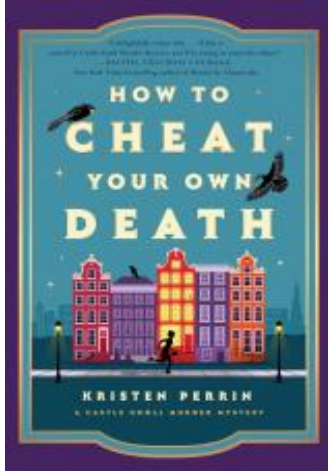

How to Cheat Your Own Death

by Kristen Perrin



About the Book

From the gritty streets of 1960s Soho to the lofty galleries of present-day West London, two interlocking mysteries decades apart unfold in this latest installment in the award-winning, *New York Times* bestselling *Castle Knoll Murder Mystery* series.

Some secrets are deadlier than others.

1968: Frances Adams is loving her new London life, and she's stepped into a world of glamour thanks to her new friend, Vera Huntington --- a magnetic socialite as mysterious as she is provocative. Vera dances around London like she owns it, taking Frances with her.

Present day: When Annie Adams heads to London to visit her famous artist mother, Laura, the last thing she expects to find is a dead body. Least of all for it to be Laura's new protégée, left in an alley with her heart surgically removed from her chest.

Annie is no stranger to murder; after all, she's solved a few already. And something about this case feels familiar. She's read about one just like it in the journals of her late great aunt Frances, whose friend Vera was killed in the 1960s in the exact same way.

As Annie investigates, threats pile up on Laura's doorstep, and it soon becomes clear that she's next. With her mother's life on the line, can Annie find the killer before it's too late?

Discussion Guide

Note: These discussion questions contain some spoilers! We suggest you finish the book before you read through them.

- 1.** Annie comes face to face with a new murder that mirrors one detailed in Frances's journals. How does the book explore the idea of family legacies and generational echoes? Why do you think it's important to Annie to continue picking up the threads Frances left her for solving crimes?
- 2.** The novel begins with an ominous prophecy that Peony Lane left for Annie, suggesting that her actions could lead to danger and death. Do you think Annie believes in the prophecy? Do you believe? Do you think it affects how Annie acts throughout the novel?
- 3.** At the beginning of the novel, our main characters move from the small village of Castle Knoll to London, a much bigger playing field for both of them. How does solving murders in such a sprawling, multi-faceted city pose different problems than the ones they've faced before?
- 4.** Annie's relationship with her mother, Laura, is a complicated one. Who is the caretaker in their dynamic? How do you think that shaped Annie into the person she is now?
- 5.** Laura's status as a renowned artist puts her both in the spotlight and, as we come to find out, in danger. What does the novel suggest about the connections between artistic expression, notoriety and risk?
- 6.** In both timelines, the victims' hearts were surgically removed from their chests before they were found. What do you think this says about the killer? How does the symbol of the heart continue to show up, and what does it mean to our characters?
- 7.** Annie has experience solving murders at this point, but this is the first case that directly involves her parents. Do you think exploring the truth about her parents affects her judgment? Her sense of self?
- 8.** The relationships with the important men in Frances's and Annie's lives, namely Ford Gravesdown and Rowan Crane, change when they're in London. How do you see these relationships shifting, and why do you think this is?
- 9.** Many of the women uncover crucial information but stay silent for years, including Frances and Vera. Why do they view the gathering of secrets as a form of protection? Do you think the act of keeping secrets ultimately helped or harmed our characters?
- 10.** The effects of money and power come to a head. How does power dictate whose stories are believed, whose crimes are ignored, and whose reputations are protected?
- 11.** Journals, heirlooms and paintings play major roles in Annie's deciphering the past and unraveling this mystery. What do you think the novel is saying about how the physical manifestations of a life shape the stories we tell about it?

Author Bio

Kristen Perrin is the *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Castle Knoll Murder Mystery* series. She is originally from Seattle, Washington, where she spent several years working as a bookseller before moving to the UK to do a master's and PhD. She lives with her family in Surrey, where she can be found poking around vintage bookstores, stomping in the mud with her two kids, and collecting too many plants. Her middle-grade series, *Attie and the World Breakers*, was published in German, Dutch and Polish.

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