guy shows up. And there are strange things happening in town. And then there is that dead body, and her grandmother telling her that she must solve this.

It was a light mystery that I could read fast. Ophelia was nice when you got to know her. There is a hint of romance. But the next book I have is book 6 and it was not that awesome that I will buy the rest. I will just read that sixth book one day.

Chris says

This isn't bad, it just isn't good. And it is impossible to take about way without some spoilers.

The main character, Ophelia, is pretty good, though her reaction about not being touched because her best friend was murdered and she couldn't save him, seems a bit much considering that they were friends only. We are told this because he was gay so no hanky panky. Though, we aren't told much else about him so I wonder how close they actually were.

For a book where the main character gets upset about stereotypes, there are sure a great many stereotypes that play true in the book.

The romantic lead is a jerk, sorry.

Lauren Librarian says

As a librarian, I was borderline offended by how the main character was portrayed in this book. It seemed as though librarians just sit around and chat while they're working. She uses her super-librarian skills to solve the murder which is limited to GOOGLING THE ANSWER ON THE INTERNET. Well that's a reliable source of information (fail). Also I found it lame that the character's name was Ophelia. If her parents were true Shakespeare fans, they wouldn't name her after the saddest, most pathetic, suicidal, side character from Hamlet. I would go with Beatrice, Miranda, Olivia (from Twelfth Night) or even one of the girls from Midsummer Night's Dream.

James says

Given my interest in witches and the impending autumn season, I thought this would be a good kick off to embracing what's to come next. It was a fun quick read and left me curious for more.

At first, Ophelia annoyed me as she treated people very poorly; however, you could tell it wouldn't last. After about 25% of the story, she calms down just enough to be likable and you get to see her relationship with her grandmother Abby, her employee and friend Darci, and her new potential love interest Rick. Each relationship shows promise of growth and depth while the secret among the 4 of them of Abby's and Ophelia's witch ways invites a little fervor.

For a first in series, it's a good start. We don't learn a whole lot about the other characters, and I don't feel like I can easily picture the mid-western / Appalachian town, but I feel like that may come with time. There are a lot of rotten apples in one small town, but doesn't that happen in all cozies?

I look forward to seeing what sorts of witchery and magick come our way with this series!

About Me

For those new to me or my reviews... here's the scoop: I read A LOT. I write A LOT. And now I blog A LOT. First the book review goes on Goodreads, and then I send it on over to my WordPress blog at <https://thisismytruthnow.com>, where you'll also find TV & Film reviews, the revealing and introspective 365 Daily Challenge and lots of blogging about places I've visited all over the world. And you can find all my social media profiles to get the details on the who/what/when/where and my pictures. Leave a comment and let me know what you think. Vote in the poll and ratings. Thanks for stopping by.

Lynn Abbey says

I should have been able to read this in a night, maybe two, but it just never came to life. It's not a mystery; the main character don't "solve" anything. Things simply happen to them and then the bad guys explain themselves. The first-person narrative doesn't help: I don't have a problem with "broken" protagonists, but when the broken character is the only POV character, her depression becomes contagious

Diane Morasco says

Damsgaard delivers the goods w/ her sensational debut, *Witch Way to Murder!* I want to thank Ms. Damsgaard for creating an intelligent series that is a cut above most cozy debuts.

Kudos to Damsgaard for weaving an enthralling tale of magick & mystery.

Welcome to rural Iowa, where nothing exciting seems to happen & each day merges into the next.

Ophelia Jensen has been a recluse since her best friend was horribly murdered four years ago.

Ophelia doesn't want anyone to know she's psychic & her grandmother, Abby, a witch...

When Ophelia finds a dead body that might be connected to a drug ring, the family secret just may be revealed.

When dapper newcomer Rick Davis, sweeps into town professing to be a fertilizer salesman & begins asking far too many questions, Ophelia's sixth sense goes into overdrive. What is the suave salesman really doing spending so many hours in the library's archives?

Damsgaard has a skill for writing authentic characters that are engaging, intense, intriguing & vivacious.

Darci, who is Ophelia's bubbly assistant at the library, is absolutely irrepressible.

I look forward to watching her grow along w/ the series.

Damsgaard also does an impressive job of unfolding Ophelia's past throughout the book.

Witch Way to Murder is a topnotch cozy w/ a paranormal twist that is riveting, tasteful & charming.

Witch Way to Murder is peppered w/ red herrings & round the clock suspense. I just love cozies & am hooked on Damsgaard's delectable series.

Damsgaard weaves a wickedly smooth, entertaining cozy w/ a dollop of paranormal that will enchant from beginning to end!
