



# The Plot Is Murder

*V.M. Burns*

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*The small town of North Harbor on the shores of Lake Michigan is about to have a new mystery bookstore. But before the first customer can browse its shelves, the store's owner is suspected of her own murder plot . . .*

Samantha Washington has dreamed of owning her own mystery bookstore for as long as she can remember. And as she prepares for the store's grand opening, she's also realizing another dream—penning a cozy mystery set in England between the wars. While Samantha hires employees and fills the shelves with the latest mysteries, quick-witted Lady Penelope Marsh, long-overshadowed by her beautiful sister Daphne, refuses to lose the besotted Victor Carlston to her sibling's charms. When one of Daphne's suitors is murdered in a maze, Penelope steps in to solve the labyrinthine puzzle and win Victor.

But as Samantha indulges her imagination, the unimaginable happens in real life. A shady realtor turns up dead in her backyard, and the police suspect her—after all, the owner of a mystery bookstore might know a thing or two about murder. Aided by her feisty grandmother and an enthusiastic ensemble of colorful retirees, Samantha is determined to close the case before she opens her store. But will she live to conclude her own story when the killer has a revised ending in mind for her?

## The Plot Is Murder Details

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## From Reader Review The Plot Is Murder for online ebook

### Viva says

If you adore cozy mysteries, READ THIS BOOK! It is SO good. I really enjoyed curling up with my dogs, a cup of tea and this book.

The main character, Samantha Washington, is embarking on a new chapter in her life. This includes a new home, opening her dream book store AND writing a novel (shhhh! She doesn't want anyone to know).

Samantha's new life seems to be coming together until someone is found murdered on her property and she becomes a suspect! Samantha, Nana Jo and her retired friends (think Golden Girls meets Nancy Drew) come together to help find the real killer and clear Samantha's name. This book had me laughing AND wondering "whodunit?"

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### Betty says

A new author for me and the first book of the series. The cover and author's name attracted me to this book. I was disappointed because the format of the book is not a favorite of mine. I find it difficult to jump from one story to another. I thought the ending was original but easy to guess it. I like the current mystery and would have a higher rating of the second story had not been included. I found the book being written by the main character very simple and the titles of the characters annoy me.

Samantha Washington has opened her dream mystery bookstore. Using the proceeds of her dead husband's insurance she bought a building and started the bookstore they had a plan to run. Before it opens the real estate dealer is found dead in the garden. Samantha explores the mystery of his death to clear the names of her friends. Yes, she is writing a mystery set in England in the 1930's that is similar to the current story. Samantha needs to find the answer before she loses her life?

Disclosure: I received a free copy from Kennington Books through NetGalley for an honest review. I would like to thank them for this opportunity to read and review this book. The opinions expressed are my own.

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### Linda says

A mystery within a mystery...I absolutely loved it!

When Samantha Washington opens her new bookstore, she doesn't anticipate that she'll have to solve a murder. But when nasty broker Clayton Parker is murdered in her backyard and the police try to pin the ghastly deed on her, she's forced to take matters into her own hands and root out the real culprit. Fortunately, her Nana Jo and the sleuthing seniors provide her with plenty of intel and backup. The sleuths are loads of fun, and I enjoyed every scene that described their exploits.

But Sam isn't only a kind, caring, and resourceful bookstore owner--she's an aspiring mystery writer as well. An aficionado of the British cozies I craved when I was young, Sam is penning her own mystery at the same time she's trying to solve a real one. The two scenarios meld together in a perfectly delicious ending. I can't wait to read Read Herring Hunt, the next installment in this charming new series.

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## Nicole says

I must admit that I had been waiting months for the release of author V.M. Burns' cozy mystery debut - *The Plot is Murder*. The cover, the title, and the plot (no pun intended!) description grabbed my attention from the moment I first saw it, and I pre-ordered the book as soon as it was available. I was lucky enough to obtain an advance copy to review, and it did not disappoint! Not only do we get the story of bookshop owner Samantha Washington, we also get to immerse ourselves in the British cozy mystery she's writing in her spare time. Sam is a widow, and it was her late husband's dying wish that she open up their dream bookshop, which she does with the help of her loving and supportive family. Shortly before the opening, however, the unscrupulous realtor who sold her the building is found dead in her courtyard and Sam must work to discover who murdered Clayton Parker and why. Enter Nana Jo and her Senior Sleuths, and cozy mystery solving (and reading) and mayhem ensues with this hilarious bunch of octogenarians. And while we're reading about this mystery in North Harbor, Michigan we're also transported to the pre-WWII English countryside and the manor home of the aristocratic Marsh family where a murder has taken place in their garden and it's up to Lady Elizabeth et al. to discover whodunit. I highly, highly recommend this wonderful first very cozy and well-written installment in the *Mystery Bookshop* series! A+++

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## Carrie says

After the unexpected loss of her husband Samantha Washington has become determined to live out her dreams that she has always had that were put on the back burner for a more steady and reliable income. Part of her dream has been to open her own bookstore and cafe in the small town of North Harbor on the shores of Lake Michigan. Samantha is also a budding writer herself and has finally begun work on her own cozy mystery.

Things seem to be going well in her new life until one night when her realtor comes knocking at her door. Never a man that Samantha trusted she points to the closed sign and heads to bed refusing to allow him in. The next morning however the realtor is found murdered in Samantha's back yard and with all clues mirroring what is in her manuscript Samantha becomes the primary suspect.

*The Plot is Murder* by V.M. Burns is the first book in the new cozy *Mystery Bookshop* series. The best way to describe this book would be as if the reader were reading two cozy mystery novellas at the same time with the main character being an author and the story alternating between her life and that of the pages of her book as she writes them.

Now while I thought this was an OK start to the series and quite an interesting idea of having an author as the main character what I think held me back from rating higher is simply the length that each side of the story ends up being in an overall short read. There were plenty of times I'd quite enjoy each side to the story but I think this would have succeeded better in my mind had both sides had a bit more depth to them. In the end though it was a fun twist following both stories at once and would be interested in seeing how the series continues.

I received an advance copy from the publisher via NetGalley.

## **Kelly says**

**\*\*I voluntarily read this ARC\*\***

An enjoyable first in series. Small town Michigan is one of my favorite settings, so obviously I loved the setting. The senior citizens were awesome. The book inside the book was interesting, but slightly distracting. I kept trying to solve the wrong murder. I found the mystery interesting yet slightly predictable.

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## **LORI CASWELL says**

Dollycas's Thoughts

Who doesn't love a mystery within a mystery?

Samantha Washington has lost her husband and she is a little apprehensive about following her dreams on her own. She has purchased an old warehouse and turned it not only into her home but the lower level is now her mystery bookstore. That was her first dream, the second is to become a cozy mystery author. She not sure if she will let anyone read it, but she has started a story set in England about two sisters, their suitors, and a murder. She can escape into her writing when the real world gets to be a little too much. That's exactly what happens when her realtor is found dead in her backyard. She had hoped the only murders she would uncover would be within the pages of the books on her shelves or those she wrote about in her own mysteries. Now the police believe she killed someone in real life, especially after reading her manuscript. She now needs to solve both a fictional murder and a real murder? If she doesn't, all her dreams could go up in smoke.

I really like Samantha. She is courageous enough to follow her dreams while still grieving for her husband. She has a warm and helpful attitude, both in the way she treats her customers but even more so by who she hires to work with her at the bookstore. She has a clever imagination that shines in her writing. And she is a strong woman, who I believe takes after her grandmother. She also has two lovable dogs.

Her grandmother, Nana Joe, moves right in when she fears Samantha may be in danger. She is a spunky woman and comes with a group of friends that will have you laughing out loud. Don't take these Senior Sleuths for granted. They have connections all over town and they try to help Samantha figure out who killed the wayward realtor. I wish I had half their energy.

Ms. Burns has created a very eclectic group of characters. I enjoyed getting to know all of them and their dialogue was top notch. She also created an interesting group of characters for Samantha's cozy mystery.

Both mysteries are very well written and nicely plotted. At first, I was a little unsure about the second story interrupting the first, but it then hit a nice rhythm of back and forth and flowed naturally. I suppose each story could be called a novella by their length, but neither felt rushed or like anything was missing. I hope they both become long-running series.

Both the setting in Michigan and England were well presented. From the floor to the ceiling in the Market Street Mysteries Bookstore to the gardens outside Marsh estate, all were easily envisioned in my mind.

This is V.M. Burns first cozy mystery and she is off to a fantastic start. It is hard enough to write one story full of twists and turns but she gives us two. I want to get to know all these characters better and am excited to see what kind of trouble they get into next. Read Herring Hunt will be released April 24, 2018.

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### **?Dani? ?Touch My Spine Book Reviews? says**

V.M. Burns created a cozy masterpiece with this book! When reading through this book I was so excited and just wanted more! I absolutely loved the characterisation in this book. I loved how the main character(Samantha) went sleuthing with a group on senior citizen ladies! These ladies were a hoot and could out party me any day! I just loved Nana Jo and how she was described as “all of the Golden Girls” wrapped up in one! Her group of friends that her and Samantha tagged along with made me laugh out loud.

I have been in a reading slump lately but was able to gobble this book up regardless of my mood. I also enjoyed how the main character was a writer and took us on another adventure. I felt both stories were well written and I couldn't wait until I went back and forth to the other one. I can't wait until I get to read more of V.M. Burns' works! I definitely recommend this fun and light cozy!?

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### **Libby Klein says**

Very cute dual mystery within a mystery. And i love the feisty grandma and her friends.

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### **Chris Conley says**

What a fun book. Two different mysteries...one starring the new main character and the second, written by said main character! Really fun.

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### **Karen says**

I am very blessed to be able to read so many cozy mystery books and I will say that I actively lobbied author V.M. Burns for the opportunity to have this book on my table as soon as possible. Sometimes I can look at a cover and just know a book is going to be amazing, and I was very right with The Plot Is Murder. I did not read the book intro which I have posted below. I just saw the cover and knew I wanted to read the book. Yes I judge books by their covers, and I am not ashamed. This book was better than good, it was spectacular. I had no idea the concept of a main character who was in the process of mourning her husband, opening a mystery bookstore to help fulfill her husband's dying wish and she is writing a mystery too, would work so well! If I had read that going in I would have told you it is not possible to do all that and do it well and I would have been so wrong. I have never seen a cozy that was so well written and seamlessly slips between the main characters reality and the book she is writing. I would have told you it can't be done and I would have missed out on an amazing book. I found this to be one of the most engaging cozy mysteries I have ever

read. Easily in the top 5 best new cozy first in series released this year and a book you should line up for. Not only were the two mysteries perfectly balanced but the characters were interesting, well rounded and each added something perfectly in this layered tapestry. I could not put this book down. In fact I didn't, it was the perfect cozy read. I am in awe of V.M. Burns ability to write like this and I am anxiously awaiting the release of book two already

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### **Linda says**

The coastline of Michigan is the setting chosen for the debut Mystery Bookshop Cozy series. Widow, Sam Washington is following her and her deceased husband's dream of opening a bookstore, Market Street Mysteries. Secretly, Sam is penning a mystery novel set in Great Britain in 1938. Surrounded by a great family to help her run the bookstore, Sam opens shop. The next thing she knows, her crooked realtor's corpse is found outside. Innocently caught up in a crime family's crosshairs, Sam and her family and friends close the gap on clues leading to the murderer. I enjoyed the Bookshop story much more than the other mystery that the protagonist is writing within the book. I love Sam's toy poodles!

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### **Kellye says**

Great first book in a new cozy series that introduces us to a widow finally following her dreams to open a bookstore and write a cozy of her own. Has all the things I love about cozies, including food, great setting and an interesting cast of characters. I especially loved Nana Jo and the Sleuthing Seniors. Stephanie Plum's Grandma Mazur would fit right in with that group.

It also had something I haven't seen: we get to read Samantha's work in progress so we're trying to solve two whodunits. Just when you were totally immersed in one story, the author would switch to the other. It made me keep reading to find out what happened.

Overall, great book for fellow cozy lovers.

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### **Melanie says**

*The Plot Is Murder* was an amazing read featuring a compelling mystery and a charming cast of characters.

Sam has spent the past six months trying to find a way forward in life after her husband unexpectedly died. Their dream was always to open a mystery bookstore with a café and now Sam is realizing that dream on her own hoping to honor his memory. Her dream hits a bit of a snag when the shady realtor who tried to stop her from buying the building for her shop is murdered in the courtyard behind the building. Soon the detective investigating the case turns his sights on Sam believing her to be the killer! Sam knows she needs to solve the murder and find the real killer before she goes down for a crime she didn't commit.

Sam was a character I enjoyed right away and I found myself liking her more and more as the book went on. She's incredibly strong willed and I admired her ability to pick herself back up after her husband died. Sam is determined to make her and her late husband's dream of the bookshop a reality and nothing will stop her

from accomplishing that goal. The descriptions of the bookshop she opens are amazing and I found myself wishing it was a place I could visit! Sam has two toy poodles, Snickers and Oreo, who were quite adorable and I enjoyed when they popped up.

Sam has a group of women who help her during her investigation. Her biggest helper is her grandmother Nana Jo who recruits her fellow friends from the senior center to help out. Nana Jo and her friends were an absolute riot and I enjoyed the situations they got themselves into. Each of the women had a knack for a specific type of investigating and were all able to play to their strengths. Sam appreciated all of the women helping her and never wrote them off as incapable due to their age which was something I was happy to see.

The premise of this book was a good one, the main character begins to investigate the murder of the man killed in her backyard. The murdered man had many enemies and was all-around not a great guy. I enjoyed that the author didn't try to redeem him and instead had the characters admit their dislike for the man while sympathizing that he was murdered. While investigating what happened, Sam is in the process of opening her bookstore while writing a mystery novel of her own. Throughout the book you get to see snippets of the book Sam is writing and I found myself really liking those sections. I enjoyed the path the author chose to go in terms of who the killer was and found myself surprised by the outcome as I had written the killer off as someone who didn't commit the crime.

*The Plot Is Murder* was so enjoyable that I couldn't put it down and read it in one sitting. I would highly recommend this book to fans of cozy mysteries with a large cast of characters and an emphasis on their relationships. I can't wait to read the next book in the series, *Read Herring Hunt*, soon.

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## **Juli says**

Samantha Washington's life has completely changed. Her husband of 13 years died, but he made her promise to fulfill her dream of opening a bookshop. She keeps her promise, selling their house, buying a building and preparing to open her mystery bookshop in North Harbor, MI. Not only is she opening her dream shop, but Samantha is also writing a murder mystery. All her dreams are about to come true. Things are moving along smoothly until she discovers the dead body of real estate agent Clayton Parker in her enclosed patio. Parker tried to sabotage her purchase of the building, forcing her to get an attorney to help her complete closing on the property. Now he's dead. Parker had come to her door the day before asking to speak with her, and she had refused to open the door, walking away instead. Feeling guilty that there might have been a way to prevent the man's death (even if he was a shyster), she vows to find out who killed him.

This first book in the Mystery Bookshop series is actually a mystery within a mystery. As Samantha tries to discover who killed Clayton Parker, she is also writing her own British-style cozy mystery novel about Lady Penelope Marsh and her sister Daphne. As she works to discover who killed Parker, she's also working on her book. I enjoyed the snippets of Samantha's novel and thought the author alternating between the two stories was really creative and fun.

I love the characters in this book! Samantha is a strong woman, realizing her dreams while still grieving for her husband. Her grandmother Jo is a tough old bird, who enlists her friends at the retirement village to help in the investigation. My favorite side character is Irma....the lovely old lady who peppers her conversation with curse words.....well, the group stops her before she finishes saying them, but still....it's the thought that counts. ha ha. :) The colorful characters and humor sprinkled in with the mystery really made this an enjoyable book. The mystery moves along at a nice pace. There are plenty of suspects and sleuthing. Nana



Jo's friends are really a huge help -- nothing like a gang of old ladies to dig up gossip and info on anybody!

This is a great start to a new cozy series! A second book, Read Herring Hunt, will be out in April 2018!

For more information on the author and her books, check out her website: <http://www.vmburns.com/>

\*\*I voluntarily read an advanced readers copy of this book from Kensington via NetGalley. All opinions expressed are entirely my own.\*\*

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