

Deadly Homecoming at Rosemont

Connie Chappell

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This enjoyable, cozy murder mystery features a likable heroine and is an engrossing whodunit.

Connie Chappell's *Deadly Homecoming at Rosemont* is an enjoyable, cozy murder mystery in which the death of a prodigal heir has major implications.

Wrenn Grayson—historian, city recorder, and mayor's assistant—is on the scene when Trey Rosemont's body is discovered in his family's derelict mansion, a once-beautiful dwelling being restored by Wrenn's friend, Clayton Addison, who also happens to be the retired police chief.

The victim, Trey, disappeared decades ago. Presuming him dead, Clayton purchased the mansion from his estate, and now he becomes a suspect. More trouble arrives when it is discovered that a rare Theban funeral mask and priceless gold Egyptian jewelry have been stolen from a local exhibition. Mystery buffs won't take long to suspect the two cases are related.

The two narratives are neatly, believably woven together, with Wrenn set up as both a likely and likable hero, the go-get-'em type who wants to solve both cases, though she must also deal with mundane city business at the same time. Wrenn's involvement in the cases is logically detailed, and old scores are drawn in believable ways.

Secondary characters are well realized. The rotund mayor is the sort of small-town, congenial fellow that everyone has encountered a variation of. More nuanced is reformed thief Wilkey Summer, who can't seem to do anything to better himself and yet is willing to risk incarceration in order to help Wrenn. The blandest of the supporting cast is Wrenn's long-term boyfriend, Dr. Gideon Douglas, a history professor supposedly watching over the stolen relics. The villain is generally believable, but seems to lack edginess until the conclusion.

Dialogue rolls off the page conversationally, and descriptions are succinct but evocative, whether they focus on a ramshackle old Cutlass car or the funeral mask of Egypt's Theban dynasty. The prose contains many interesting turns of phrase, as when Wrenn describes her own nervous energy: "I chugged at a rough idle."

The setting of Havens, Ohio, is well-detailed, certain to strike those with small-town backgrounds as familiar, and is the perfect backdrop for the mysterious events of the novel: part everyone-knows-each-other small town, part progressive city. The mysteries themselves are centered on believable crimes, with solid motives established for each. The story's pace works as well, with logical steps used to build tension, right up until the novel's surprising and violent conclusion.

There's nothing noir about Chappell's work, and fans of mysteries with minimal gore and PG romance or *Murder, She Wrote* will find an easy-to-cheer-for heroine in *Deadly Homecoming at Rosemont*, and the sort of whodunit with which to while away a weekend.

GARY PRESLEY (March 14, 2016)

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