



## Royally Dead

*Greta McKennan*

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## **Royally Dead** Greta McKennan

*A seamstress who specializes in historical detail, Daria Dembrowski is happy to welcome the Highland Games to town—it's all fun and games until someone gets "kilt."*

Daria's roommate, Aileen, plays guitar in a metal band, but one of her bandmates is branching out musically and asks Daria to craft a kilt for an upcoming bagpipe competition. The locals in Laurel Springs, Pennsylvania, are really looking forward to the Highland Games, and the Scottish regalia needs to be just right.

Then one of the athletes collapses during the event, a victim of poisoned whiskey. As suspicion spreads and the police turn their attention to Aileen, Daria vows not to let the real killer get off scot-free . . .

## **Royally Dead Details**

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Author : Greta McKennan

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## From Reader Review Royally Dead for online ebook

### JoAnne McMaster (Any Good Book) says

Daria Dembrowski is a seamstress who is attending the Highland Games both as a vendor and a spectator when she finds out that her renter Aileen, singer and guitarist for the band Twisted Armpits, seems to know one of the game contestants, Ladd Foster. Their meeting doesn't seem to be a pleasant one, but Daria decides to stay out of the altercation.

The festivities are in high gear and she plans to be part of it, and that includes meeting the author Morris West, who has written a fictional book about Scotland's Bonnie Prince Charlie and when he meets Daria, envisions her as his heroine from his book named Catherine and continues to call her by that name, to her annoyance. Then Aileen's bandmate Corgi asks Daria if she will fashion a kilt for him, since he's learned to play the bagpipes and wants to enter the competitions - the one he has is a cheap knockoff and will not pass muster and even costs him points in performing.

But during the games Ladd suddenly collapses and falls dead and Daria, with her innate curiosity discovers the source which happens to be the flask he was drinking from during the day. While it seems he left the flask in a tent that was also visited by four others beside herself - including Aileen - she wonders which one hated him enough to kill him. But when the police arrive, the flask has disappeared from the tent, and now finding a killer as well as the weapon of choice could be very difficult indeed.

She's also creating a wedding gown with a tilt to Scotland for a friend, and a young girl named Gillian had an infatuation with Ladd, not to mention the girl's surly attitude could only make it worse; and at the last, she meets an employee of the Templeton museum who offers to let her see the wedding gown and diary of a long-ago resident of their town, Margaret Oliphant, the woman for whom the local college was named. Little does Daria know that once again her curiosity may bring her into mortal danger...

This is the third book in the series, and after reading the first two, I truly believe that Ms. McKennan has found her voice. While I have to be honest and say I wasn't enthralled with the first one, in this book the story line kept me riveted throughout.

While it may seem to some that there are several plot lines going at the same time, they are all (mostly) entwined and watching them come together is indeed a delight. We follow Daria as she innocently tries to complete the wedding dress and create an authentic Scottish kilt while not only participating in the Scottish celebration but watching it as well, while surreptitiously keeping an eye on the young Gillian in an effort to keep her out of harm's way.

Adding to this is the fact that Daria's tenant Aileen is suspected of killing Ladd, although Daria knows it's not possible. Aileen may act tough, but Daria knows there's a soft underbelly that wouldn't kill. So she sets out to look at the other suspects while trying to find out who had the best motive; even involving her maybe-boyfriend Sean McCarty, a newspaper photographer/reporter. (To be fair, he plays along with her willingly in the hopes he'll get a story).

For the most part I was highly entertained; Daria is evolving into a woman who's coming into her own, who's becoming braver within herself and more circumspect with others, McCarthy is beginning to grow on me and I do love a man with a sense of humor; and while we learned a little more about Aileen's past, it still doesn't explain how she got to where she is today. (From one extreme to another?)

All in all, as I stated above, the plot line was very good and the story was written well. I enjoyed the twists

and turns throughout the tale that brought everything together in the end, much like watching a fine tapestry being woven and delighting in the final product. When the killer was discovered (although I figured it out early on - but then again, I read a *lot* of these) and the reason for the murder revealed, it reminds us that even those that seem the most stable can often be the most insane around us.

Ms. McKennan is indeed learning her craft, and this, as the third book in the series, proves that fact. She has managed to give Daria and Sean life, and make us want to visit the small town of Laurel Springs, Pennsylvania. Her characters are becoming well-rounded and believable; and when I finished this book I realized I was ready for the next in the series and that's a very good thing. Recommended.

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## **Lghiggins says**

Daria, a seamstress in little Laurel Springs, Pennsylvania, expanded her business to include historical sewing. As *Royally Dead* opens, she is at the First Annual Highland Games where she and her friend Letty, who owns an antique shop, are manning their booth to make sales, let people know about their businesses, and support the local community. The reader is introduced to a lot of interesting characters, and Daria and Letty get into more than they bargained for as they witness a manly contestant who just can't seem to stay out of trouble: flirting with an underage girl, arguing with a famous author, angering one of Daria's roommates, and continuing a long-standing conflict with another contestant.

Greta McKennan's *Royally Dead* is full of sewing, historical mysteries, and Scottish dancing woven throughout a good whodunit. Suspicion falls on four characters, all of whom have both motive and opportunity. So, in this cozy mystery we have four interesting stories playing out as Daria tries to help people and solve the murder. Her friend, Sean McCarthy, a congenial newspaper reporter, is always willing to help and accompanies her on many of her adventures. He affectionately refers to her as the "nosy seamstress."

There is lots of information about Scottish customs, clothing, and traditions, as well as history surrounding Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Battle of Culloden. Just as interesting, is the information about sewing and some of the difficulties inherent in hand sewing without a pattern. Also I was excited to pay a visit with Daria to the local museum to see a kilt worn in the battle in 1746 and a bridal gown from the 1750's in an archival room in the basement of the museum.

This cozy mystery provides a good time right up to the end as the spotlight shines on various suspects. There are even some surprises as backgrounds and relationships come to light.

I would like to extend my thanks to netgalley.com and to Lyrical Underground (Kensington Press) for giving me the opportunity to read this book in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Kathleen Gray says**

Who poisoned Ladd? Not Aileen, surely. This is a nicely done installment in a fun cozy series featuring Daria, who is of all things, a seamstress who specializes in historical costumes (for want of better word.). This adds an extra zip to the books because you learn a bit about a period and place in time, in this case Scotland. There are bagpipes, Bonnie Prince Charles, kilts, and so on but this aspect never overwhelms the story. Daria's a fun heroine, with a good sense of humor as well as of who might be a bad guy. Thanks to net galley for the ArC. The mystery isn't too twisty, the Laurel Springs setting is fun, and all in all, this is a good

read.

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## **A Woman Reading says**

I'm a big fan of cozy mysteries and have a high bar for good stories. Royally Dead is a winner in my opinion.. The main character is a historical seamstress in an area chock full of Scottish history. There is SO much Scottish everything in this story: food, Highland games, dances, tartans and of course, history. If you're having withdrawals from Outlander or just love all things Scottish, you'll love this fast-paced fun Scottish-themed mystery.

It's a very fast read. I zoomed through it in just a few hours. Characters are well-developed, story is written by a polished author and the plotting is great. My only complaint? I knew from the beginning who the villain was and why - but I'm pretty good at figuring out whodunnit. I won't hold this against the author and I suggest this book to anyone who loves cozies, especially those with historical sub-plots.

This is the third in the series and can be read as a standalone. I'm going back to read book 1 and 2!

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## **Gaele says**

My first introduction to this series, I found Daria to be both intriguing and empathetic, while the lesser-known and unknown tidbits from history that made their way into the story added both interest and 'I didn't know that' moments. The over-arching set up here is the Highland Games, and Daria is attending as a vendor, while soaking up as much of the action as time allows. And there is plenty of that: an author with a newly released and popular fictional tale of Bonnie Prince Charlie who's taken a fancy to Daria, her roommate Aileen there to perform with her band knows (perhaps well enough to argue with) one of the highly touted contestants, another of her bandmates Corgi, wants a kilt to wear while trying his hand at the games – since the cheap one he already has will cost him points as inappropriate. If that's not enough, she's also in the midst of designing a wedding gown with a nod to Scotland, and a chance meeting with a local historian offers her the chance to see a dress in the archive of the museum, with a diary – both belonging to a well-known former resident.

Sure – the twists and turns are deep in this one – but the way that McKennan wove them all together – each thread building and extending from the initial whole cloth that is the games and Daria's participation. From there – each story branches out to have its own character that is the focal point – all stemming from the connection to Daria. From Ladd's poisoned whiskey death to Aileen's landing in the prime suspect position with Daria's knowledge that she couldn't be the killer AND her willingness to dig deeper which places her in harm's way keep this fast-paced whodunit dig for the truth moving quickly forward. When you add in the historic elements about tartans, the rules for clothing for Highland Games participants, food, bagpipes and even a bit about the Bonnie Prince, there isn't a ton of time to lose interest or feel overwhelmed, so good are the introductions of new elements, questions and facts. Of course the culprit was completely obvious when revealed, with 'reasoning' that made sense, if one is a killer. I didn't find that I was confused or lost jumping into this series partway through, and thought the character of Daria had a solid mix of curiosity, sense and a cleverly constructed occupation that allowed for plenty of interest to a reader. A perfect getaway cozy read that has me interested in the earlier titles in the series.

I received an eArc copy of the title from the publisher via NetGalley for purpose of honest review. I was not compensated for this review: all conclusions are my own responsibility.

Review first appeared at I am, Indeed

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### **Lorraine Kraft says**

Historical seamstress, Daria Dombrowski, is having a great time at the Highland Games in Laurel Springs while selling her wares at a booth, until one of the contestants collapses and later dies.

When it is discovered he was poisoned, police are focused on Daria's room mate and friend, Aileen. Aileen had a confrontation with the victim that was witnessed by bystanders and when she refuses to divulge her past relationship with the deceased, the police take her into custody as a suspect. When the police are focused on Aileen as their main suspect, Daria then embarks on her own investigation to help find her friend innocent, especially when there are three other people with motives in the mix.

With great characters, a good story line and a good resolution, this is a great cozy mystery for those who love mysteries.

\*\*Please note: I was given a copy of this book by the publisher through Netgalley.com.

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### **Brenda says**

The author has a great sense of humour - a Mexican food restaurant named Over the Wall provides balance to the historical aspects of Culloden

Seamstress Daria Dembrowski makes custom wedding gowns. She also creates historical costumes.

In volume 3 of The Stitch in Time Mystery series Daria tackles creating a Scottish kilt while solving the murder of heavy athletic games star Ladd Foster, and the death of Melissa King.

A great variety of characters round out the various plots and relationships without leaving the reader overwhelmed.

This could easily be read as a stand alone.

I volunteered to read an ARC through Net Galley.

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### **Lisa Morin says**

Royally Dead is the next exciting addition to the wonderful series by Greta McKennan.

Daria Dembrowski is a seamstress who specializes in historical clothing. She is a strong, solid character that I have truly come to love.

In this installment of the Stitch in Time series, the Highland Games are in town, and Daria is there, watching the games, when someone suddenly becomes ill.

Was it an accidental death or was it murder, and why is Daria's roommate involved?

I was captivated by the mystery and all the history that filled the pages of this book.

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I couldn't put it down until the very end, and I'm anxiously awaiting the next book.

I volunteered to read and review an ARC of this book provided by the publisher and NetGalley.

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### **Angela Brocato-Skaggs says**

The Highland Games have come to Laurel Heights, PA and Daria is using it to advance her business of being a historical seamstress. As she works the booth housing her wares her roommate, Aileen, has sent a bandmate to Daria asking for a real kilt to be created for a bagpipe competition. As Daria watches the games and looks at all the different kilts one of the athletes collapses during a competition. Daria finds herself, yet again, in the middle of investigating a murder.

I happened upon this series by accident one day reviewing NetGalley and am so glad I did. All three books have been enjoyable. I love how the author, Greta McKennan, weaves in history without making it dry and boring. The history in this book is probably one of my least favorite time periods but I was totally enthralled in learning about Scotland and the history of kilts and what haggis is and how it is made (I'm pretty sure I will never try it!).

You have the most unlikely group of characters with straight-laced Daria, hard rocker roommate Aileen, and ex-con brother Pete but it works beautifully. All the characters meld together to make a great team when it comes time to solve the crime.

This series has a light touch of romance but nothing over bearing and is a clean read. The most gruesome might be the initial death scenes but nothing too harsh. I would recommend this series to any cozy mystery read, new or experienced.

I received a complimentary copy of this book from Kensington/Lyrical Underground through NetGalley. Any and all opinions expressed are entirely my own.

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### **Megan W. (pnwbookworm) says**

Overall this was a pretty good mystery. I loved the historical aspect and all the different parts of Scottish culture that the author was able to fit into the story, including how an authentic kilt is made. I also enjoy the relationship between the two main characters. The only downside to this book is that I figured out who the killer was pretty early so I skim read the last bit to finish it.

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### **Patricia Romero says**

This is one of my favorite Cozy Mystery Series! Daria is such a solid character.

Everyone in Laurel Springs, PA is excited about the highland games taking place and for a few days everyone is Scottish. With games, dancing and of course wonderful things to purchase.

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Daria and Letty are sharing a booth and Daria's tartan bow ties are a good seller. They even have a famous author on site promoting his book about Bonnie Prince Charlie and his missing ring. Even Daria's roommate Aileen and her band are playing. With one of them taking up the bagpipes.

When one of the participants in the games is murdered, secrets come out and Daria needs to do two things. One is prove her roommate is innocent and two throw together an actual kilt plus a wedding gown in just a few days.

This series has everything I love. Great characters, a plot with a lot of historical information, some fact, some imagined. It's a joy to read every time.

Well Done!

Netgalley/Kensington/Lyrical September 11, 2018

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### **Susan Johnston says**

Princess Fuzzypants here: I enjoy books that can weave history into their fictional narrative. Daria, being a historical seamstress, gets involved in a combination of these two things. This time, she is caught up in the time of the Rising and Bonnie Prince Charlie. She may have witnessed the actions of the killer who poisoned one of the contestants in the caber toss at a Highland Games. The problem is she is not sure which of four possibilities is the one. It doesn't help that one of them shares her house.

The nosy seamstress, as her friend has labelled her, tries to sort through the backstories of all of them. She is not exactly subtle nor is she adept but, she is effective. Unfortunately, when all is revealed, her life is on the line. She uses some unusual means to escape. It leads to a fast and exciting conclusion.

This combining of history with fiction has its challenges. Often the historical revelations and stories end up being more interesting than the current day ones. There is a fascinating twist here where a best selling author meets Daria and thinks she is the embodiment of his heroine.. It is all flattering and creepy at the same time. The convergence of the stories heightened my enjoyment of the book. It didn't hurt that I had guessed the perp long before the end.

I am a cat and my Momma was born with ten thumbs so neither of us sew but we both found Daria's creation of an authentic kilt for a friend most interesting. We enjoyed all the Scottish background information as well. We know Outlander fans will enjoy this story.

I give it four purrs and two paws up.

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### **Betty says**

History was a favorite subject in school and I have thoroughly enjoyed this series as I learned about subjects that I didn't know before. This one did not disappoint as it taught a lot about Scotland. I enjoyed the of the different kilt, the history of the town, the best selling author, the information wedding dress, Scottish events including the story of Bonnie Prince Charles, and the two romances. This The best book in the series.

The Highland games have come to Laurel Springs. Daria has rented a booth with another artist. She has many small items to sell. A popular one was the bow ties in the various clan plaids. All is fine until one of the athletes collapsed while doing exercise in the game. He was disliked by many and it was determined he was poison. Police question those and Aileen refused to answer questions about an acquaintance with the victim there are several witnesses when Aileen attempted to hit the victim with her guitar. The police

arrested Aileen as a person of interest. Daria starts to investigate to free Aileen from jail will she succeed?

I HIGHLY RECOMMEND this book and series.

Disclosure: Many thanks to Lyrical Underground for a review copy. The opinions expressed are my own.

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### **Anna Fox says**

I am enjoying this series. Daria's roommate/friend (Aileen) is accused of murder so of course Daria must figure out who did it. She also befriends a teenager who's father might be the killer. There are other suspects of course and what is the history between Aileen and the dead body?

I received an eARC from Lyrical Underground via NetGalley for an honest review. - This is a fun series with enjoyable characters.

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### **Barb says**

The Highland Games have come to Laurel Springs, Pennsylvania, and Daria has a booth there to try to build her seamstress business. Aileen, one of Daria's roommates, and her metal band have been asked to entertain the expected crowds between events in the athletic and bagpipe competitions. When one of the popular athletes collapses during the caber toss, Daria gets involved to prove that her friend had nothing to do with the killing.

I've read the previous two books in this series and found both of them to be only so-so. I read this installment, hoping it would help me decide if I want to continue the series, and the answer is maybe? I don't know if Daria's nosiness is rubbing off on me, or if she toned it down in this book, but I wasn't as annoyed with her investigation this time around. She still seemed to put herself in harm's way unnecessarily, which I would find both annoying and frightening if she was my friend or relative. I wonder how much longer Sean will put up with her apparent disregard for her own safety?

*Thank you to NetGalley and the publisher for the opportunity to read and review this book.*

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