



Night Kill

Ann Littlewood

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Iris Oakley, a young zookeeper at the Finley Memorial Zoo in Vancouver, Washington, hopes to reconcile with her newly sober husband, Rick. But when he is found dead and dead drunk in the lion exhibit, a paralyzing mix of grief and anger at his betrayal keeps Iris from questioning the assumptions around his death. But Iris' friends motivate her to prove that her husband could not have died the way it appears. Soon, however, these same friends impede her progress as she follows ambiguous clues and sorts through unlikely motives. Meanwhile, Iris must also adjust to losing her beloved job as feline keeper and instead learn to be a bird keeper. The zoo's veterinarian respects her skills, but the foreman would far rather she get a job elsewhere and the senior bird keeper seems to agree. After Iris survives a series of near-fatal accidents, she begins to understand what really happened to Rick. But Iris must survive to prove it....

Night Kill Details

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Author : Ann Littlewood

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From Reader Review Night Kill for online ebook

Carol Ladwig says

predictable, but the animal info was a plus.

Anna Strom says

I wish I had read this one before "Did Not Survive," as I know realize they were sequential. But overall, I enjoyed the book, an interesting but not too demanding story that was good to relax with after a day at work. I especially enjoyed learning bits of "behind the scenes" info about working in a zoo, and will look for more titles by this author.

Jan says

Stephanie Plum has a cousin in Iris Oakley, a Portland zookeeper who finds herself sucked into a spider's web when her feline charges cross with her husband and he loses.

I bought this book (and its sequel) sight unseen for full price after hearing the author speak - something I rarely, rarely do. But Ann Littlewood's years of experience as a zookeeper and charming turns of phrase promised that the "behind the scenes" would be fun and interesting if nothing else. And that was indeed true, but the mystery plot was wonderfully written as well, especially for a first-time author.

I have to go now. I want to start on her next book, "Did Not Survive."

Melody says

Many people ask 'why' when a loved on dies. Iris has more reason than most to do so, but her friends at the zoo seem to think she's going a little crazy from grief. If I got transferred from an area I know and love (big cats in Iris' case) to something I knew almost nothing about (birds) I'd go a little nuts too! But the pat answers she's getting just don't add up and the story of how she figures out why they don't is entertaining.

I figured out who the killer was early on, but enjoyed the characters, the setting and the unfolding of how it was done. Some of the details don't quite make sense, but not enough of an issue to ruin the story. Would definitely recommend to readers of cozies.

Bridget Martin says

The behind the scene at the zoo setting is very interesting.

Just a comment about mysteries in general.

A frequent criticism I read is along the lines of; "I figured it out too soon." or "It was too easy."

Well, I think that usually doesn't say much about the book, especially if paired with appreciation for the writer's character portrayals. Unless the protagonist is a detective they don't know they are necessarily solving a crime in a very limited environment. The author can't fill the novel with a great number of believable characters. If you look at the world created by the author through the protagonist's eyes you would be bewildered too. As a reader we filter through just a few characters and their motivations. It's no big deal if, with our microscopic view of the basket, we spot the rotten apple before the lead character.

Ann Littlewood does characterization and reveals about their motivations well in this book.

60%

A secondary character just presented a well reasoned argument for the murderer being someone who could not possibly have committed the crime. He is completely wrong but it makes sense from his knowledge base and perspective. I really appreciate that in a mystery.

100%

Satisfying conclusion. The lead did not have information hidden from the reader. I was pretty sure who had done it but, so what? The setting is novel and interesting. The friends and co-workers are characters, not window dressing or props.

I will definitely continue with the series. That means I have to pester my library to buy the second book. They have the third. There is a nice continuing storyline that will be developed in the second book. (Don't peak at the publisher's blurb now. It has a spoiler.)

Carol says

Night Kill isn't great literature. But, oh the fun of reading a mystery set in a Pacific Northwest zoo! The author has worked as a zookeeper in our local zoo for years, and her knowledge is apparent. The setting, animals, zoo crew drama, and daily zoo activities were very real. The mystery plot and characterizations were just okay. But the setting more than makes up for it.

This is the first in a series of three.

Melanie says

I was glad this book was comparatively short. It had a good premise (a zookeeper's husband is killed when he falls in the lions' cage), but it never really gelled. I liked the zoo background; points for that. But Iris did not act like a 24-year-old (no one who is 24 calls flip-flops "thongs."). Even though she had all these freak accidents, she didn't guess that her husband might have been murdered and that someone was now trying to kill her until about the last quarter of the book. Anyway, it just didn't ring true for me.

Gary says

Several occurrences of "should of" and "would of" were a minor complaint, but did kind of kick me out of the story a little bit. The only real complaint I have is that the pace is quite slow. While all the animal care was interesting and eventually fed into the plot, that 'eventually' is important. I had figured out who the killer was (although not why) about halfway through the book, which was the point where the main character finally let herself start to think that just maybe the accidental death at the zoo had been a murder instead of an accident. The red herrings were good, and did deflect my thinking for a while as to why the murder was

committed.

I liked the characters and the setting enough that I will read the next book to see how it is.

Nicole B says

MC annoyed me occasionally. Well, everyone did but the plot was well though out.

Deborah Ross says

Ann's a college friend and this is her debut novel from Poisoned Pen Press. She worked for years as a zoo keeper, and set her mystery, um, behind the bars. The animal stuff is way, way cool, and the story moves right along. No sf/f elements, but I suspect a huge interest overlap. Do check it out if you have any interest in animals or the lives and work of zoo keepers.

LJ says

NIGHT KILL (Ama Sleuth-Iris Oakley-OR/WA/Cal-Cont) - G
Littlewood, Ann – 1st book
Poisoned Pen Press, 2008, US Hardcover – ISBN: 9781590585047

First Sentence: Hot breath from the lioness toughed my cheek.

Iris Oakley, a zookeeper at a small Vancouver, WA zoo, is having problems with her marriage. Her husband's beer intake and distance have been getting out of hand and, in anger, she throws him out. Talking after a party, they decide to try again and Rick promises to give up beer.

The next day, he is found dead in the lion enclosure, reeking of scotch. At first Iris attributes dangerous threats to her life as accidents...until someone ransacks and sets fire to her house.

For me, the best part of this book was the information about working at a zoo and what goes on behind the scenes. It's nice to have a book with a different than usual setting. Beyond that, it was a decent read.

I liked the character of Iris who is well drawn and believable. The description of Iris dealing with her grief was very true and provided an emotional impact. Iris was strong and smart and took the investigation step-by-step rather than flying off wildly. There is a good mix of secondary characters who add balance to the story.

The story itself was a bit predictable and I did figure out the killer fairly soon into the story.

Gail says

Iris Oakley is a young zoo-keeper in felines married to a keeper in reptiles. Their short marriage has been changed from passionate and caring to distant and uncommunicative highlighted by her husband's over-enjoyment of beer. One night after she explodes and he storms out of the place to stay with his friend, another keeper.

After a week of emotions, the two reconcile passionately in the front seat of his truck. Not ready for him to move back in, they go their separate ways. The next day, Rick is found dead in the feline exhibit being mauled by one of the animals. He is soaked in alcohol.

Iris reacts emotionally and angrily to Rick's memory. Her coworkers and friends become concerned about her. she is reassigned to Birds after a series of accidents. In an interesting change of heart or, rather, an incredible emotional U-turn, she decides to learn the truth about Rick's death. What follows is a series of accidents, revelations and finally...the killer. Dangerous, to be sure.

This book kept me going. I guess it was the power of her emotion. Some things were not well crafted, the killer was evident to this reader, but the stuff about zoos was really interesting. I couldn't decide if I liked Iris or if I just wanted to, like Cher, slap her silly and yell "Snap out of it." I am going to read the sequel because, while not perfect, the characters were interesting, zoo life was interesting, and there are possibilities.

Joseph says

Kind of a dud of a mystery, not much detecting done or clues, really. A bit interesting regarding how a zoo might be run, but really, if you want to read a mystery with a good zoo premise, I'd suggest reading *The Anteater of Death* by Betty Webb instead.

Antoinette says

I'm listening to the unabridged audio version (MP-3). It's been a slow start so far. Hopefully, it will get better.

Update: I've given up. If I can't get involved in the first 2-3 hours, it's a bust.

Shelley M. says

I didn't like the murder victim, which made it difficult. I was kind of glad he died.
