



# The First Murder

*Susanna Gregory*

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**The First Murder** Susanna Gregory

1154, Osney Priory, Oxford. When the first performance of The Play of Adamens in tragedy, the author is compelled to pen a grim warning for the generations that follow:

'BEWARE THE SINS OF ENVY AND VAINGLORY, ELSE FOUL MURDER ENDS YOUR STORY'

But his words are not heeded, and as the play is performed in many guises throughout the ages, bad luck seems to follow after those involved in its production.

When a snow storm diverts two disparate parties of travellers to the busy market town of Carmarthen in the winter of 1199, an enigmatic stranger appears and requests to stage the play to alleviate tensions, but on the eve of the performance the actor chosen to play Cain is found dead.

When the play is performed in the city of Ely in 1361, the townspeople fear the play has unleashed a demon upon the town after a gruesome discovery is made in the Cathedral. And from Shakespeare's London to war-time Surrey, no matter the time or the place, each production always seems to end in disaster.

Perhaps it is simply the curse of thespian rivalry that is to blame. Or does the story of man's first murder somehow infect all who re-enact it?

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