



The Vital Principle

Amy Corwin

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An inquiry agent is asked to expose a spiritualist as a fraud only to uncover a murder.

In 1815, an inquiry agent, Mr. Knighton Gaunt, is asked by Lord Crowley to attend a séance with the express purpose of revealing the spiritualist as a fraud. When the séance ends abruptly, Lord Crowley is poisoned during the turmoil by an unseen killer.

Gaunt is now left to investigate not only fraud, but murder. Suspicion turns first to the spiritualist, Miss Prudence Barnard, but as Gaunt digs deeper into the twisted history of the guests at Rosecrest, he discovers more deadly secrets. Inevitably, long-time friends turn against one another as the tension mounts, and Gaunt is challenged to separate fact from fiction before another death at Rosecrest.

The Vital Principle is the first mystery in the Second Sons Inquiry Agency series and features coolly intellectual Mr. Knighton Gaunt, the agency's founder. This witty, historical whodunit in the tradition of Bruce Alexander's Blind Justice, will keep you guessing until the unexpected end.

The Vital Principle Details

Date : Published February 8th 2011 by CreateSpace

ISBN :

Author : Amy Corwin

Format : Paperback 350 pages

Genre : Mystery, Romance, Historical, Historical Fiction, Regency, Historical Mystery

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From Reader Review The Vital Principle for online ebook

Lilly Gayle says

Everyone has Secrets and Pru Barnard is no exception. But is she a charlatan? Or worse? A muderer?

With no family and no inheritance, Pru Barnard must find a way to support herself and her maid without working or she will be unable to maintain the lifestyle to which she is accustomed. So, she becomes a professional guest, entertaining her hosts/hostesses by contacting the spirit world.

Knighton Gaunt was once a member of the ton, but as a second son, he's no lord and he chooses not to live off the generosity of his older brother. But when he opens his own inquiry agency, he's no longer accepted as a guest in the finer homes.

The story opens with Pru holding a séance at the home of Lady Crowley. Her son, Lord Crowley has invited Knighton to prove Pru is a charlatan, but when Lord Crowely is murdered, Knighton suspects Pru of much worse. But Knighton soon learns that everyone attending the séance that night had a possible motive for murder, even Lord Crowley's mother. And Pru just might have some psychic abilities after all.

As Knight searches for the truth, Pru tries desperately to prove her innocence. The motivations are believable and the dialouge witty. Ms. Corwin also does a superb job weaving in the character's backsoty and romantic tension between Knighton and Pru that make me wish to read more about these two.

I can't say I was surprised by the ending, but I was satisfied. Unlike some mystery writers, Ms. Corwin did not try to "surprise" the reader by blaming the murder on some obscure character and then divulging the motive at the very end, making it impossible for the reader to guess correctly. The clues are sprinkled through out the story so the reader can "solve" the case along with Knighton and Pru. And I love being able to solve the mystery...and be right. lol!

Well done, Ms. Corwin. I'm looking forward to reading all the books featured in this series.

Verity Brown says

This book isn't QUITE a four--more of a 3.5--but I did enjoy reading it very much. The two main characters have a nice chemistry, and I confess I was disappointed by the idea that future books in this series might not feature them.

Our heroine: a spinster who formerly helped her father debunk ghost stories. His death has left her in poverty, and she survives by being a professional houseguest, performing seances for her wealthy patrons. (Problem: this is set in the Regency Era, while this type of spiritualism didn't become popular until the Victorian Era.)

Our hero: the "second son" of the series' title, who decided to form a discreet detective agency as an alternative to any of the more respectable professions he might have chosen. Despite this, he is almost

unbearably upright.

The two meet as a result of the hero's attempt to prove that the heroine is a fraud. However, a murder mystery intervenes, which leaves both of them scrambling to figure out who the murderer is.

The mystery itself is excellent...until it is suddenly marred by the inexplicable concealment of vital information. The apothecary's horrible treatment of the heroine is difficult to comprehend in light of the fact that he *must* realize who the real culprit is, and there's nothing in the text that would suggest a good reason for him protecting the culprit. This breaking of one of the fundamental laws of a good mystery is the chief reason I lowered this to 3.5 stars.

Books Mom says

Originally posted at <http://its-raining-books.blogspot.com...>

This whodunit, the first in the Second Sons Inquiry Agency Series, claimed it would keep you guessing until the end. I was not convinced, and believed I could figure it out if I really concentrated -- after all, I love a good mystery. I put all my skills to the test and began reading.

As I read, I'd be sure I had figured out who had done it, but then everything changed, and I was proven wrong. By this time, I was utterly intrigued and kept on reading because I just knew I could figure it out. And so it continued, with me certain I knew whodunnit, and then I would be proven wrong.

The people involved in the story were very real to me. The author did a wonderful job fully fleshing them out and making them interesting and unique. The two who were trying to solve the mystery were fascinating and fun. I really got to know them. They fit so well into the regency era. There was a little romance, a little humor and a lot of regency background that was fascinating. I enjoyed that -- it made a great mix.

Finally as I neared the end, I had to confess I didn't have a clue as to who had done it. Then, when I found out, I realized that I should have known, but Ms. Corwin is good, very good, and the ending was a surprise. It fulfilled its promise to keep me guessing until the very end.

A very satisfying read.

Susan says

My Review:

Pru Bransford is suspected of murder by the inquiry agent hired to reveal her as a fraud. Even when falsely accused of murder; Pru Bransford keeps her head, remains calm, and eventually her innocence is proven. An interesting mystery from beginning to end.

Amy Corwin's writing style flows easily and keeps the reader interested, and continually guessing "what comes next." In each chapter, the tension mounts between the different characters involved, and continues throughout the book. The suspense grows gradually, and builds until the final chapters where the murder is

finally revealed and apprehended. The only christian element of sorts, is that Knighton Gaunt believes in

Even after the mystery is solved, the story continues. I love a good story where the ending is just as good as the beginning, and Amy Corwin delivers. A great novel for mystery buffs. As for the "christian fiction" genre; There seems to be an underlying note that inquiry agent Knighton Gaunt believes in God, but it is understated. Gaunt quotes in Chapter five that "there is only one truth."

Though the language is clean, and this book is readable for most of my followers; I would recommend this for 13+ due to some of the more adult-oriented content of the story.

The Vital Principle

Sarah says

Great story and a great mystery.

I'm not usually into mysteries but I love historical romance and I was pleasantly surprised with my enjoyment of the whodunnit aspect.

The main characters were well written, especially the h. I love Pru.

One of this author's best IMO.

Lauren Hopkins says

Entire middle was superfluous but there were no stupid bullshit twists like, 'oh god the butler was an adopted son and no one reading this could have possibly known that' just good old fashion regular motives and for that I am grateful.

Barbara says

No bad, but not enticing. I'll try another.

Kathy says

Knighton Gaunt, second son's inquiry agent, was hired by Lord Cromwell to prove that Prudence Barnard was a fake. As a guest of the Dowager Cromwell, Prudence held a seance to conger words from the deceased Lord Cromwell only to have the new young Lord Cromwell poisoned during the seance. with 13 guests and a maid in attendance, there were a lot of suspects. A great mystery that kept me guessing to the end!

Kat says

I found this book when it was posted for free on amazon. This was a nice gem to find. The characters were good with a complicated mystery. I loved the unique heroine that was someone who spoke to the dead to entertain. The hero was a good match. I jumped right into the second book in the series and loved that one too...

Cassia says

Regency mystery with a good level of tension. I love to see the "other side" of Regency England, not so golden and gentle like in the most of historical romances, but governed by baser instincts and greed. Good chemistry between the main characters, Knighton and Pru, that I'll be glad to find in other two books in this series of Second Sons Inquiry Agency. Recommended!

Susan says

It's 1815 and an Inquiry Agent - Mr. Knighton Gaunt - is employed at a house party to expose a spiritualist - Miss Prudence Barnard - as a fraud.

Unfortunately murder happens to prevent this. Can Mr Gaunt discover the murderer while unearthing all the guests secrets before they strike again.

This is the first of a series which I look forward to reading the next.

Judy says

The Vital Principle by Amy Corwin

A Second Sons Inquiry Agency Series Book 1

Prudence Barnard has nowhere to call home. When her father was alive they were invited to homes so he could investigate hauntings. Now that he's gone, she gets invited to try and speak to the dead. Instead of her scientific studies, she is considered entertainment for the bon ton. As a guest at Rosecrest, her entertainment suddenly puts her in the position of a prime suspect for murder.

Knighton Gaunt is a second son who didn't feel called to the church, but he does like the truth. His older brother, a baron, is displeased to have his brother as an inquiry agent, stirring up the truth among the realm. Too bad, it's what Knighton wants to do with his life. When called to find out if Miss Barnard is a fraud, he finds himself deep into a murder mystery. His client died in the same room as him. Not good on all fronts.

There is a touch of romance in this book and it is a great murder mystery. It seems every guest has a secret and a reason they might want to do away with Lord Crowley. It kept me guessing all the way through the book. Book two in this series is called A Rose Before Dying.

<http://justjudysjumbles.blogspot.com/...>

Mayara Arend says

The Vital Principle is a lovely mystery romance by Amy Corwin, featuring Knight Gaunt and Pru Barnard. Amy has a wonderful narrative, that kept me guessing until nearly the end. When the last major event on the book happened, I was already sure of who was the killer, but that was pretty much when it was revealed, merely pages before, so kudos to Amy, it's not that easy to fool me ;)

Pru Barnard is a lovely fraud, she pretends to be able to communicate with the dead and she was invited by Lady Crowley, recently widowed, to go to her house and try to reach her late husband. Lord Crowley, her son, is sure she is a charlatan and hires Mr. Gaunt to expose her "in a way as humiliating as possible".

Lord Crowley is killed (and no, that is not a spoiler, they tell you on the back cover) and Mr. Gaunt is left to inquire (he IS an Inquiry Agent of the Second Sons Inquiry Agency) and find out who murdered him.

As we go along, we end up hating Lord Crowley. He is a despicable little man, hateful and hideous, who ended up hurting and damaging several people, specially women. Also, we end up understanding and caring for Pru and Knighton who, of course, are romantically attracted.

I see my "philosophical" views alternate between Pru and Knighton, Pru's view of "the truth" is much alike mine and Knighton's view of the people around him (specially the women) who he thinks are, usually, untrustworthy or hysterical. Really, screaming, hysterical females drive me crazy. Get ahold of yourself woman!

The historical aspect, the relations between man and women, between noble people and workers ("working for a living" being something awful and all, really cute), the difference on the police and inquiry work, that's all just very interesting.

Amy's rythm is amazing, she keeps you turning pages without breathing, wanting to see what'll happen next, wanting to see what Pru was thinking during that one scene that Mr. Gaunt just narrated (did I mention they both narrate chapters? They do), who is the killer, why, when, how? Keeps you asking but also keeps you giggling, laughing, entertained.

May Allen is a separate delight. The perfect portrait of so many women nowadays, her speech was a bit hard for me, English not being my first language and all, with the way she speaks being too colloquial, illiterate, some words I didn't know, some I had to infer from the context. We'd call her a golddigger, nowadays, but when you think about it, sure, she was being ambitious and, well, pretty greedy, but what was in the world for her? Nothing, really. So she had to take her faith on her hands. And do it for herself, work with whatever she had.

The story revolves and, eventually, you think that ANYONE could have killed Lord Crowley, simply because he was an awful person. Hell, I would've killed him if he wasn't dead. Hideous, awful little man, hurtful, despicable, misogynist, likes to feel empowered, hurting people even after he's dead, his own poor mother... Anyways. Yeah. Hateful.

Quite interesting to see how Amy shows the women on the book, some are strong, most are weak and sad,

depending on man, just. like. today. I mean, when you think about it, the world didn't change all that much... But maybe I should leave that to another post ;)

Overall, The Vital Principle is an amazing book, with strong characters and a very clever plot, full of witty remarks, cute, romantic, funny but also full of mystery. I look forward to reading more of Pru Barnard and Knighton Gaunt, although I'm adding the other "Second Sons Inquiry Agency" books to my wishlist (my very long wishlist), for when I'm actually able to buy books (my mom and my boyfriend say I will only be allowed to buy when I have under 4 on my TBR pile, so that may take a while). Read it, you won't regret it.

Rebecca says

Rather liked it actually. Two main characters are interesting. A touch more polish would be beneficial but nothing serious or invasive to enjoyment.

3.5 star

sheila says

Nice

I did briefly think of the murderer but dismissed them. So many suspects. With many good reasons. Lovely mystery. Look forward to reading more ?
