



Oliver Twisted

Cindy Brown

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Orphans. Thieves. Murder. And an All-You-Can-Eat Buffet!

When Ivy Meadows lands a gig with the book-themed cruise line Get Lit!, she thinks she's died and gone to Broadway. Not only has she snagged a starring role in a musical production of Oliver Twist, she's making bank helping her PI uncle investigate a string of onboard thefts, all while sailing to Hawaii on the S.S. David Copperfield.

But Ivy is cruising for disaster. Her acting contract somehow skipped the part about aerial dancing forty feet above the stage, her uncle Bob is seriously sidetracked by a suspicious blonde, and—oh yeah—there's a corpse in her closet.

Forget catching crooks. Ivy's going to have a Dickens of a time just surviving.

“This gut-splitting mystery is a hilarious riff on an avant-garde production of ‘the Scottish play’ ...Combining humor and pathos can be risky in a whodunit, but gifted author Brown makes it work.” – Mystery Scene Magazine (on Macdeath)

“A definite delight...sit back, wait for the curtain to rise on this one, and then have a whole lot of fun figuring out whodunit.” – Suspense Magazine (on The Sound of Murder)

“Ivy is a delight! She's sweet, smart, and a little zany. You'll find yourself laughing out loud as you race through the pages.” – April Henry, New York Times Bestselling Author of Lethal Beauty (on The Sound of Murder)

Books in the Ivy Meadows Humorous Mystery Series:

- MACDEATH (#1)
- THE SOUND OF MURDER (#2)
- OLIVER TWISTED (#3)

Part of the Henery Press Mystery Series Collection, if you like one, you'll probably like them all...

Related subjects include: cozy mysteries, women sleuths, murder mystery series, whodunit mysteries (whodunnit), amateur sleuth books, book club recommendations, humorous murder mysteries, private investigator mystery series.

Oliver Twisted Details

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Author : Cindy Brown

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From Reader Review *Oliver Twisted* for online ebook

Mark Baker says

Ivy and her PI uncle Bob are working on a case together as they go undercover on the Get Lit! ship the S.S. David Copperfield. They are trying to track down the people behind a rash of petty theft that have been plaguing the literature themed cruise company. As part of her cover, Ivy is working in Oliver! At Sea!, the ship's current play. However, the ship has barely left when Ivy finds her roommate stuffed into their closet. Have the thieves escalated to murder?

This is another delightful romp with Ivy. There are some fun distractions and twists before she begins to put the pieces of the case together, and the way everything comes together at the end is masterful. Ivy's cast mates are also the suspects, and we get to know them very well, yet the regular characters we've met in Phoenix still get to pop in, mostly via a sub-plot Ivy is trying to help with over phone calls. Throw in some delightful humor and you have another winner.

Read my full review at Carstairs Considers.

Ivonne Rovira says

Author Cindy Brown scored big with her debut mystery *MacDeath* and its sequel *The Sound of Murder*, but the third book in the series, *Oliver Twisted*, while enjoyable, isn't a five-star triumph.

Fledgling actress Ivy Meadows (the stage name for a young woman with the more prosaic name of Olive Ziegwart) joins her private investigator Uncle Bob in going undercover on the S.S. *David Copperfield*, a cruise ship with a Charles Dickens theme. The entire cruise line has been hit with a series of robberies and jewel thefts, and Ivy and her uncle, Bob Duda, are to uncover the culprits and how they're getting away with it.

But the stakes are raised from the very first chapter when Ivy discovers that her roommate, Harley Locklow, has been murdered. And Ivy gets even more anxious when she's called on to perform as an aerialist and she's subject to some "accidents."

Oliver Twisted, while a fun read, wasn't as funny or believable as the previous two books. Ivy, heretofore terrified of bodies of water, loses that fear almost as soon as she boards the ship. Her gay friend Timothy, her antagonistic rival Ada, the lothario Valery Boyko, and most of the passengers and crew members were reduced to stereotypes or total nonentities. An intriguing mystery and an interesting resolution elevate the novel to three-and-a-half stars, rounded up to four.

Leah says

Please, sir, I want some more...

Ivy Meadows is an actress part of the time and a private detective the rest of it. So when her PI boss, her

Uncle Bob, is hired to investigate a series of thefts aboard a cruise ship, Ivy puts both her talents to use – detecting when she's not playing Nancy in the Dickens-themed cruise's production of *Oliver! At Sea!* But things take a serious turn almost as soon as she steps on board, when she finds the body of the girl she was due to share a cabin with stuffed into the wardrobe. It's not clear how she died, but Ivy and Bob suspect murder and that in some way her death may be tied in to the thefts.

This is a fun romp, with a very likeable lead character in the shape of Ivy. Her career as a detective is just beginning, so she's not what you'd think of as slick at it. Her technique is mainly to blurt out questions at people and hope they don't wonder why she's asking! But she's intelligent and perceptive, curious about people in general, and endearingly aware of her own deficiencies. Fortunately she's also attractive, both physically and personality-wise, so she soon builds up some on-board friendships that help her with her enquiries, while adding to the general fun.

The Dickens theme is done well, without taking itself too seriously. The cruise ship sounds frighteningly realistic with Boz's Buffet, the Droid Deck, and fancy-dress parties where everyone dresses up as Dickens characters. The actors double as 'ambient' characters when they're not on stage, so that Oliver wanders around picking the pockets of guests, while Madame Defarge knits scarves and an Eastern European Bill Sykes is mean to our Nancy (when he's not flirting with her).

I must admit that, as has become one of my regular whines, I felt the book was a bit too long for its content, especially in the first half. It seemed to take forever for the investigation element to get underway, and I had to suspend an awful lot of disbelief that no formal investigation of the death seemed to be taking place. But when a second death happens about halfway through, things hot up, and the plot is actually rather darker than it seems as if it's going to be. However, the general feeling is one of a well-written cosy.

There's lots of humour in the book, and I appreciated this more as the book progressed and I found Ivy had won me over. If murder and theft aren't enough, she also has to contend with the fact that her Uncle Bob seems to have fallen for a woman whom Ivy suspects of being a fortune hunter or worse. Oh, and then there's the little matter that no-one thought to warn her of when she took the job as Nancy – that part of her task would be to perform aerial acrobatics 40 feet above the stage! The production of *Oliver! At Sea!* is largely 'borrowed' from the musical *Oliver*, with some strategic changes – songs such as *Gruel*, *Glorious Gruel* have an eerie familiarity! There's also a touch of romance, but this isn't allowed to overwhelm the book.

A very enjoyable cosy, better written than many in that genre, with a decent plot and some great characters. I can only echo Oliver himself... "Please, sir, I want some more!" It's apparently the third in the series, each of which has a theatre theme, and I'll be adding the other two to my list for those days when only something light-hearted and fun will do.

NB This book was provided for review by the publisher, Henery Press.

www.fictionfanblog.wordpress.com

Cindy Brown says

Yes, I did write this book, but I also read it! Many, many times...

Holly says

Another cute entry in the Ivy Meadows mystery. This one takes place on a cruise ship. This just happens to be a literary cruise ship, which if these things were real, I would sign up--especially if there was a Jane Austen cruise ship!! Anyway.....I love cozy mysteries, so if your not a fan, this wouldn't be for you. Ivy is an inexperienced P.I. which leaves for many mishaps and not so subtle investigating. Ivy is so adorable, though, it hardly matters. She has her Uncle Bob with her, who is a senior P.I., and is also helping her hone her skills. Like all cozy mysteries, this isn't a difficult mystery to read but just light and fun adventure. I have yet to read the first in this series but I plan to very soon. However, a few months ago I read the 2nd one and enjoyed that as well.

**Thank you to the publisher and Netgalley for an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

Sue Hieber says

I liked this book very much, imagine a fledgling private investigator/actress, who seems to have absolutely no ability to judge people. This has caused her problems in the past. Now she is On the high seas with a secret assignment to uncover thieves aboard ship while working undercover in a play. Not having a clue whom to trust, she just goes headlong into first one murder, then another, and starts receiving death threats. So much for solving a theft ring. However, much like other intuitive heroines of the past, she will not give up no matter what. A very enjoyable book.

HENERY PRESS PUBLISHING says

“Brown mixes laugh-out-loud observations about the acting life with a witty and intriguing mystery. Consider yourself warned. *Oliver Twisted* is a fast-paced addictive read impossible to put down until Ivy has caught the killer.” – D.E. Ireland, Agatha Award-Nominated Author of *Move Your Blooming Corpse*

Betty says

Ivy Meadow and Uncle Bob have accepted a PI job on the cruise ship S S. David Copperfield Get Lit! to locate the thieves robbing passengers. Ivy finds herself playing the part of Nancy Her contract skipped over the aerial dancing. Ivy discovers her roommate, Harley, dead stuffed in a small closet. As the investigation unravels it takes different on several different paths. Uncle Bob is smitten with a passenger. Ivy receives a message that her brother is missing from his group home. Will Ivy and Uncle Bob reveal the answers before the ship reaches Hawaii? I recommend this series.

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

Debbie says

I think this was my favorite out of the Ivy Meadows series. I loved the little Dickens of a brat kid, his final scene was the best. Ha!! The story was a good one and I definitely share Ivy's fear of the water. And who knew there would be so many suspects?

This is certainly a fun, entertaining and just relaxing and enjoyable cozy series. There's lots of chuckles and being in the theater/PI business, you just never know what Ivy will have to get herself into. Silk aerial dancing? Oh, no way I could do it.

Thanks Henery Press and Net Galley for providing me with a free e-galley in exchange for an honest review.

Fay Fawcett says

This is the third book in the series and it was just as much fun as the other two. Ivy gets herself into some crazy situations along with her uncle who is a PI. Ivy is an actress of sorts and also works for her uncle as an assistant. This story takes them on a cruise ship to find a thief, which they do in the end.

LuAnn says

In January 2014, I read the first book in this series, MacDeath, and enjoyed it immensely. Somehow I must have slept through 2015, because I missed The Sound of Murder. But I'm truly glad to be back reading about Ivy and her adventures.

"Why", you might ask. Well, I am a nut for live theatre. So much so I got a minor in theatre (to go with my finance major), and have acted or tech'd about 30 plays. Cindy's books are about as close as I get to the theatre these days (we live in the boonies), so it's always a pleasure.

What a cool idea, to have a cruise line with ships named after famous authors and theme the voyages after titles of the author's books! In this case, there is "Oliver Twisted" a shortened musical take-off on the Broadway musical "Oliver Twist", taking place on the S.S. David Copperfield. I would SO be in my element. Books and theatre together??? That's this gal's career nirvana!

If you haven't read one of the series yet, Ivy is a part-time PI (at her uncle's agency) and a part-time actress. They both have been hired by the cruise line to investigate a string of high-dollar thefts from the guests on a number of ships. Ivy goes undercover as an actress in the play "Oliver Twisted", oh yeah, with like one week to learn her lines, the songs and the dance steps. I've done that; it is not easy at all. Her uncle is a passenger.

And talk about a 'twisted' mystery. Usually in a mystery, the characters may not be as they appear. In this book, the actors are dressed in period costumes, so you know darn well that they aren't as they appear. The women in the troupe are *ahem* less than cordial to the newcomer Ivy, and the men who are not gay are all looking at her cinched-up costumed chest.'

The kid that played Oliver needed someone to take him to the woodshed. He was incorrigible! He would actually pick pockets and I have my doubts as to whether or not he would return whatever he stole if Ivy

hadn't been there to catch him!

The sub-plot with Ivy's brother Cody (who has a TBI - traumatic brain injury - from an accident and lives in a group home) is very engaging. Cody and his friend Stu go missing from the group home, and are gone at least overnight. Everyone is worried. Ivy and her uncle cannot leave the ship. Then Cody calls Ivy and talks to her, letting her know he's ok and asking for her help in finding Stu. The ending to that part of the story is utterly charming.

I await the next 'season' of the Ivy Meadows Mysteries with bated breath. :O)

(Disclosure: I received a copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.)

Carla Johnson-Hicks says

This is the third book in the Ivy Meadows Mystery Series and the first one I have read. I give this book 4.5 stars. I am definitely going to check out the other two. Even though there were things mentioned that I had obviously missed from the first two books, I was able to follow the story easily. Cindy Brown has written a funny mystery that kept me guessing right to the end. The fact that there was more than one death/murder as well as thievery going on it was easy to send up red herrings and keep the story moving well.

Ivy Meadow and her Uncle Bob have accepted a PI job on the cruise ship S S. David Copperfield "Get Lit!" They have been hired to find and locate a group of thieves who have been robbing passengers on various "Get Lit!" cruises. Because Ivy is an actress, she finds herself playing the part of Nancy in the ships version of Oliver Twist. Once onboard, she finds out that she is supposed to do a performance using silks dangling 40 feet over the stage. This adds some of the humour to the story. On her first night on the ship, she discovers her roommate, Harley, dead stuffed in her small closet. As the investigation progresses, there are many surprises that do not seem to have anything to do with the case. Uncle Bob has fallen for a passenger that Ivy suspects is a gold digger, Ivy's brother has left the group home where he is living and contacts Ivy a couple of times, but hangs up on her before she can find out where he is, Ada her roommate is not very friendly and actually threatens her, and now she has to keep an eye on the young actor playing Oliver who seems to relish getting into trouble and playing practical jokes. All this while Ivy tries to get over her fear of water. Will Ivy and Uncle Bob figure out who the thieves are before the ship reaches Hawaii?

This was a fun light-hearted read with a lot going on to keep the book moving quickly. I really enjoyed the character of Ivy as well as some of the supporting characters. I am not sure about Uncle Bob, he seemed to doubt Ivy a lot, but perhaps there are reasons from the previous two books. It does look like there is going to be romance in Ivy's life coming up in the next book in this series. I recommend this book to cozy mystery lovers.

Kay Hudson says

Another fun adventure with Ivy Meadows. This time she and her uncle Bob are undercover on a Charles Dickens themed cruise ship (the S.S. *David Copperfield*), looking for a gang of thieves working the *Get Lit!* cruise line. Ivy plays Nancy in the on board production of *Oliver! At Sea!* and appears as an aerial dancer (for which she has no training at all) in a magic show, while Bob pretends to be a wealthy rancher.

Bad cell service fouls up communication between Ivy and Bob, and between Ivy and Phoenix, where her brother Cody has disappeared from his group home. On the ship, bodies start piling up, and Ivy and Bob realizing there's a lot more than pick-pocketing going on. Will they figure out what's going on before the ship reaches Hawaii?

I've really enjoyed this series, enough to read the first three in a row, and I hope there will be more Ivy Meadows mysteries.

Stacy McCain says

I love this series of books and Oliver Twisted is as entertaining as the others have been. Set during a "Get Lit" cruise, Ivy joins the troop performing Oliver Twist on a Dicken's Literature Cruise to go undercover and try to find the culprit in a series of robberies onboard. But a dead body complicates things and both Ivy and Uncle Bob have to get to the bottom of everything before they are next. Cindy Brown does a great job creating multiple characters that are flawed and have roles in the finales while also being colorful and well developed. She also has created a great heroine with Ivy Meadows who can get herself into (and out of) anything. Because I enjoy the takes off classic plays and novels that are used in Brown's books, I think this is a great way to combine the mystery genre with my book nerd side. I think anyone liking a mystery, humor, and classic stories will enjoy them with me.

Kathleen says

This is an excellent "cozy" mystery that takes place in a very unique setting allowing for interesting situations and people. The main character, Ivy/Olive, seems like a very real person, with errors in judgment that any of us might make in similar situations, and very sweet and funny too. The story line was complex and well-written with a number of surprises on various levels at the end. Well done and great fun!

The author does great research, particularly on two diverse subjects as orphans and epilepsy. Both are turning points in various plots, but both are handled with delicacy and truth.

For the orphans look at this quote: "I am dead inside. Only once in my life did I feel something. Then, poof. Dead again. It is that way with orphans you know. If no one loves you, you do not learn to feel. Or even to want. You just hope to live." How moving and empathetic!

For epilepsy, she uses Sudden Unexpected Death in Epilepsy (SUDEP <https://www.epilepsy.com/learn/early-death-and-sudep/sudep>) as a plot point but does it with great sympathy and understanding for the people affected. Not many people know about this condition as it rare but the author explains it very factually. I know because my nephew died of it. It was difficult to read but I thank the author for bringing this little-known cause of death into the light of reality.
