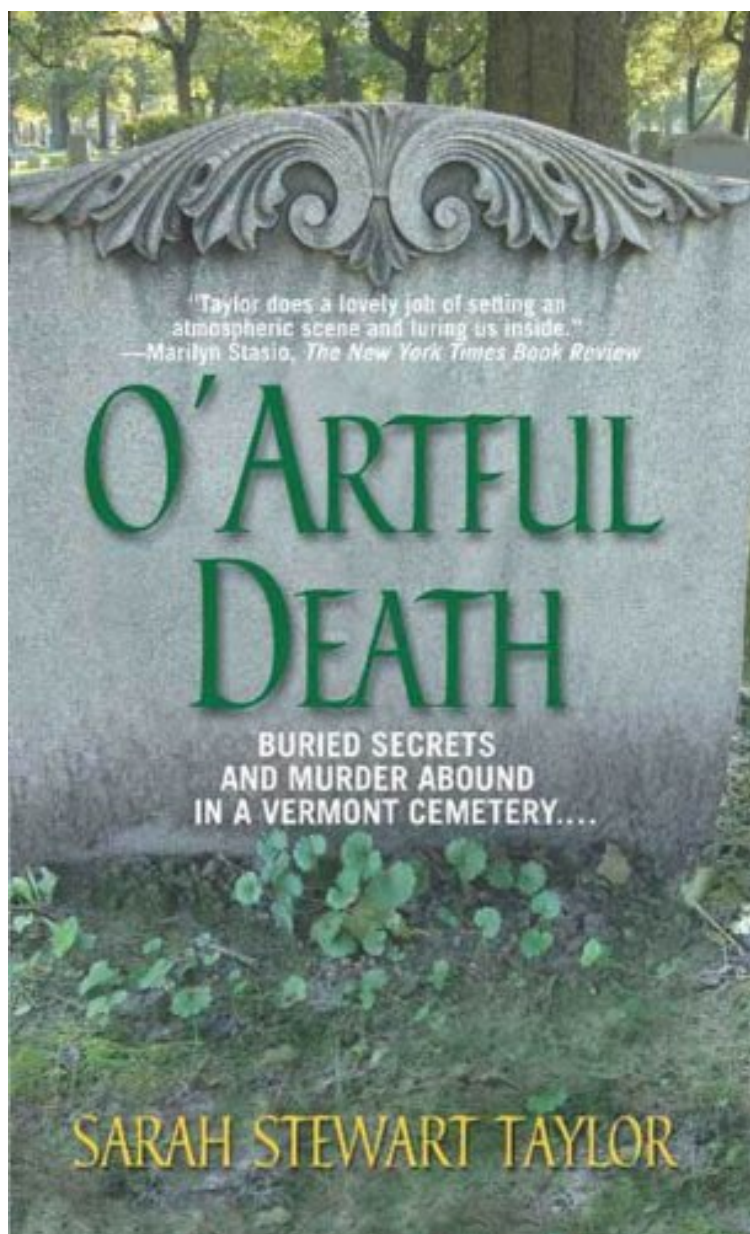


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O' Artful Death: A Mystery



Par Sarah Stewart Taylor
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Par Sarah Stewart Taylor : O' Artful Death: A Mystery before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised O' Artful Death: A Mystery:

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Description : Description du produitSweeney St. George looks nothing like a university Professor with her unruly red curls and preference for vintage clothing. Single and wary of relationships, she pours her energy into her college teaching and a passionate interest in cemetery art. And now Sweeney is intrigued with a macabre graveyard statue of a beautiful woman—a carving that is at once astonishing, sinister, and perhaps hiding a one-hundred-year-old murder...Dying to find out more about the strange monument, Sweeney heads for a winter holiday among friends at a mansion in Vermont's historic Byzantium Art Colony. Her plan is to snoop in dusty archives and tromp through the tiny cemetery where the statue still stands. But what Sweeney finds in this isolated rural community is an emotional awakening, a chilling link between old and new

crimes...and a clever killer reaching for her with deadly hands.

Prsentation de l'diteurNewcomer Sarah Stewart Taylor delivers a compelling and atmospheric cozy mystery that introduces Sweeney St. George, an art historian in Boston with a special interest in the art of death.

Sweeney becomes interested in Byzantium, Vermont, an art colony that flourished in the late nineteenth century, when she comes upon a photograph of the striking gravestone of a girl who drowned, and may have been murdered, in 1890. The stone is in a tiny cemetery surrounded by other beautiful, if unremarkable, headstones, some dating back hundreds of years. But the unsigned sculpture that marks this young woman's grave is of extremely high quality and the artist is unrecognizable.Sweeney is soon hooked, not only on the mystery of who created the beautiful sculpture but also on the details of the events surrounding the girl's death. When the friend who showed her the gravestone invites Sweeney to visit his relatives in Byzantium for Christmas, she jumps at the chance, knowing full well that the girl's murder has achieved the status of mythology in the town and hoping she'll be able to uncover new information. But by the time they arrive, her interest in the girl and the sculpture has gotten around town and, in fact, seems to have disturbed a killer. For not long after Sweeney arrives, one of the girl's descendants is murdered, shot and left lying in the cemetery.

Taylor has written a remarkably accomplished debut mystery in the traditional cozy vein, and she's sure to win over legions of fans with O' Artful Death.From Publishers WeeklyFreelance journalist Taylor makes a promising, if flawed, debut with an academic cozy set in rural Vermont's Byzantium, a bygone artists colony

replete with a Victorian mansion, rumors of murder plots past and present and a surfeit of oddballs marooned there for the winter. Harvard art professor Sweeney St. George, invited to spend Christmas at the colony, soon finds herself immersed in a prolonged quest to find the origin of a distinctive monument in Byzantium's cemetery. Excerpts from a history of the colony help shed light on the fate of Mary Elizabeth Denholm, a farm girl employed as a maid and later as a model by the colony's rapacious founder. Sweeney's almost obsessive curiosity about poor Mary, who drowned at 18 in 1890, and the sculptor of her marble tomb becomes so intense that she (and likewise the reader) admits to being "ready for a break from Mary's gravestone." The story picks up with the unexpected slayings of locals linked to the scandal-ridden Mary, though it remains hampered by too many underdeveloped characters, notably one who proves to be the key to the ultimate resolution of Byzantium's present-day miseries. Taylor, however, does use her expert knowledge of 19th-century artwork and New England to good effect, and one can hope her plots will improve with experience. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.BooklistAn elegantly wrought first mystery with layers within layers like carved ivory balls. Twenty-eight-year-old Sweeney St. George--

her father an artist suicide, her estranged mother an alcoholic--is an art historian specializing in representations of death. A gorgeous and highly unusual marble grave marker of a young woman in Vermont catches her attention, and she accepts her friend Toby's invitation to spend Christmas at his family's home, in the village of Byzantium, Vermont, near the location of the grave marker and a famed nineteenth-century art colony. Even before she arrives for the holidays and the beginning of her research, there's a murder. Petty and gross thievery and another killing intertwine with family secrets and town tensions, as Sweeney methodically patterns her research and slowly reveals the depths of her own sorrows. She's a vivid and attractive sleuth, and the iconography of graves and death, hidden meanings in diaries and inscriptions, and some complicated personal relationships sweep one past an overstuffed plot and a slightly wobbly denouement. Rich and rewarding reading. GraceAnne DeCandidoCopyright American Library Association.

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