

In this debut mystery, a real estate broker's life and work are a series of ups, downs, and the occasional corpse. Realtor Vivianne Murphy earns both a client and a friend when she helps Venice Martino find a new place to live. Venice settles on a log home in Havenville, Washington, just across the street from Vivianne. The two women are soon co-workers after Venice gets her real estate license. There's a pile of money to be made in this business, even if it's sometimes dangerous. Vivianne buys and carries a gun and Taser for protection and has a frightening encounter with a potential client—though this allows her to put her Taser to good use. But real estate has its glamorous side, and Vivianne and Venice are thrilled by the chance to broker the sale of a multimillion-dollar home. They plan to meet the prospective buyers at the house only to discover a body there. Do they call the police? Or do they move the corpse so they won't lose an epic commission? Their ultimate decision has unexpected and hazardous consequences.

Addison's lead female characters are captivating, particularly Vivianne. The author devotes a substantial portion of the lighthearted tale to her. Vivianne fled New York primarily to escape her overbearing mother, with whom she maintains a strained relationship. These familial subplots, including hefty backstories on both of Vivianne's failed marriages, are wholly absorbing, perhaps more so than the novel's mystery element. But that's because the mystery, rather than taking center stage, plays out as another subplot. The narrative is generally high-spirited; finding a body, for example, spawns dark humor but no scares or suspense. Still, the tense final act offers undisputed perils. Addison's brisk, conversational prose entails periodic sighs, as if Vivianne's narration constantly reminds her how exasperating her life is. Superb, winsome female characters headline this breezy thriller.