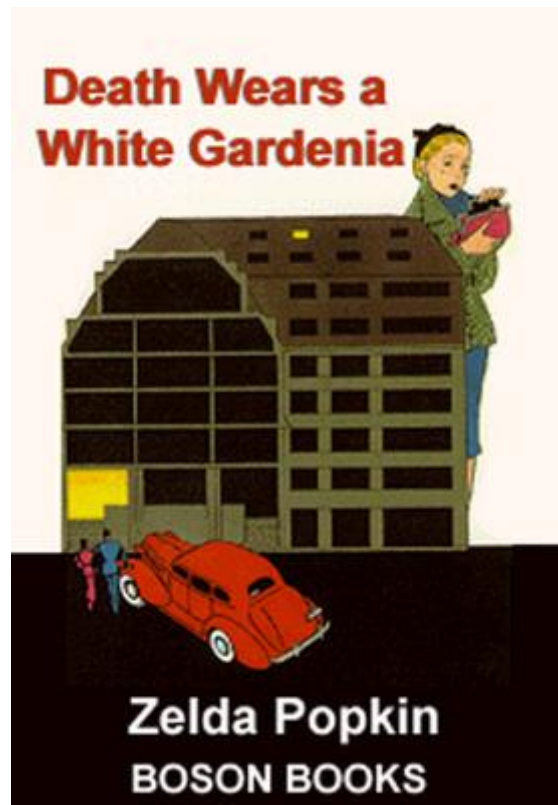


Death Wears A White Gardenia - Zelda Popkin



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Prudence Abernathy left her job in a California art gallery to marry a young army captain on the way home from Vietnam. She settled into the life of a country housewife at the old family plantation in Mason County, Virginia-that is, until her husband is disbarred from practicing law. Prudence has to pitch in to keep the family finances afloat, first by selling off antiques from the manor house, and then by welding funky furniture out of cast-off farm machinery-the big stuff like tractors and combines. She's making do, selling the furniture mostly to the commuters who are moving into the northern end of the county from the Washington, DC., area. Then, one of her heavy tractor sofas crashes through the parlor floor of the Abernathy manor house, causing part of the chimney facing to disintegrate. The collapse exposes the secret compartment in the wall next to the fireplace, allowing a skeleton in a Confederate Lieutenant's uniform to fall out. While dusting for prints in the compartment, the police forensic team also finds an expensive bracelet that was stolen the previous year from a retired Yankee businessman, J. Augustus Pickerill. It's possible that the person in Confederate uniform was involved in the theft during the Confederate Memorial Day Ball that Mr. Pickerill hosted during the previous May, and hid there after he

was mortally wounded by an accomplice who didn't want to share the loot. But it is also possible that the theft was done before the ball, while the Pickerills were out of the country on vacation. Unfortunately, Prudence was making some tractor furniture in Mr. Pickerill's rec room during the vacation period. That gave her the opportunity to steal the jewelry. The local sheriff also decides that she had the means, since the safe containing the jewelry was opened with a welder's cutting torch, and the motive, since the Abernathys are chronically broke. Aided by her friends and her status as an almost-local after living in the county for thirty years, she sets out to prove her innocence. As she works her way down the list of possible suspects, she comes into sometimes-amusing contact with many of the citizens of Mason County, who, when not answering Prudence's questions, are busy trying to navigate their lives between the rural Old South and the encroaching suburbia spreading its technocrat tentacles out from the big city. A reading sample, author bio, and picture can be found at bosonbooks.com. Author: Popkin, Zelda
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