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No one is more familiar with Savannah's dark side than homicide detective and native resident Elise Sandburg. She's been haunted for years by her own mysterious past: she was abandoned as a baby in one of the city's ancient cemeteries, and it's rumored that she is the illegitimate daughter of an infamous Savannah root doctor. The local Gullah culture of voodoo and magic is one that few outsiders can understand, least of all Elise's new partner. Now someone is terrorizing the city, creating real-life zombies by poisoning victims into a conscious paralysis that mimics death. As the chilling case unfolds, Elise is drawn back into the haunted past she's tried so hard to leave behind.

Play Dead Details

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Author : Anne Frasier

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From Reader Review Play Dead for online ebook

Resa says

'Play Dead' is a fun take on the somewhat overdone zombie genre. Frasier gets back to the zombie roots, ignoring the scientific, weaponized creation of zombies and looking at the voodoo/hoodoo roots of zombie creation. Now, don't let that fool you, this is not a "horror" novel. While I initially got the book because it was listed as a voodoo-horror-novel, it's actually a mystery-crime story, and the "zombies" aren't really supernatural creatures at all. In fact, zombies are really just a side note in the story, and the plot really revolves around the use of the drug TTX (from the puffer fish) which in folklore could be used to create zombie slaves. The plot is fast paced for the most part and the mystery intriguing. Frasier does an excellent job describing Southern (and voodoo) culture as well as creating a mystery that makes the book hard to put down. You will want to know what happens next. That being said, Frasier changes character perspectives throughout the book, and these get very confusing. The transitions are choppy, and while they are separated by a space or chapter break I found myself having to reread pages just so I could figure out what character these thoughts were supposed to be coming from. Which made reading a little frustrating. This gets increasingly confusing towards the end of the book. While I understand Frasier is trying to build to the killer reveal (which is a fantastic twist) while putting the killer in the book without giving anything away (the first person narratives), the strategy just doesn't work as well as it could of and instead of leaving me intrigued I was just confused.

The three characters the story revolves around are Elise, David Gould, and Strata Luna. These three characters are done excellently, Frasier gives us enough backstory to make us feel for them, and they each have a unique personality that adds to the story. Elise is the Southerner with a bizarre history, as well as the lead cop on the murder investigation the plot revolves around. David is Elise's partner, and from up North (a point which he is reminded of constantly by everyone throughout the story) but has a heartbreaking past of his own. Strata Luna is the obligatory "witch" character, who practices spells, makes mojos, and just seems a little strange. She also has a history which is brought up throughout the book, and her personality gives this book the color that makes it such a fun read. The minor characters, however, all seem a little flat, they serve their purpose but, with the exception of one or two, don't bring much to the story.

Frasier has a talent for bringing Southern culture alive in her writing, and she sets up a very gothic setting for her book. Children chant rhymes while jump roping which give you some foreshadowing about what will happen later in the book (or to mislead you). The buildings are described in detail, and everything just seems a little creepy. It's the perfect setting for this kind of murder mystery. Description is obviously Frasier's strong point, as the dialogue falls flat in some places, but that can be easily overlooked by the fast paced story going on around it. The narrative makes this book an easy read, and the plot just pulls you along as it unfolds. As I mentioned before, the point of view changes do make things a little confusing and can bring the flow of the plot to a halt while you try and sort out who's who again, but for the most part the book really does flow.

Frasier has done an excellent job with 'Play Dead'. I enjoyed the folklore of zombie history sprinkled throughout the plot and the mystery is cleverly done. It's an enjoyable crime read with an element of the supernatural twisted in. I'd advise you to read it at night with the lights off if you want a good scare

Heather Blair says

Love this series. Such amazing characters.

Rachel says

This was a really interesting book. I put this book in the fiction sub-category of southern gothic - it is a suspense/murder mystery, but the sort of legends within the story and elements of voodoo, conjuring, and root work add something extra for me.

Elise is a detective, and also a struggling single mom. She has ultimately sacrificed her relationship with her daughter to her job, preferring to think of her daughter as having a more whole and normal life living with her Dad and step-mom. David is Elise's new partner, a transfer from another department, complete with a shady history no one particularly knows the real truth about. Without spoiling anything, he is also dealing with divorce, and not too far into the book visits his wife in prison to sign the papers...

A large portion of the story focuses on the two (to borrow from another reviewer who hit the nail on the head...) "suitably flawed" detectives working on opening up to each other, to begin to trust and each to become the partner they need to be to the other. BUT... as they are working through these issues, they are tracking down a killer. Someone is picking off Savannah's prostitutes, killing in a most torturous manner using TTX - a poison derived from puffer fish that leaves the victim paralyzed but completely conscious and aware. Bodies in Savannah are "coming back to life"... Elise and David are faced with multiple victims who were pronounced dead, only to be discovered to still be alive, but beyond saving. The poison is so deadly it keeps the victim conscious even as their bodily systems are shutting down.

Aside from her present struggles, Elise also has a checkered past. It has long been rumored that she is the daughter of a notorious white root doctor, the now-deceased Jackson Sweet, and was abandoned at birth in a local cemetery. Elise grew up in an adoptive home, never knowing her mother's name, and having nothing more to go on than the rumor of her paternity. Clues about Elise's past begin to come to light as infamous Savannah Madam and voodoo queen Strata Luna is drawn into the investigation. The stories surrounding Strata Luna are even more harrowing.

The sense of place and time are excellent, and I think that Frasier absolutely did her research as far as the voodoo and root work. The book was well-paced for the most part, and information about the killer was sufficiently drawn out over the course of the book. My one and only issue with the book was that I felt like the ending got a little rushed, and the final ID of the killer didn't flow from the clues drawn out over the story. The revelation of the killer was really abrupt. I felt like I would have liked a little more story to lead me up to it. Also, Elise's relationship with her daughter took a sudden turn that didn't seem to have enough of a foundation or build-up to be entirely realistic. Those things aside though, this was still an enjoyable read. There is a sequel, and I would definitely check it out for a fun read.

Chris says

4.5 I really enjoyed this book, it was different than "typical" murder mysteries in that an element of the story was about southern Gullah hoodoo witchery, embraced by the protagonist. Having visited historic Savannah

for a week two months ago, I was very familiar with some of the setting, including the extraordinary Bonaventure Cemetery and even my favorite restaurant whilst there, Gryphon. There are three major storylines twisting and turning together in this book - the murders they were investigating (involving deaths that used a toxic found in puffer fish which renders its victims unable to move or feel, but able to hear and think), Elise's background and ancestry, and the mysteries surrounding Elise's new partner, ex-FBI agent David Gould. It was a fascinating story with a vibrant setting. I wish I had read this book before I went to Savannah because I would have checked out a few more of the places described in the book. Next time....

Lisa says

Really enjoyed this story, bit creepy and loved the flawed David. This is my second by this author and I am liking her writing, very easy to read. I didn't want to put this one down. Looking forward to the sequel.

T says

I'm in love with this narrator's voice. I'll get the rest of the series for that alone. Just so happens the mystery and story were very engaging as well.

Heather Fineisen says

Love the Savannah, GA setting and the chemistry between detectives Elise and David. The whole zombie science was interesting and the who done it wasn't obvious. Definitely a series to follow.

Hollie says

~2.5 stars~

The element of suspense was well executed in this read. I was glad it was offered as a kindleunlimited as well. the plot was fast paced as well. what really kept me from liking this book we're the main characters. The heroine seemed generic for me. The hero was disgusting and simply repulsive. He was basically a binge drinker that called an escort service. He even had sex numerous times with one of the prostitutes. That ruined his character for me. I doubt I'll continue this series.

Mauoijenn ~ *Mouthy Jenn* ~ says

I didn't think I would like this as much as I did.
I mean the relationship between the two characters was a given.
Almost predictable in my book. But it was a quick read, so I might read the rest in this series.

Cab says

I picked up the audible version of this book and listened to it while working out. I found the plot engaging and the narration was good. Note: I listened to this at 1.5x speed. I'm not sure this is something that I could read with my eyes but it was a good listen.

I will listen to the second book in the series.

Agnes (BeaderBubbe) says

Didnt think I would like this book so much.....voodoo, witchcraft, darkness, night, weird things happening.....but it grabbed me and didnt let go. Great story, with happy, sad and a few surprises...what you thought you knew...well, that changed in the end. Takes place in Savannah Georgia.....with Det Elise Sandburg investigating a mysterious homicide....she herself has mystery surrounding her - being left in a cemetery as an infant -

Things get hot by mid book...alot of murders happening, until Elise gets to the point of almost losing her life.....thats all I am saying, must read book - very enjoyable.

Connie says

I loved this quick read. It was filled with a lot of suspense and a different kind of murder to be sure.

*****SPOILER*****

The strange goings on in Savannah is the back drop for this mystery and perhaps a little voodoo. For the life of me I cannot understand why anyone would want to have sex with the dead though. They have to be really sick. This was definitely a sicko mystery with a very strange way of murdering people.

I really enjoyed this one and even thought the spell at the back of the books was very interesting. I am giving this 5 out of 5 and will look for the 2nd in the series to rea.

Karen Fowler says

Despite the fact that I have numerous other books in my to-be-read pile I couldn't help moving Play Dead to the front based on the cover alone. It's fantastically creepy and morose. Which I was apparently in the mood for when I started reading this earlier today.

Ironically, after I finished the book I realized that I've recently read another book by Frasier (HUSH) and while I enjoyed that one, I adored this novel.

Set in the sweltering south amid voodoo lore and "root doctoring" (a phrase I hadn't heard in a while) the

main character Elise is divorced, a detective, living in a perpetually partially renovated house and has a daughter who'd rather be anywhere else. And then there is the detached partner who's keeping secrets to preserve his own sanity. When bodies start coming to life after being declared dead, Elise and her partner are swept into a dark world of spells, secrets and betrayals.

I found this novel an excellent read. With its evocative setting, woven in folklore and complex character issues, I couldn't get it read fast enough. At the end (well done, by the way) I found myself hoping that there is at least a sequel planned, if not a whole series.

Play Dead is a quirky, fast-paced mystery with undercurrents of family drama and southern lore. I've become an Anne Frasier fan with this one for sure!

Ashley says

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CompNtBk

Borrowed off Amazon Prime.

FS: "Savannah medical examiner John Casper believed in what some scientists termed the cluster effect."

LS: "Only then would he get out of her brain."

Pretty good...I enjoyed the narrator a lot. She is a woman of many voices and it made me able to get into the book. I loved the witchcraft and voodoo. The old city feeling you got mixed with a crime and police work. All in all a good book. Looking forward to the second!

Wendi (BrokenBinding) says

I think I could have enjoyed this book

But...every few pages there was a page or more of text missing. I have read a few badly edited e books but this is among the worst. I couldn't cope with reading the alternating half of a book.
