



Charmed to Death

Shirley Damsgaard

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Ophelia Jensen's good witch granny Abigail revels in her paranormal powers. But Ophelia never asked for her bothersome psychic abilities -- especially since they proved worthless when the thirty-something librarian's best friend Brian was murdered by a still-unknown assailant.

Now, five years later, another friend is gone, killed in almost identical fashion. Even dear old Abby isn't safe, distracted as she is by her fight to prevent a massive, mega-polluting pig-farming operation from invading their small Iowa town. And Ophelia can't count on her snarling, scoffing nemesis, police detective Henry Comacho, to get the job done, so she'll have to take matters into her own hands. Because a common thread to the crimes -- and a possible next victim -- is suddenly becoming troublingly apparent . . . and it's Ophelia Jensen herself!

Charmed to Death Details

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From Reader Review Charmed to Death for online ebook

Hazel says

I'm of two minds with the main character Ophelia. On the one hand I like that she's a strong lead character. But on the other hand, I find her uptight, defensive, sarcastic & rude. She's really afraid of her gift. She treats it as if it's her power when she's just a vessel, as Abby says. She seems more like a teenager in maturity level than a 30something woman. That being said, there is a lot of potential for Ophelia to grow. In this book it's baby steps. She's starting to see the value of her gift & that it's not something to be abused. I would like to see more time given to Darci, Abby & Ophelia's mother. As they are interesting side characters that also could use some development. Ophelia also needs a strong male character in her life. Someone who won't take her BS.

I did like this book. There were a couple of people who I thought the killer would be. So it was nice to be kept guessing for a bit & not be able to figure things out right away. I'm looking forward to reading the next books & seeing how things develop for Ophelia & Abby.

Nikki says

Second in the Ophelia and Abby series about two witches living in a small town in Iowa. Ophelia Jensen works in the town library and her grandmother Abby has a greenhouse. But their other vocation is a family tradition of earth-centered witchcraft, used only for good.

As the book opens, Ophelia is continuing to discover what her special powers may be under Abby's tutelage. Abby's other main concern is the proposed factory hog farm in their county, which she is protesting both at town meetings and in the streets. Ophelia, meanwhile, is again having disturbing dreams about the death five years earlier of her friend Brian in Iowa City, which she foresaw but could not prevent. A library convention in Iowa City brings her into renewed contact with Henry Comacho, the investigating detective on the case, who is now with a state agency. Ophelia struggles with how to help Comacho find her friend's killer without revealing her psychic powers. She's also fighting a growing attraction to the policeman. Murders, vandalism, and a mysterious stranger complicate matters further. Both Ophelia and Abby will find their lives in danger before the final resolution.

This book was a worthy successor to *Witch Way to Murder*, with continuing character development for Ophelia, an evocative Iowa setting, and intelligent integration of current affairs into the plot. I look forward to the next in the series.

Abbey says

BOTTOM LINE: #2 Ophelia and Abby, rural Iowa; fantastical cosy mystery. Ophelia gets to finally solve the murder of her friend Brian, and in many ways this is merely a continuation of the first in series, but with a new protagonist. This was a very, very "soft cosy" in the Aunt Dimity manner, with precious little plot. And every cliché in the romance novel field seems to be thrown in, alas. I had hopes for this series but while the first book was entertaining (and I love Abby and her relationship with Ophelia), this was just more "same

old, same old" - didn't fulfill the promise of the first book. Don't think I'll try #3.

This second in series is nearly a rerun of the first book plot-wise, with Ophelia and those she loves in danger, and her attempting to find ways to get out of it, not being believed by law enforcement, etc.. There's an awful lot of femjep here, and while there's a nice sense of humor, the use of supernatural elements seems contrived, as each time Ophelia gets cornered she "discovers" a new talent. At first it's interesting, but much repetition has made it stale.

I enjoy the characters of Abby and Ophelia, a loving grandmother and granddaughter, one a folk witch (Appalachian style) and the other a family member with The Gifts who really doesn't want them, thanks. Her learning curve is interesting to watch, but the plotting here was abysmal, with everything moved on by Ophelia's "lucky guesses". Charming in the first book, annoying in the second.

I'm not about to attempt the third, possibly having been further soured in my mind by reading an interview posted on the author's website that clearly and carefully states that she doesn't believe in folk magic and writes the stories only because there's a good market for them currently (it seems witches are "hot!" right now...). I felt manipulated by an author who uses religious beliefs as a marketing ploy.

This series has nice, loveable characters and a cosy small town setting, but her use of supernatural elements to move things along in this second book became frustrating and annoying. Why have a police detective as second lead if he's not going to help solve the crime? Because he's a hunk, that's why, and the introduction of a seemingly cold, handsome detective to act as Ophelia's foil was, I fear, too much, finally, for my sensibilities.

May 2008

James says

4 stars to Shirley Damsgaard's Charmed to Death, the second book in the Abby and Ophelia series, for brewing up an even better story and turning on the ways of the witch. While a fun and good example of a cozy and has a lot of potential as a popular new series, it needs another book to fully round out the setting and the characters before I can push it to a 5.

Story

Ophelia has a dream which her grandmother Abby interprets as a need to solve her best friend's murder from five years ago which was the ultimate driver for Ophelia's move back home to her small Iowa town from the Iowa big city. Ophelia begins to accept that she and her grandmother are witches and partially embraces her powers to discover who killed Brian. At the same time, Abby is leading a group of townsfolk to stop a big company from changing the landscape of their town and potentially causing disastrous results. Ophelia develops relationships with a few new male characters testing the waters to see who might be a good love interest, but Abby warns that one is dark and one is good. Which one will the witch pick? And what happens when the suspected serial killer who murdered Brian seems to be lurking in Ophelia's hometown? All the stories come colliding together revealing more bubbling beneath the cauldron's surface than actually appeared.

Strengths

1. The story was quite clever. It had some complexity but also some simplicity which made it spot on for a cozy mystery read. You know from the beginning that one of the new characters is too good to be true, but

you can't quite figure out what's going on until the big reveal.

2. Ophelia's softer side comes out in this book. She's not as harsh as she was in book 1, especially seeing her worry over her grandmother who has an accident and when she turns to her mother (who makes an appearance!) for comfort.

Weaknesses

1. One of the sub-plots had no conclusion: what happens with the big company coming in to takeover some of the farmland and turn it into a hog breeding facility? After Abby's accident, her cause seems to have dissipated along with Harley and Edna. I'm hoping this is picked up in book 3 but it was definitely left *too* open for readers just starting a new series.

2. When one of the characters falls victim to an accident/killer, no one mourns his death and it really isn't discussed a whole lot. There is no funeral, no town gossip, no sadness, etc. In order to build the appeal of the town and the people, I think it's important to incorporate these side stories and themes into the overall series in order to build a large readership. Unfortunately, this example felt mechanical and not emotional.

Final Thoughts

The series really took off in this book from the debut. Characters are developing personalities and rivalries. Families are being integrated with Ophelia's return home. The town is being flushed out. It has a lot of potential. And if you have any interest in witch history, it's connecting the story back to the Salem Witch Trials which helps ground it in history. I'll definitely move on to book 3 to see if this series flies off the handle!

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. *Note*: All written content is my original creation and copyrighted to me, but the graphics and images were linked from other sites and belong to them. Many thanks to their original creators.

Angie Lisle says

Shirley Damsgaard has carved a new niche in the market: Appalachian Paranormal Fiction! Being a West Virginia gal, I love how Appalachia figures into the books without all the negative stereotyping that usually goes along with it!

I always have problems getting started with Shirley Damsgaard's books. But once I make it past the first couple of chapters, I fall in love with the characters again (and again). I am sucked in by the storyline and I have a very hard time putting the book down.

I love that these books are "chick lit" without all those annoying sex scenes! Finally, we have a main character whose biggest concerns are her family (especially her adopted daughter and her grandmother), her job, her best friend, and her special psychic gift that helps her solve mysteries. There is a guy involved -

sometimes, he even helps solve the crimes - but Ophelia's entire life doesn't revolve around him. And, because they aren't rushing off to bed together, they actually have a real relationship forming. It's a nice change from what's normally published and called "chick lit." I hope it takes!

Rebecca says

I'm liking this series more and more as I go along. LOL, the only way it could be better for me is if the cat had a greater part in all of the interesting doings!

Betty says

Just the series for those who like their witches gently turned out. Number 2 in the Ophelia and Abby series, Ophelia, the apprehensive witch, finds herself stumbling alone without the guidance of her grandmother Abby, her trainer, tracking a witch-killer.

The troubles began with the death of Ophelia's good friend five years previously, leaving her fearful of her destiny. Abby is the powerful witch but the two though able to perform many of the same feats, do not necessarily have the same gifts and Abby has the feeling that she will not be able to help her granddaughter on this mission. She can only give her clues as to what Ophelia's visions may portend. The women of the family have passed down this destiny, skipping a generation here and there, one of the missed being Abby's daughter, Ophelia's mother. Abby gives Ophelia some ancient Norse runes that belonged to her great grandmother believing she will gain her insights through them. The runes come with a journal, and awaken deep feelings within.

After an accident leaves Abby in a coma, it is up to Ophelia, ready or not, to be strong and learn. She must be the one to complete the mission. This series of books is light-hearted, fun, and yet interesting. There are some continuing characters in the series, each well-developed or developing individually. I love these books and turn to one of them whenever I am in need of calming my mind from weightier matters or tomes. The promise shown in this, the second book, is something I look forward to in each and every one. Totally enjoyable, no vampires, beasts, or were-people, just two enduring and loving witches. A quick, easy read.

Natalie says

Love these books, next one in series, I'll be reading.

Erin ? *Proud Book Hoarder* says

It's been over a year since I read the first one - I was excited to continue the series, so ordered the next several in the series. For some reason took awhile to start it, though. Will keep on with the series but my enthusiasm is dampered a little. As with a lot of series, it may spruce back up again though. Let's hope!

I love the concept - small town witch librarian who is slowly coming into her powers, aided by her quirky

grandmother, in a cozy mystery setting where she keeps stumbling on dead bodies and has to solve the crimes to prevent herself from being sucked in and killed.

Book two takes to solving an old murder that plagued her since book one, where in her past a friend was murdered. Answers are finally here, and they're depressing. Ophelia has come out of her shell and is allowing friends and dates now, unlike her stubborn demeanor in the first book where she refused to stop being a hermit and meet people.

The mystery is a good one, but I started suspecting the villain because there weren't enough culprits left that would be likely. Comancho was a fun character - I hope he returns in the future, has a charm and animal magnetism about him.

As with a lot of cozies, the writing is too simple, too juvenile, at times. The dialogue goes from flowing smoothly to seeming silly. It's all a little unrealistic with the writing tone and characters aren't sketched out enough yet - especially Ophelia's overreactions with her emotions, particularly where her grandmother is concerned.

I'm hoping the third improves - the concept for the series is fun.

Jacki says

Ophelia Jensen once again finds herself in the middle of a murder investigation. This time another friend is found dead and Abby is not able to help Ophelia as she uses her psychic powers to find the killer before he strikes next. It looks like Ophelia is the next victim on his list.

As I had hoped from reading the first book in the series, Damsgaard is maturing as an author and her storyline a big improvement from *Witch Way to Murder*. In addition, her characters are better developed and much more interesting, although I really wish Abby was a bigger player as I would really like to get to know her better. Darci also takes a bit of a backseat in this book as well. However, a new and very interesting character was introduced who I hope we see more of.

Yet another enjoyable and easy read from Damsgaard. A great book to have if you are traveling or sitting by the pool this summer.

Shala Howell says

My five year old daughter told me earlier this week that the secret to finding good books is to look for a cat on the cover. So when it came time to find a mystery with which to while away a lazy Saturday afternoon I picked this one off my to-read shelf. The cat on the cover is adorable.

If you like your mysteries solved not by detective work but through a series of psychic visions and rune-casting, this is the series for you. Spoon-fed answers from the great beyond are not my preferred detection method, but once I stopped expecting Ophelia to actually use her brain and concentrated on the relationship

between Ophelia and Abby and Ophelia and Comacho, I liked the book much better.

Damsgaard is a good storyteller, just as long as you expect the right thing out of the story. This book isn't actually about finding a killer, it's about a woman coming to terms with her psychic abilities, and forging an uneasy detente with an adversary from the past. The mystery, such as it is, is the vehicle for that, but Damsgaard is no Agatha Christie. I knew who the killer was half way through. Then it was just a matter of waiting for Ophelia to catch up. I finished the book bc Damsgaard got me caring enough about her characters to want to get some resolution for them, but I'm not sure it's enough to get me to pick up another.

Wendi (BrokenBinding) says

2 1/2 stars

I really want to like this series...there is a lot I like about it. But there are niggling annoyances scattered throughout. Ophelia can be entertaining, but most of the time she is annoyingly clueless. I find her hard to believe in the role of librarian.

Sue says

I jumped right into this second in the series after reading the first and this one solves the mystery of her friend's murder five years earlier that caused Ophelia to shut out other people and deny her heritage of folk magick. Since beginning to embrace her heritage and open herself to friends during the events of the first novel, she makes more strides toward using her precognitive gifts in this novel as she tries to save those around her from the same killer that murdered her friend. This one contains more magickal descriptions, but I didn't find them overpowering, and it also contains some creepy descriptions of serial killer behavior.

catechism says

Well, despite the less-than-glowing review I gave the first book in this series, I saw some promise in it and decided to try the second one. Wrong call! I didn't actively dislike anyone, but the main character is still a jerk. I do not require characters to be likeable for me to like a book, but an exception to that rule is cozy mysteries. I want to like my small-town amateur sleuths, dammit! I want to enjoy the time I spend with them. In this case, I just don't.

Also, this isn't really a mystery, so much as the story of an obnoxiously stubborn woman trying to come to terms with her psychic powers and some past trauma. Most of this "coming to terms" thing seems to consist of a lot of frustrated whining that said powers do not provide her with the names, addresses and likenesses of murderers. They do provide her with other clues, though, and those clues seemed obvious enough to me. Those things add up to a few murders solved by virtue of answers handed down from the great beyond while we wait for the protagonist to get over herself enough to think, "oh! an answer! handed down from the great beyond! let me tell the cops."

NOW I'm done with this series.

Jennifer says

Following her adventures in the series opener, *Witch Way to Murder*, Ophelia is settling into her position as a librarian in the small Iowa town where her grandmother, Abby has lived for many years. Ophelia doesn't stay out of trouble for long though because both she and Abby are witches and dead bodies just seem to keep turning up around Ophelia. Soon Ophelia is trying to dodge the policeman who made her life a living hell when her friend Brian was murdered while trying to figure out who would have wanted to murder Brian and why.

I liked this better than the first book in the series, partly because a lot of the exposition was out of the way thanks to the first book, but mostly due to the presence of a worthy partner/romantic interest for Ophelia - Detective Comacho, who was originally mentioned in the first book as an antagonist. The chemistry between Ophelia and Comacho is well-done and Damsgaard has them set-up for future collaborations in a way that makes sense. I'm not convinced all the plot threads were that neatly tied up (who was it again who knocked out Abby in the greenhouse and why?) but maybe I just didn't pay close enough attention since I was reading this on a car trip.

After the first book, I decided to give the series one more try, but I liked this well enough that I think I'll pick up the next one once my "to be read" stack gets a little shorter.

Peggi Warner-lalonde says

Ophelia continues to grow and to accept her abilities. A satisfying read.

C. says

Here is a mystery that kept me reading until it was done! The lead character has warmed up, melding into a circle of friends we enjoy seeing her with. She has found assertiveness to speak up to figures who once intimidated her. She is forced to explore extra-sensory gifts by herself. Best of all, we meet *Ophelia's* Mom.

I've seen ratings lowered merely because a reader guessed a culprit's identity - nonsense! There's nothing to hazarding 'person A, B, or C'. The meat in "**Charmed To Death**" is a profound background of details: why kill, deciphering clues about how someone behaves, and what they are really after. The poignancy of novel 2 is higher-strung because all crimes, even external vandalism and threat, is extremely personal. This isn't about feeling compelled to help a general townspeople. Familiar, kind faces are affected and the vulnerability of even much loved plants reaches you tremendously.

The book keeps you absorbed on numerous levels, like daring to acquaint a nemesis and the fascination of watching how *Ophelia's* Mom fits into the family. Most urgently: the reader is doled out a complete inability to assume 'Grandma will save the day'. **Shirley Damsgaard** has penned a very well thought out story.

Kimberly Ann says

This is the 2nd book in the series and I am reading it second after the 4th book which I read 1st. Are you with me so far?

Ophelia (town Librarian) & her Grandmother Abby have the "Gift", which has passed Abby's mother by. Abby is having to go this alone, but is guided by her Great Grandmother's Rune Stones. Abby has visions & dreams...which are as horrific as the murders themselves. Abby is being tracked by a serial killer who previously killed her best friend Brian and later several other professional homosexual men. In the mix is the community that is fighting a large corporate "Hog Farm", which pollutes the rivers and land.

I like the series, the books are well written...however I have also been able to figure out the Red Herrings and the killers before the conclusion. I am not thrilled with the graphic violence of the murders or her visions. I would prefer there to be more information of her & her grandmother's "Gifts".

Amy says

I read this book because my son picked it out because of the cat on the cover. I was bored by it & i usually enjoy books with a supernatural element.

AngryGreyCat says

Charmed to Death is the second book in a cozy mystery series. I found the 1st, 3rd & 4th books at my local indie book shop, but couldn't get a hold of the second, so I ordered it on my Kindle....must read in order syndrome. I am not a big reader of paranormal cozies..but I seem to keep saying that lately so maybe I am reading more of them than I think. Anyway, I enjoy this one and will continue reading it. I like the combination of realistic and paranormal elements. The characters Ophelia and Abby are charming and the cast of characters adds plenty of local color.

The mystery was interesting and well paced. Ophelia is growing as a character, in her relationships and in her craft. I am interested to see where this series will go in the subsequent books.
