



Riddle

Elizabeth Horton-Newton

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Seven years ago Kort Eriksen went to prison for killing his girlfriend Desiree. Now he's back in Riddle and some people think he got off easy. Others, including long time friend Norma, think he was railroaded because he's the only Native American in town. Grace Donahue is running away from her past. Trapped in Riddle until her car is repaired she develops a friendship with Kort. Suddenly accidents are happening and people are dying. Is Kort adding to his list of victim's or has someone else taken the reins? As mysteries from the past rise to the surface, more questions will be raised. The suspect file grows as victim's fall. Is Desiree's killer back for more or is someone trying to avenge her death? The riddle of Riddle will be solved, but how many bodies will it take to find the answers?

Riddle Details

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From Reader Review Riddle for online ebook

Lorraine says

A well-written book, with an intriguing storyline and a great cast of fleshed-out characters.
The book has believable romance and unpredictable mystery.
A true riddle with many twists and turns to keep you guessing until the end.

Cori F says

Great story!

I couldn't put this book down. It left me in suspense until the very end. Great characters. Very well written.

Michelle Medhat says

An intense, thrilling ride of passion, prejudice, obsession and revenge.
Riddle is an incredible book and one that should not be missed. When I started reading, it seemed like a superb dramatic romance. But the more I was swallowed into the story, the more I was aware of an undercurrent of something else. Written with sweet charm, Riddle is a story that appears to be a chocolate pudding, but dig deeper and the maggots start to crawl out. Think David Lynch and then some. Mrs Newton has created a literary sleight of hand with stunning deftness. Startling graphic imagery is juxtaposed with cupcake, little town sensibilities. The fatherly owner of the diner, the tough but kind proprietor of the local Inn and the pragmatic but caring garage mechanic, give a light feeling to this story, but don't be fooled. There's the town's bad boy Kort just out of jail for a murder he says he didn't commit. Is he lying or just misunderstood? The town's split between supporters of Kort – those who believed him innocent of the heinous crime – and those who'd like to see him six foot under. Unfortunately, his mother falls into the latter team. And amongst it all a girl named Grace arrives. Her car's broken down, so she stays in Riddle until it's fixed. Who is she? Why is she running? Does she intend to stay? Questions circle in your mind as you read, and Mrs Newton's writing holds you captivated with intrigue demanding you read further. Each page furnishes a further titbit of insight into the lives of those players on Riddle's stage, but no conclusions are forthcoming until the final pages. Don't try to second guess, just sit back and enjoy the thrilling journey Mrs Newton has crafted for you.

The characters in Riddle are deep and complex. Their intricacies and foibles give way to a multitude of enthralling considerations. However, what makes the book truly stand out is Mrs Newton's ability to address such big themes as prejudice, revenge, obsession and pride in a way that forces a reappraisal of perspective. The distrust that naturally occurs when meeting those not conforming to a stereotype of our predetermined design, and the faith to find the strength to use our intelligence to observe and interpret instead of accepting and believing the judgement of others. Riddle is a book not to be missed and one that I highly recommend.

Jessica Wren-Wilson says

If you interview every inmate in any given prison, I would estimate that nine out of ten would tell you they were innocent, they were framed, that evidence was planted, that the defense lawyer was incompetent, and on and on. While no one believes that this many people are wrongfully convicted, it does occasionally happen. In *Riddle* by Elizabeth N. Newton, Kort, a twenty-ish man of Native American origin, is returning to his home town of Riddle (in an unnamed state but hinted to be Nebraska) after serving eight years for manslaughter. He had been wrongfully convicted of killing his girlfriend Desiree when they were teenagers. Having accepted his life circumstances and determined to move on, Kort immediately sets out to put the past behind him by getting a job and trying to stay out of trouble, knowing that any attempts to clear his name would be useless. When a beautiful drifter named Grace's car breaks down in Riddle, leaving her stranded, the two immediately strike up a friendship, which quickly leads to a romance, and she encourages him to do all he can to prove his innocence. Unfortunately, neither of them can enjoy any peace due to the constant harassment and stalking by folks in town who, well, I'll just say have their own reasons to stalk and harass. It's only when a gruesome death occurs that Kort snaps out of his denial and realizes just how far some people in Riddle will go to get their revenge and satisfy their own agendas.

None of these reasons have to do with Kort's heritage. In the opening scene, Kort experiences a juvenile racist taunt, and the first couple of chapters will have you believe that Kort was set up because he was the only native American in town. Indeed, Kort believes that this was one of the reasons he was accused of the murder: a close-minded, racist town wanted rid of its only Native American inhabitant (and for the record, I am Cherokee and have never experienced any anti-Native sentiments. I'm not saying or implying that prejudices don't exist, and in her introduction, Mrs. Newton informs the reader that before Congress passed legislation outlawing it, Native American children were routinely forcibly removed from their families in an attempt to "civilize" them. I was not aware of this before. In this novel, it's not clear why the inhabitants of Riddle are specifically prejudiced against Native Americans but no other race). However, Kort's ethnicity is barely mentioned after this scene. He was the last person seen with Desiree before her death, he had had brushes with the law in the past, he had a very strong potential motive (which I won't give away here), there was DNA evidence linking him to the crime scene and the struggle, and Kort himself confessed that he and Desiree had an argument right before her death. It seems pretty reasonable to me that he would be convicted of her murder and that people would be uncomfortable in his presence. However, I can understand Kort's frustration at the injustice. For the town pariah, Kort has a lot of supporters: his new boss, Frank; his friend Jack, who runs the diner; his parole officer, Jeri; even the detective who investigated the murder who had his doubts from the beginning. He never appears to have any shortage of company. The other characters are superbly developed and you feel for them (even the bad guys). Kort's relationship with his adoptive mother changes profoundly over the course of the novel, and these changes make a great subplot.

The best part of the book is the blooming romance between Kort and Grace, the ultimate "us against the world" couple who are determined to beat the odds, overcome their past (Grace has more baggage than an airport carousel but still manages to remain strong, independent, and self-confident. I wish I could pull her out the novel just so I can have a conversation with her), and make a new life for themselves. I would love to see a sequel to this book just to know how things for them turned out.

Riddle is not a "whodunit" murder mystery. It becomes clear fairly quickly who really should have been in prison for the murder. The real suspense comes from the inter-character drama. The novel uses a sequence of shocking scenes rather than plot twists to create its suspense. The ending, while thoroughly satisfying and has its own shocking scene, contains no major surprises. It's like being in a movie theater, watching a slasher film, and watching someone walk into a room where you (the viewer) know a killer is hiding. It's a little

tough not to shout “don’t go in there!” Riddle is more of a drop tower than a roller coaster; you will float merrily along and then suddenly a bombshell is dropped.

Riddle does get repetitive at times. It seems that in every chapters, someone is apologizing, making sure someone is ok, or “has a bad feeling” about something. In the grand scheme of the novel, though, this is not that big of a deal. Nor is this an error per se; excessive repetition just happens to be a personal pet peeve of mine, and that’s not the author’s fault. Riddle can also benefit from a quick re-edit to fix some punctuation errors and typos, and from a reformatting. But please don’t let this discourage you from buying this treat of a book. These are things that are easily fixable and probably will be in a short time, and even if they’re not, Riddle is still an amazing read.

Anita Kovacevic says

Ah, the secrets that lie beneath the surface...

Four things drew me to this book - the fabulous title, recommendations from some friends, an amazing cover, and the teaser chapter posted on the website. It was intriguing, and the author's style seemed so easy to read through and visualize, carrying hints of picturesque bitterness and ominous gloom which confirmed Riddle was not your typical romance, but much more. If you take the time to read the foreword, which I do, out of respect for any author, you will be on the hero's side from the beginning, and I thank the author for a glimpse into social matters.

The main character is Kort, Native American uprooted and adopted, mistreated from childhood, and later convicted of murder under unclear circumstances. The fact that he returns to the town which accused him, speaks volumes by itself, but keeps you wondering if he came back for justice or vengeance. Meeting the heroine, Grace, made me like her immediately -- there is just something likeable about people who help others on gutt instinct, not calculating the odds and interests. With Norma, Tony and Agnes the story begins to spin in directions that remind me a bit of Twin Peaks, and your mind starts making assumptions, and all the what-ifs crawl in, keeping your interest.

Although the book needs slight editing and proofreading, which will certainly be dealt with soon, it truly lures you into its riddle. The scene with 2 significant letters waiting for the pizza to be finished was where you really get that fan feeling and want to shout at the characters 'Darn the pizza, what's in the envelopes?!' The physical fight between the killer and a police deputy is really striking. I did guess the killer (the analogies are a nice touch), but the author led the story skillfully to its climax and untangled it fully, with a surprise waiting in the prologue. The final pages of chasing down the culprit had me on my toes, and the unravelling of the workings of the crazy criminal mind is shockingly vivid.

When you feel like reading a book which feels like watching a good mystery, with strong hints of romance and scary thriller scenes, this is the book for you. Strong characters on both sides (if you're going to have a villain, make him/her memorable, right?) will have you rooting for and against them, happy to know there is always a happy ending. Or is there;)?

Wendi Wilson says

Riddle is a fast-paced story full of twists and turns. The characters were well developed and believable. The suspense was intense and the mystery twisted and turned. You think you know what's going on, then it twists again. I loved Kort and Grace and thoroughly enjoyed their blossoming relationship.

I gave this book four stars instead of five due to it needing some serious editing. There were quite a few punctuation errors (missing commas, periods and spaces, formatting issues, etc), but these problems did not make me stop reading. I had to know what happened! Great job!

Jackie Parry says

Captivating, Thrilling, Intoxicating

Well, I could certainly drink up Kort, and Grace is so appealing too. With these two characters and other enigmatic players, Riddle will pick you up and carry you along a road of deceit, lies, cheating, love and passion – tinged with hate.... and confusion.... this has you guessing until the very end. At one point I thought they all did it!

With firm subplots that don't meander or confuse, a small American town with all its compromises and real life drama unfolding between pages of romance, mystery and intrigue – you won't be able to put this one down.

I'd love to know more about Kort and Grace, especially Kort and what happened after the fascinating....nope, I won't spoil it for you.

I've now added Elizabeth's first book View From the Sixth Floor and will be watching her for more.

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Ah, the secrets that lie beneath...

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Ann Fields says

This is the second book I've read by Newton and like the first (View from the Sixth Floor: An Oswald Tale), it did not disappoint. Riddle is the story of Kort, an outcast even among outcasts and Grace, a young lady running from a hurt-filled past. A chance meeting at a small town diner kicks off the fireworks of this story. The couple moves tenuously toward a friendship, then onto a romantic relationship as the plot thickens around who killed Kort's high school sweetheart and who is now trying to kill Grace. In the end, the killer's identity is revealed but missed clues direct the police, Kort and Grace to the wrong person. The true killer remains free, while Kort and Grace enjoy a happy, promising future together. Or do they?

Hmmmm...sounds like a sequel is to follow, and I would be first in line to read it. Newton is adept at creating large characters in small settings. She is very thorough (and fair with the clues for those who like to figure out the identity of the killer before the end) in laying out the mystery of her books. She is especially skilled in planting details (sub-plots) designed to interest yet throw off the reader. In the case of this book, she does this by creating interesting pasts for Kort and Grace and by piling on present-day work, financial and love challenges. Newton even throws in social commentary on the issue of the forced adoption of native American Indian children. The pacing for this book was steady; the minor characters well defined; and the romance steamy. If you enjoy reading well written stories that include romance, mystery and social issues, Riddle is the ticket. Happy reading!

Claire Stibbe says

Kort Eriksen returns home having served seven years of a twelve year sentence. It's been a long stretch inside and now he's back in Riddle, soaking up the sights, remembering how it was. This time, he's vulnerable, the object of everyone's scrutiny ? his mother, the girls across the street, Butch. The only person pleased to see him is Jack of the Sky Harbor Diner.

Horton-Newton's writing is crisp, grabs you from the first page and doesn't let up. With the plot picking up speed and the suspense following suit, you begin to feel an underlying tension that just won't shift. And that's what makes this book. It's not that I felt sorry for Kort, far from it. He doesn't need pity. He's too

charismatic for that. I was fascinated with him. He's an outsider trying to re-acclimate to a hostile environment and, emotions aside, managing rather well. Newton's ability to climb into the minds of her characters speaks for itself. We mustn't assume Kort's return is going to be that easy, snide remarks and narrowed eyed looks are only par for the course. They believe he's a convicted killer and we can empathize with his dilemma, but we know there is something far more appealing about Kort than just the matter of his exceptional heritage.

Grace Donahue has car problems, seems like she's in need of a new transmission. With a few options and fewer dollars, she checks into a hotel and takes a bite to eat at the local diner. This girl's no lightweight, witty and determined she meets Kort, accepts a short ride in his truck, and latterly takes residence in Riddle. Trouble begins to brew when a newflash releases footage of Kort Eriksen and the murder of Desiree Steele. It's particularly engrossing to read about the past of a tortured hero and clearly Grace feels more captivated than deceived. As Newton points out 'She struggled to match the boy in the reports with the man she had just met.' This is the very essence of the story.

As Kort tries to put old ghosts to sleep and bury the what-if's, we wonder about the driver of the small dark car and we wonder why Butch is keeping such a careful eye on him. I enjoyed the strained relationships and the complex characters - a letter, a poignant Polaroid and a dead girl's secrets - and an ending I wasn't expecting. Newton skillfully weaves past with present and like a roller-coaster ride, we can neither get off nor want to.

Mark Fine says

They say judge a book by its cover. No kidding! The sumptuously designed cover for "Riddle" sucked me right in. And boy, this romantic thriller did not disappoint. In fact it had me truly committed to carve out time in my busy days in order to read it.

From the first page I found myself channeling "The Master of Suspense" himself, Sir Alfred Hitchcock. I'm convinced he would have reveled in the psychological twist and turns, portrayed by the gifted Elizabeth Horton-Newton, in her small town of Riddle she so tellingly created.

I know the fiery sanguine-haired Norma would have delighted the great director (she certainly fascinated me). He also would have appreciated the ratcheting drama of Grace, trapped in Riddle by a car that betrayed her, by breaking down at the least opportune time.

But her car's betrayal is nothing compared to the questionable justice meted out against Kort. Mr. Erikson had been jailed for the alleged killing of his girlfriend. Or, was he a victim of crude prejudice being the only Native American in bucolic Riddle?

As I read, the layers peeled back page-by-page revealing a narrative as engrossing as anything created by Alfred Hitchcock. I really wish the late great Master of Suspense was still alive, as I would have liked to see Riddle come alive as a quality motion picture. I strongly recommend this book!

Review by Mark Fine The Zebra Affaire: An Apartheid Love Story (The Sub-Sahara Saga, #1)

Marcia Martins says

I like romantic thriller and I got hooked from the beginning. Kort, a Native American, served seven years in prison. Out on parole, Kort went back to his home town, Riddle. As the story goes, a question hang on the air, is he innocent as he claims or had him killed his high school girlfriend? People are hostile to him, except a few friends from high school. Grace Donahue is running from her past, and is forced to stop for a while in Riddle when her car broke. Grace and Kort meet at Ollie's dinner and their relationship progress naturally. Grace believes in Kort and decide to help him to prove his innocence. She has no idea what she is getting herself into.

The characters are believable and the story has twisters and turns that keep you hooked. I would like to know more about Kort's family.

Carole Parkes says

Engaging with the characters from the very first page, I couldn't wait to read more and see how this story developed. 'Riddle' didn't disappoint. In fact, in some ways it exceeded my expectations. The characters are realistically portrayed and believable, so much so I became quite attached to them. Also, the locations were sufficiently described for me to be there with them as the story is acted out. Just as all good books should do, it kept me interested right until the end even though I'd guessed early on how it would play out. Despite my accurate prediction, the author still managed a little surprise at the end making 'Riddle' an excellent read.

Ted Tayler says

"Dictionary - a riddle is - a puzzle to be solved. 'Riddle' is a very apt title!"

I have often wondered what America was like far away from the big cities. There have been several films and many books that portray small-town America as somewhere that Trip Advisor might describe as 'best avoided'. Riddle is a small town. Everyone knows everyone else's business. There are some good folk; folk that are as honest as the day is long, they would give you the shirt off their back. Then there are others who pass by on the other side of the road and whisper, nudge and stare menacingly at anyone who dares to stop and stay for a while, uninvited. Riddle is no longer on my bucket list of places to visit.

Grace Donahue is forced to stop for a while, when her car dies on her. Grace is escaping a troubled past. Kort Eriksen is a Native American out on parole after serving seven years for the murder of a young girl he was at school with. His former schoolmates that stayed in Riddle are in both camps. The good folk and the others. We meet the cop with a grudge; the girl who still carries a flame for Kort despite his past; the mild mannered desk clerk at the motel, with an alcoholic mother. A handful of townsfolk think Kort was innocent; that it was convenient for the police to pin the murder on him because of his background.

Your past has a way of catching up with you and there are many twists and turns in this excellent thriller. The body count rises. Who is responsible? Were the townsfolk right about Kort all along? Was there another evil force at work? This story will keep you guessing until the end.

Kerry Reis says

After over seven years in prison for a manslaughter conviction in the death of his high school girlfriend, Kort has just been paroled back to his hometown of Riddle. Despite his adamant protestation of innocence, Kort feels that his being a Native American child raised by white parents was an underlying prejudice that the town, police, and jury against him, but upon his return to the town, he discovers that a small group of town residents who believe he was innocent, including a high school friend, Norma, who meets him at the bus station, another high school friend, Jack, who now owns the local diner, and the owner of a local construction company who provides him a job. However, Kort finds his high school nemesis, Butch, is now the Assistant Chief of Police with a personal directive to harass Kort back to prison. Meanwhile, Grace, on a personal roaming mission of self-discovery after running from her wedding due to finding her groom-to-be in bed with the maid-of-honor, finds herself stranded in Riddle when her car's transmission dies. When she meets Kort at the diner, learning his history makes her wary, but she also begins to believe in his innocence as their relationship deepens into love. As they delve into proving Kort's innocence, they are unaware of the danger facing them. With a strong character foundation, this was an engrossing tale of suspenseful mystery, romance, and redemption. It was very easy to find empathy with Kort and Grace, and to feel the tension and anger when danger and murder arise around them. However, the author's use of omniscient point of view at a couple of spots made it easy for me to figure out the main villain in the story, but the full truth is well hidden until a final twist is revealed.
