

Dance On His Grave Book Reviews

I met Sylvia Dickey Smith at a local bookstore and decided to try this book in the Kindle version. I really enjoyed reading it and thought the plot was very well done, as was the attention to small town detail. It was difficult sometimes to understand Sid's motivation in the story...why did she do the things she did? Also, the romantic interest did not seem to fit someone who was just recently divorced...it was never clear to me why she was interested in him. These things may become more obvious in the subsequent books as the characters are developed. Overall, I was pleased with this book and look forward to downloading the next two to my Kindle!

A good read especially if you like female sleuths!
Reveiwed by Michele S. (Georgetown, TX)
April 28, 2009

This is a powerful story and a great book. Sidra is a woman to be admired!

This book introduces us to Sidra Smart. Sidra just divorced her Baptist minister husband and moved from Houston to Orange on the coast of Texas to settle her brother's estate. Her brother died and left her everything, including his business as a private investigator. Sidra is trying to put her life together, figuring out where she wants to be and who she wants to be. She's been a minister's wife since she was a teenager. Now that her children are grown and out of the house, she realizes that she has never been on her own. She has no idea what she wants to be, now that she's all grown up and has to make her own way in the world.

One morning, she arrives at her brother's office, intending to clear it out when a young woman shows up. She had hired Sidra's brother, and now that he is gone, she wants Sidra to continue her case, but this is completely out of her realm, so she tries to refer the case to another private investigator in town. Instead of taking on the case, George Leger offers to mentor her.

Thus Sidra finds herself looking into a mystery that occurred when her client was a child of three. The woman, Jewel, believes that she and her sister Emma witnessed her father and two other men murder a woman. Her father then took the body to a house and dumped it, burning the house to the ground to hide the evidence. Jewel is convinced the memories she has are true, and she wants Sidra to prove that her father did murder a woman. Sidra searches for proof that these crimes were committed, and in doing so, finds out that her courage is great, her instincts amazing, but most of all, that her brother knew her better than she knew herself.

Emma and Jewel are both damaged young women, and the investigation is painful for them and for Sidra. The stories of what this man did to his children are ugly, and what he

tries to do to stop the investigation is just as hideous. At the same time, Sidra must find a way to make her home in Orange and come to terms with leaving her past behind.

This is a powerful story and a great book. Sidra is a woman to be admired, and the two young women she helps are stunning in both their pain and the beginning of their path to healing. This is a book to put on your list of must reads.

January 19, 2009

Reviewed by Rachel P. Smith "BittenbyBooks.com" (Nashville, TN)

This was a great read. The author brought the characters to life and the mystery intriguing.

August 13, 2008

Reviewed by Author, Jennifer Robins (Cleveland, Ohio USA)

A Texas Twist on the Mystery!

Dance on His Grave is Sylvia Dickey Smith's first in her Sidra Smart/Third Eye series. This is a mystery with a touch of paranormal, in that the protagonist has a sixth sense about things.

Sidra Smart and the other characters in the book are true to life. This is not to say they aren't larger than life, which they are, but they certainly hold true for east Texas. You could pluck just about any character from Dance on His Grave, set him or her in the real setting and they'd be right at home.

Orange, Texas, is fictional, but Smith creates the town in such detail and with such love that it comes to life - vivid and believable.

The protagonist of Dance on His Grave, Sidra Smart, starts off as a fish out of water, but by the end of the book, she's grown into her role as sleuth and unexpected P.I. If you like character driven mystery with a touch of fantasy, you'll most likely like this book - and will look forward to more in the series.

May 3, 2008

Reviewed by Helen Ginger

This is one of my all-time favorite books. Though it's extremely bizarre at times and walks a line of becoming unthinkable, yet it never fully crosses that line. "Dance On His

Grave" is suspenseful, engaging and anything but predictable and rekindles your love of why you started reading it in the first place.

As a former native of the area where much of the story takes place, I think the story works because the cast of characters are quite an interesting ensemble. While each new character introduced is appealing enough to catch your eye, Sylvia Dickey Smith doesn't go into too much detail to detract from the main story or main characters.

The descriptions of the place and the people and even the food are detailed enough to give the reader a good feel of the setting and atmosphere. From start to end, it is an interesting tale because the characters are unbelievable (in a good way) and it takes place in an area where anything and everything is know to happen. This area along the Sabine River as it winds its way to the Gulf of Mexico has always intrigued me. From the fantastic architecture, to the culture and people, they are all truly fascinating and Sylvia Dickey Smith paints a picture that is easy to visualize. She has a definitely unique style of writing and I was left wondering how in the world she came up with some of the things that are exposed in "Dance On His Grave." This story totally captures the hot, sultry mood of Orange, Texas, and goes at that pace - any faster and the heat would have caused a melt down. This book is a thrill-ride a minute.

March 27, 2008

Reviewed by Cliff Johnson (Filer, Idaho) Author, Wrong Side of the River

Sidra Smart is 51 years old and recently divorced from her preacher husband. When her brother dies in a motor vehicle accident, Sid, inherits his investigative firm, The Third Eye, in Orange, Texas. Sidra has no experience as an investigator and initially intends to sell the business but is intrigued by a young woman named Jewell, who claims her father murdered a woman 30 years before. Although Jewell was three when it happened, her memories are so intense, Sid can't help but wonder if they're real. She questions Jewell's sister, Emma, who corroborates much of what Jewell remembers. Emma and Jewell confide in Sid their father's cruelty, and both, along with their mother, are suffering mental and emotional sequelae as a result of his abuse. Sid contacts the sheriff of Orange, Texas with the information Jewell has provided, and shortly thereafter, her life is threatened. This makes Sid more determined than ever to bring justice upon the man who has severely damaged so many lives. But someone is intent on stopping her.

Dance on his Grave is a strong start to the Third Eye series and is sure to develop a large reader base. Sid Smart is a compelling character; a woman who lived a sheltered life until she decided she wanted out of a controlling relationship and is now determined to start her life anew, despite antagonistic actions from members of her husband's parsonage. A female baby-boomer as a private eye is a fresh addition to the mystery genre, even more appealing, one with intelligence and maturity. Sid's Aunt Annie is a likeable, albeit quirky character, and Sid's mentor George Leger lends a colorful Cajun ambience to the

story. This well-written mystery falls under the category of page-turner and will keep the reader entertained throughout.

Reviewed for Midwest Book Review

March 3, 2008

Christy Tillery French "reviewer and author" (Powell, TN)

Good, earthy writing; strong character!

The Sidra Smart stories carry you right along; they are intriguing and mesmerizing for the reader who likes `real' characters and a puzzle to solve--a good write!

I enjoy getting to know Sid; a very interesting person. I'm very glad to see that she has moved beyond the rules (which are made to be broken) and seen beyond words (which are meant to control). Especially that she had/has the strength (guts) to move/stay out of a relationship that was damaging her and move on to a life that calls to her. All of us are where we need to be at any given time and when the urge to move on comes, it is because we are ready to do just that, even if we don't know what's waiting for us out there.

If studying Zen has done anything for me, it has made me more tolerant of everyone else; allowing me to see that each of us is on our own path and each of us needs different supports and trials at different times and in different ways. It is not for us to judge where a person is but to accept that it is their journey. It only becomes sad when one gets so involved in being `human', they cannot see their way. I know; I've been there.

I don't see either the Zen or Buddhism as a religion, or the worshiping of some mythical creature/person, rather as a way of life--a way to live with the Earth, the Universe and more importantly, with myself.

Thank you for introducing/releasing her.

January 15, 2008

Reviewed by Carol M. Menchu "Thirdgate" (Texas)

Excellent read!

Following in the footsteps of the likes of Mary Higgins Clark and Phyllis A. Whitney, Sylvia spins a tale of suspense that kept me on the edge of my seat. It didn't take much past the first few lines for me to know that I would do nothing much except read this book in it's entirety for the next few hours. I have just come into possession of the second book in the series, and cannot wait to jump into it with both feet!

November 8, 2007

Reviewed by Karyn Trantham (Orange, TX USA)

A Jambalaya of a Mystery!

Author Sylvia Smith's novel "Dance on His Grave" is a mystery story filled with absorbing suspense, intrigue and surprise. At its best, it is a page turner, and at its very best it is a mystery story that won't let you put the novel down. Eager to find out what comes next the readers will take the novel with them everywhere.

The author gives the reader a bird's-eye view as she spins the tale of mystery and suspense. The reader will feel as being small enough to fit in the spleen of the novel, between the pages, holding a spyglass ten times bigger looking for clues to find out what comes next.

Author Sylvia Smith's novel, "Dance on His Grave" is the first novel of a trilogy of the "Third Eye" series. It is spicy, with many intriguing, fascinating and suspenseful twists and turns.

I recommend "Dance on His Grave" to anyone's savor and palate; especially to the reader that likes spicy mystery stories.

August 10, 2007

Reviewed by Soapsuds "MC" (El Paso, TX USA)

An INTENSE read!

After the sudden death of her brother Warren due to a traffic accident, Sidra Smart comes to the small southeast Texas town of Orange to permanently close his private investigator business. Recently divorced after thirty years of a mind numbing marriage, Sidra knows absolutely nothing about private investigations or running her brothers business with the intriguing moniker of "the Third Eye: Intuitive Investigations." While she isn't sure what she is going to do with her life she knows that she isn't going to take over and run Warren's business and she isn't going back to her old life as a preacher's wife.

Somewhere during the course of that thirty year marriage that started when she was so very young, she lost her identity. It is something she wants back and just isn't sure how to get it back. She isn't alone with that problem as the visibly agitated blonde woman makes clear by showing up while Sidra is paying bills and clearing mail in Warren's old storefront office. The woman's name is Jewell Stone and Warren had just barely opened a file for her. With Warren dead, Jewell expects Sidra to take over and help her. Jewell is haunted by nightmares of a naked woman who she thinks might have been killed by her father, Roy Manly back when Jewell was a child. If the memories that come out of Jewel

and her emotional pain aren't disturbing enough, while Jewell cries and talks, Sidra sees a small blue flame appear in the air over Jewell's head for a few seconds. Despite all the reasons not to get involved, Sidra eventually begins to investigate a sinister world of child abuse and possible murder far different than her experiences of bake sales and back stabbing church politics as a preacher's wife.

This is an intense read with frequent and very graphic recounts of horrible child abuse and molestation. Such scenes are intense and very disturbing and will no doubt upset a number of readers. Author Sylvia Dickey Smith details the horrific abuse over and over again to various parties throughout the entire novel while occasionally adding a little new information at the various tellings. After awhile, the graphic abuse and molestations become a bit much and could distract readers from a compelling story.

This is a shame because the main story is quite strong and would move the story along very well if allowed to do so instead of being stopped by the detailed abuse materials. The novel revolves around a thirty year old murder case and accompanying arson in the small town of Orange as well as Sidra's efforts to find herself. During the course of investigating the case, we learn quite a lot about Sidra, her relationship with her former Pastor and husband as well as the congregation, a fellow private investigator George Leger, Sidra's rather eccentric Aunt Annie, and numerous other characters along with a strong slice of life in that shadowy land full of mystique and mystery where Texas and Louisiana meet.

Evil walks in many forms in this intense novel. Full of suspense, interesting characters and a heroine trying to find herself once again, the novel delivers on all levels while disturbing repeatedly with the constant scenes of abuse and molestation. Few readers will find this a relaxing read but all will certainly find it suspenseful, intense, and not easily put down.

July 30, 2007

Reviewed by Kevin Tipple (Plano, Texas)
