



Murder at Cirey (Victor Constant Mysteries #1)

Cheryl Sawyer

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Police-procedural murder mystery that enters the lists of historical crime with shock and suspense.

Eight days in spring, 1735: a race against crime.

When a handsome young man is shot dead on an estate in the picturesque Champagne region of France, Victor Constant, military policeman, determines to find out why. But no one else, including the local magistrate, seems willing to penetrate the mystery of this brutal death. Alone and against orders, Victor confronts the notorious free-thinker, Voltaire, who found the body. Victor fights to protect the innocent and bring the real killer to justice. A second murder occurs and Victor's task becomes doubly dangerous: unless he can strip bare the conspiracy behind this intricate series of crimes, he stands to lose his military career--and his life.

The first in the series of Victor Constant Mysteries, starring a tough military policeman who has all the audacity of a Jack Reacher.

Best-selling crime writers say:

Peter Lovesey

'Here is an invitation no lover of historical mysteries will be able to resist: eighteenth-century France at the Château de Cirey in the company of Voltaire, who discovers a murdered body. Marvellous tensions between the great free-thinker and Victor Constant, the book's hero. Is it a crime passionel or something far more threatening to the nation? The story dazzles and beguiles and the setting is pitch-perfect.'

Peter James

'This is historical fiction writing at its very best. Astonishingly vivid, transports you instantly back in time -- wonderful evocation of the period.'

The first historical mystery by the author whose novel *Siren* was hailed by Booklist: 'Cheryl Sawyer's American debut is a grand and glorious delight.' This is taut and intense crime story in which a tenacious trooper works from the ground up to lay bare the secrets of the powerful.

Murder at Cirey (Victor Constant Mysteries #1) Details

Date : Published February 5th 2015 by Thorpe-Bowker Identifier Services

ISBN : 9780992472870

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Format : Paperback 264 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction

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From Reader Review Murder at Cirey (Victor Constant Mysteries #1) for online ebook

Laura says

When I finished this novel, I was happy to note that it looks like it's the first of a series starring Victor Constant, a tall, principled, Parisian (but low-born) mounted gendarme (sort of like a Canadian mountie but in 1730s France). The story is set in the Champagne countryside of France, where Constant has been rather banished to, during the era of Voltaire. Indeed, Voltaire is a main character in this murder mystery, living at Cirey, the country estate of his mistress—the famous intellectual Emilie du Chatelet—while writing plays. And he's every bit as charismatic, smart, and free-thinking as one would expect Voltaire to be.

The plot revolves around Victor Constant's investigation of a murder designed to implicate Voltaire. It's clear pretty quickly that Voltaire is not the culprit, so what keeps the pages turning are all the details of France of the 1700s, a war-torn and hierarchical society where the various Ducs, Marquis, and magistrates must never be questioned, even by military investigators. The renegade Constant clashes with his military bosses so has to do a lot of investigating on the sly on his own. He dabbles in some rudimentary forensics and, in between various threats to his life, he manages to catch the eyes of some local ladies. Reminded me a bit of Jack Reacher in the Lee Child novels.

I enjoyed the cleverly reconstructed milieu of a people, place, and time I was not at all familiar with. And a nice bonus were all the sympathetic passages about horses, Victor Constant's steed Milan, in particular!

Joan says

I really enjoyed this book on many levels. It was a good murder mystery which kept me intrigued, for one. Secondly, it was chock-full of detail of time and place. No detail was too little to leave out. I also enjoyed the use of real people in a real war. Voltaire was an especially engaging character. I look forward to the next in the series.

Sreesha Divakaran says

Rating: 3.5/5

Voltaire discovers a body in the woods just outside of the Cirey estate on the day that his lover Madame du Chatelet was due to arrive at the Chateau, after he had renovated the place. A member of the Marechaussee, Cavalier Victor Constant is cursing the fact that he has been transferred to Champagne, where he believes crimes would never take place. However, it is he who investigates the murder and strongly believes Voltaire is involved. Whomever he questions refuses to give him satisfactory answers; moreover, people simply do not seem to care about the deceased Damien Moiron. Eventually, he learns at least two women seemed to be in love with him, and one of them hints to him that he must look for "Hatred, jealousy, revenge."

Read my full review here: <https://rainandabook.wordpress.com/2015/04/06/murder-at-cirey-by-cheryl->

Liza Shaw says

Although I found this book wasn't my cup of tea, but I have to say the pictures Cheryl paints in her book is impressive. We are swept back into 1700 France, and learn about how people live, the law system as well as vivid descriptions of the country side and architecture. For a history lesson you can't go wrong. For me; well, it made me want to visit France and countryside, but I'm not sure I would have enjoyed life in the 1700's.

With well paced story, twists and ; a love triangle and an investigation convinced of just one culprit you will be turning pages eager to see what happens next, so watch for those late nights. Overall, if you love to get your teeth into a good mystery, or want to learn about French History this is most definetly the book for you.

Anthony Kizer says

As a person who loves Europe's history during the 18th century, I enjoyed seeing the settings in this novel strikingly painted with imagery. Even though this story only takes place over a short period of time I loved to see the subtle and not so subtle politics of France play through the mystery that our main characters Victor and Voltaire are set upon.

This book does a fabulous job at having two powerful and developed characters interact with each other and see the moves and counter moves being played out in a nice paced murder mystery that stays true with what we come to expect from or maybe not expect come out of 18th century France.

I did receive this book through a giveaway.
A job well done and cant wait to see what happens next!

Sarah-Jayne Briggs says

(I received this book for free as part of Goodreads First Reads giveaways).

(This review may contain spoilers).

I wavered a bit on how many stars to give this book, but I found that the more I read of it, the more I was pulled into the mystery surrounding the murder... though I did have quite a bit of confusion with some of the characters' names.

I liked the setting of this book. Although it was a bit hard to follow at times (there were references to places and events I had little to no knowledge of), I felt that the danger some of the characters were in, particularly Vincent, came across really well. There was one particular scene towards the end of the book that caused a great deal of concern as I was reading it.

I thought it was good to learn about Vincent's past and motivations as the book went on, rather than having it all thrown at me at once when it wasn't relevant. I was quite intrigued by the friendship Victor had with

Renard and it would have been good to see more of that. I didn't really like the romantic feelings, since I couldn't see any chemistry between him and the other character... but it at least didn't interfere with his work.

One of the things I felt worked really well in this book were the obvious differences in how the police force worked in comparison to nowadays. The protection of those in higher up positions was quite clear... as was the obvious desire to punish someone for the murder, even if that person wasn't actually who was responsible for the crime.

I didn't like Voltaire much as a character at first, I have to say. He was clearly hostile to Vincent and I thought he had a lot to hide... especially with the woman he had visiting him. (I didn't see much of her children, I have to say, which seemed a little strange). As the book went on, I did find Voltaire to be a more intriguing character.

I didn't feel that there was a lot of mystery in this book. There weren't too many surprises, but the characters were interesting and it was good to get a glimpse into how the police force worked. I would probably be interested in reading more books involving this setting and characters in the future.

Nicky says

I absolutely adored this novel. It got better and better, more and more gripping as it went on and I was left with the feeling that Victor Constant is the Richard Sharp of France. He is clever, brave, bold, hard, irreverent and invincible. You've got to love him!

More please!

B.K. Maxwell says

I must say I was very impressed with the imagery of this book, I was swept back into the past, with the authors detail of the French culture, government, vivid descriptions of the countryside and architecture. The characters and plot are very well developed, and with a twist early in the story makes this a book that you do not want to put down. I must say that this was well written and with the added love triangle which could lead the reader into one direction as it even misdirects Constant's judgements about Voltaire, is just one great aspect of this novel. If you love a good mystery with a touch of history, then Murder at Cirey: A Victor Constant Investigation is the book for you. I do so hope to see more of Victor Constant, "The County Mounty" of his day and age - saddle up for more adventures.

Lorraine Pestell says

As a lover of nineteenth and twentieth century French literature, I was intrigued to come across this contemporary novel set in France in a bygone era. "Murder at Cirey" was a delight to read: so evocative that I almost believed I was riding alongside Cavalier Constant on his trusty steed, Milan.

Victor Constant, of whom I hope to hear more in future mysteries, stops at nothing to investigate his crimes, sometimes at risk to his own career. He appears to be a canny judge of character, coupled with having a

warm heart and a strong moral compass. The author writes tightly-defined and unapologetic characters, and the dialogue has a class and musicality that befit its time.

Weaving the poet Voltaire's character into the plot adds humour and a little saucy romance with his scientist mistress, and we are left at the end of "Murder at Cirey" hoping that Victor's heart isn't broken in his next adventure!

Kristin Searce says

Disclaimer: I received an e-copy in exchange for an honest review.

Upon finishing this novel, I definitely reiterate the idea that Victor Constant is the Jack Reacher of 18th-century France. His methods are a little unorthodox, but he gets the job done no matter what, and that's what really matters, right?

Well, of course not, because where would be the fun in that?

After all, this IS 18th-century France we're talking about, so playing by the rules, doing everything by the book, and bending to the whims and wishes of the aristocracy is all part of the game. But that's a game Victor doesn't have time for because there's a murderer on the loose!

Once Victor and Voltaire met, this book was set for me. I love the idea of having Voltaire involved in something like this, considering all we really know happened with him, and it was interesting to read his theories on the crime alongside that of Victor's.

I will definitely be checking out the next one in this series, as I think Victor Constant is a force to be reckoned with.

4.5 stars

Stephen Brayton says

Plot

1735. The Champagne area of France. Where Victor Constant, military policeman, has been stationed. Where one day, the writer, Voltaire, finds the corpse of a murdered man. Who was a secretary of a nobleman and general. Constant begins his investigation and immediately runs into questions. How did the man arrive in the Cirey woods only to be murdered? Why was he there in the first place? And of course, the biggest question – who killed him? Constant's investigations lead him to discover more to the murdered man's life than at first suspected.

Of course it's your standard murder mystery but authors must find a freshness to the old standards and this time it's in the form of 18th Century France. And not just the time and place but to bring in actual people is a plus.

Characters

Victor Constant: military policeman with the title Cavalier, large frame, deep voice, grew up in Paris, cobalt eyes, has a sister, father committed suicide, mother dead

Francois-Marie Arouet De Voltaire: 41, writer, formerly in prison, brown eyes, short dark hair, wealthy

Albert Poirier; average height, solid frame, gamekeeper

Louis Tranchet de Sandre: magistrate, light eyes, fifties, lean, married with two sons

Gabrielle-Emilie Du Chatalet: late 20s, Voltaire's lover, married, has children, plays the harpsichord, husband a soldier

Christine Verrat: fair hair, slender, father is a draper, plays the harp

Beauregard: ranked a Lieutenant, thin, pointy head, small ears

Olivier Frenot de Caradoc: A Prevot-General

Not too much physical descriptions of some of the character, but some of them I could imagine just by their title and bearing. A nice mixture of characters both military and civilian, even religious.

Dialogue

Voices come through really well, especially Voltaire's. A little high brow mixed with intelligence and his wonderful use of words. Again, sometimes characters can be rounded out by their dialogue so I'll let it pass without too much of a black mark on the lack of physical descriptions because of the conversations and voices. At least for me, I could picture every character.

Writing

Each chapter is a day. Some unnecessary profanity.

One misspelling of a name.

One of the things that does make historical mysteries enjoyable is the science of the times and how it can be used to solve a crime. In this book, there is an early form of a ballistics test.

The author presented 18th Century France pretty well. The action was what I expected. Constant did a lot of running around from town to town but I don't think the story dragged.

I was a bit disappointed that Voltaire didn't play a larger role. At one point he was almost upstaged by his lover in the detecting. I thought maybe Voltaire might play a Watson role to Constant or at least a pesky sidekick.

On the whole, a very well written book and a good murder mystery.

My Rank:

James Glass says

Cheryl Sawyer has a gift for writing a period police procedure and turning it into a suspenseful mystery. After a young, handsome man is found murdered, Victor Constant, a military policeman, decides to pursue the case and uncover the killer.

He constantly runs into roadblocks as the people of Cirey aren't forthcoming with information about the victim. As Victor starts to come up with a list of potential suspects another murder is committed.

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this story because it's not a time period I usually read. I learned a lot about France. The only issue I have with the book is there are a lot of characters to keep up with. Also there are two protagonists, Victor and Voltaire. I found myself have to reread certain sections to keep up with the names, but this is a minor issue. I'd recommend the book to anyone who enjoys mystery and suspense.

Cat says

The year is 1735, the place the Champagne countryside, where wealthy philosopher-poet Francois-Marie Arouet de Voltaire, well known as the most audacious thinker in Europe, discovers a murdered man in the woods surrounding the Chateau de Cirey where he is staying as a guest.

The corpse is identified as Damien Moiron, until recently the secretary to the Comte de Fronzac. Sent to investigate, Cavalier Victor Constant of the Chaumont brigade is bothered by the apparent indifference of locals to the brutal murder of a man considered by many to be an ambitious upstart, a friendless foreigner in search of a new position after having been recently dismissed by the Comte over an offense involving a lady.

Constant soon learns that at least two women from different ranks in society appear to have been in love with the murdered man – a crime of passion, perhaps -- a large sapphire ring, gift of Voltaire to his lover Emilie, was found on the body of the murdered man. Or was Moiron, perhaps, murdered to lay a crime at Voltaire's door?

A beggar, Louis Aubert, is arrested and charged with the murder after he is found on the road outside Juzennecourt in possession of a pistol.

But all is not as it appears. When a second murder takes place in which Constant himself is implicated, the clues begin to point to a larger conspiracy. Victor Constant, no stranger to injustice himself, risks his career on his mission to find justice for the dead Moiron and the living, wrongly accused Aubert.

Murder at Cirey is a lively, engaging tale embellished with vivid detail and imagery of eighteenth century French provincial landscape and culture: from the rolling hills of the Upper Marne down through towns, estates and market squares; from police procedural intricacies through to the manners and nuances requisite for the navigation of polite society.
