



The Cemetery Yew

Cynthia Riggs

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There's more than one reason the new West Tisbury police chief officially made 92-year old Victoria Trumbull her deputy. For one thing, Victoria knows just about everything about everyone in town, and a lot about the rest of the Martha's Vineyard year-round population as well. Not to mention their ancestors. Victoria may be afflicted with the usual aches and pains that descend on nonagenarians (she has a cutoff shoe to accommodate her bunion, and a stout stick to help her on her walks across the fields and in the woods). But she is as sharp and as sharpeyed as the proverbial tack. So it's not odd that when Victoria is the only one who notices something amiss among the gravestones of the West Tisbury cemetery, the chief listens.

Something is indeed amiss. Responding to a request by presumed relatives in the Midwest to disinter a coffin for reburying elsewhere, things go wrong from the start. The driver of the hearse coming to collect the coffin disappears during the Island ferry trip in a rainstorm. Other deaths - some of them irrefutably murder, the others suspicious - follow. And when as a last measure the coffin is found, dug up and opened, it does not contain the expected body. Insult upon injury, the coffin itself disappears.

Meanwhile, the available for rent bedroom in Victoria's house has been taken over by a woman relative of one of their neighbors and her raucous toucan, a bird as spoiled as the most bratty millionaire's heir. Victoria is graceful about her unwanted boarders; but they do interfere with the column she writes for the local newspaper and with her efforts to discover whether the strange antics of the coffin are related to the murders.

Victoria is the most realistic and the most delightful nonagenarian in mystery fiction. Her years have not blunted her intelligence and her sharp wit. We're lucky that she's still around and seems to be set for a long time.

The Cemetery Yew Details

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From Reader Review The Cemetery Yew for online ebook

Beverly says

When I read the first book in this series, I really had no desire to read any further even though I love the idea of a 92 year old woman solving crimes...I only hope I could do as well!!! But since we were reading the 4th book for my mystery book club and I like to start at the beginning, I went ahead and read the 2nd and the 4th one (I had to give up on reading the 3rd one before our discussion) and was glad that I stuck with it. Now, having read this third one, I'm planning to continue with the entire series. I really think this was my favorite so far. It takes a bit to finally figure out where this is going but that's normally half the fun of getting there. A coffin needs to be disinterred but can't be located. Then when it is finally found, something unexpected is discovered and then the coffin disappears again. The coffin and its parts seem to travel over quite a bit of the countryside on Martha's Vineyard and then bodies start turning up. I didn't see the ending coming until pretty well towards the end and I have a feeling that some (or at least one) of these characters may make a future appearance in later books in the series.

Una Tiers says

A fun cemetery mystery with twists and turns and nice, quirky characters.

Diane Heath says

A Halloween prank results in a missing coffin. The missing coffin results in multiple murders. What happened to the coffin? Who is the killer? What is the Motive? Victoria meets an adversary that may well be her match

Jay says

This is an engaging mystery with an unlikely protagonist, delightfully read by Davina Porter.

Sally says

If you like Murder She Wrote then this series would be more of the same, with different characters. Thanks goodness Jessica Fletcher was not 92, though. The writing is OK, the plotting is rather loosely done, and I don't think it is a very crafty piece of work. Once again, the title has very little to do with the story. Compare it to the "Darling Dahlias" series by Susan Wittig Albert and it falls short on the plant reference.

Judy says

Who wouldn't be enchanted with Victoria Trumbull? She is 92 years old, she is a deputy in the West Tisbury Police Department on Martha's Vineyard, and she is sharp as a tack. Victoria knows just about everyone in town and remembers all of the skeletons in their family closets. In this third in the series, an empty coffin is discovered in the West Tisbury Cemetery and then a series of baffling murders begin to occur in and around town. The strange thing is that all of the victims are retired foreign service officers. Victoria may not be able to get around like she used to, but she's able to figure out what's going on in this little caper. I need to dig up the first two books in this series. A very pleasant read for a rainy afternoon.

Erica says

Clearly these books are growing on me. And this time, the killer snuck up on me, which makes it lots of fun. Just enough hints and clues to make me think it **might** be who I thought it was, while still making me second guess myself.

Sharon Devine says

I enjoy this series every once in awhile.

Chris says

This is an extremely enjoyable Cozy Geezer Lit with an amazing 92 year old character named Victoria Trumbull. I was not able to get a hold of book #2 in the series but I understand that Victoria is now deputized. She is very observant, knowledgeable about the town and its people as well as rich with the wisdom of her age, and unflappable in the presence of danger.

This story covers crimes committed by a few State Department big wigs - who probably already make more money than an average citizen! They join together to hide five million dollars worth of gems they each stole from their assigned countries. But they don't stop with thievery... they had to add murder to the list of crimes as they are now ready to unearth the gems and cash them in to fund their retirement.

I guess it had to be somewhere, it is just humorous that they buried them in West Tisbury. Like Jessica Fletcher, no criminal is safe around Victoria Trumbull :-)

Great thriller with many twists and turns!

John says

There's a joke that Cabot Cove, Maine is the murder capital of the USA. Well ... West Tisbury, Massachusetts seems to be giving them a run for their money, with three homicides in a row ... off-season no less!

This story moved S-L-O-W-L-Y, with the first dead body not appearing until after the halfway point. Granted I'm reading the series for the local details, which are fine, but there's *so* much backstory and chatter among the locals that I began to despair of *anyone* dying! Second half has all of the "will they catch the killer?" tension, though even that part has some "he did this, and then he did that" style writing. After a lot of suspension-of-disbelief happenings, we learn the identity of the killer in a scene that reads as though the author decided she was tired of writing, so sat down to write the ending once and for all.

As someone with Nantucket roots, I will say that the hoopla regarding the annual inter-island football game was accurate: a big freaking deal it is! Much is made of the fact that Victoria didn't know Dahlia's family as they were "summer people until recently"; if they'd been longtime homeowners, someone like Victoria would've been aware of them, even if they moved in different circles.

A note on the audiobook, Davina Porter's reading of American characters with English accents did grate, even if her delivery of the non-dialogue narrative flowed well.

Helen says

This was a typical cosy mystery with the usual range of friendly small town residents, although the age of some of these is a bit of a surprise since our detective is in her nineties and some of her friends are well up there. The only time you notice the age, though, is when people are plowing around in the snow and wind, or she needs some help climbing up out of a grave. No matter how alert people are or how willing their systems there are very few people in their nineties who could be as quickly responsive as Victoria. That's what I mostly found a problem but the whole premise relied on the cemetery manager being as stubborn and unwilling to investigate as he proved to be. I don't know how that eastern system of selectmen works, either. Somehow I just wasn't turned on by this one.

Dharia Scarab says

Warning: contains spoilers for both this book and book 8 "Death and Honesty"

So after reading books 3 and 8 I was seriously disappointed. Now these weren't my favorites to start with, because I'm not a fan of the multiple person point of view. But the fact that the motives for the killers in both books was damn near identical, was pretty much unforgivable.

In Cemetery Yew the killer needs money because she lost everything in dot.com investing and somehow ends up owing money to the mob.

In Death and Honesty the killer needs money because she lost everything investing in a scam film company that was paying more in protection money to the mob than it was making in profits.

Not 100% the same but damn near with both the losing everything due to bad investments and having a mob connection.

Oh, and lets not forget that the same rogue for hire appears in both these books. Just in case you managed to forget the plot of book three, he's there as a constant reminder of the story) (and the author makes sure to mention his role enough times that if you have forgotten, you'll want to go refresh your memory.)

There are only 4 books in the series separating these two, so its pretty sad that the author has already started recycling motives.

Since I don't normally write reviews unless I have something specific to say, here's the break down of how I rate my books...

1 star... This book was bad, so bad I may have given up and skipped to the end. I will avoid this author like the plague in the future.

2 stars... This book was not very good, and I won't be reading any more from the author.

3 stars... This book was ok, but I won't go out of my way to read more, But if I find another book by the author for under a dollar I'd pick it up.

4 stars... I really enjoyed this book and will definitely be on the look out to pick up more from the series/author.

5 stars... I loved this book! It has earned a permanent home in my collection and I'll be picking up the rest of the series and other books from the author ASAP.

Rachel says

Cozy Mystery is Cozy. And Confusing if you're starting this series partway thru and don't know any of the characters.

Barbara says

Cynthia Riggs has created a very interesting character. Victoria Trumbell is 92 years old and a lifelong resident of Martha's Vineyard. The sheriff (chief of police?) of her town, an outsider, has made her a deputy and relies on her knowledge of the intricate relationships and politics, as well as the fact that she is related to many of the people on the island, so she rely on Vitoria to help her navigate the local climate in her investigations.

This is a complicated story, but still easy to follow. Victoria is a very astute and canny judge of character. She can be mislead – she is human and can be very stubborn and find it hard to give up her perceptions, until she gets proof. She is willing to learn from her mistakes. At 92 years old, she still adapts – I hope I can say the same, whatever age I achieve. In the end, she is one-upped, but she has such worthy adversary that this

does not disappoint.

Lis Carey says

Life on the Vineyard ought to be quiet, but somehow things don't work out that way. West Tisbury is home to Victoria Trumbull, 92 years old, not as physically agile as she used to be, but mentally scarily sharp--and she knows nearly everyone, or at least their families and the family history. That's why Casey, the Chief of Police hired from off-island, has appointed Victoria as her deputy.

The cemetery director, also town selectman, Denny Rhodes, gets a seemingly ordinary request from a family no longer living on island to have the coffin of a family member who committed suicide ten years ago disinterred. Now that no one is left on the island, they want to move her to Wisconsin, where they are now living. Not an issue at all--until the coffin is found to be empty except for some bags of perfectly ordinary sand.

Meanwhile, Victoria's neighbor, Howland Atherton, learns that his cousin Dahlia, whom he is not fond of, is coming for an extended visit. She's retired from the Foreign Service, is suffering from cancer, and wants to be treated at the hospital in the town where she grew up. She brings with her her pet toucan, Bacchus--and Bacchus and Howland don't like each other, to say the least. Nor has Howland ever liked Dahlia. It's not long before Dahlia and Bacchus have relocated to Victoria's spare room as boarders.

But Dahlia, like the empty coffin, has her own secrets, and bodies start turning up. One's in the town dump, where a fire that had been dying down has flared up again. Another washes up on the beach. And who sent Dahlia a Brazilian tea laced with poisonous evergreen needles?

This is a wonderful little cozy, with the pace building gradually to a fine level of tension. Victoria is smart and mentally tough, and thoroughly believable. West Tisbury may have a murder rate rivaling that of Cabot Cove, Maine in the 1980s and 1990s (as all Angela Lansbury fans will recall), but like Jessica Fletcher and her neighbors, Victoria Trumbull and her neighbors are likely to make it worthwhile.

Recommended.

I borrowed this book from the library.
