



Dead Renegade

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Loon Lake Police Chief Lew Ferris and Doc Osborne are back for yet another adventure from everybody's favorite northern Wisconsin murder capital. This marks the tenth book in the Loon Lake mystery series.

Dead Renegade Details

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Author : Victoria Houston

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From Reader Review Dead Renegade for online ebook

IslandRiverScribe says

For some ten books now in the Loon Lake series, Victoria Houston has crafted murder mysteries that can best be described as “cozies.” The town of Loon Lake and its surrounding water-filled environs are a mecca for fishing enthusiasts as well as for wealthy seasonal residents seeking refuge from their big-city lives. Therefore, great opportunity always exists for robberies, fraud and assorted mayhem to be sorted out by Doc Osborne and his girlfriend, Chief of Police Lew Ferris.

The book starts out in a very promising manner. First Doc finds a skeleton wrapped in an old rug tucked away in the basement of an antique store. The body had been dismembered before being rolled up, and the skull, complete with gold fillings that Doc recognizes, rolls right over to him. Concurrent with the discovery of the skeleton, Houston provides us with a very good idea of who’s going to die next. She even provides a better than usual clue to the identity of the future killer.

And then the shorter-than-her-normal novel begins to fall apart. First, Houston creates a demanding subplot for every character. For instance, Lew has refused to ask Doc to her high school reunion, choosing instead to meet with her old high school boyfriend who is now a divorced millionaire. So Doc has that angst to deal with for most of the book. Then Erin, Doc’s daughter, is working two Legal Aid cases, one of which involves the antique store where the skeleton is found while the other involves finance company fraud allegedly perpetrated by the person we figure is slated to die next.

Add to all this a problem where Mason, Doc’s granddaughter, is being bullied by an older boy, a story which dominates the entry for at least half the book. Ray’s “adopted son,” Nick, has a scenario going, as does the wife of the finance company CEO. Throw in multiple scenes tracing the family situation of the person we are clued into as the next killer and there is not a lot of space in this novel for actually investigating any of the crimes.

The focus on bullying is the next problem with the book. Not that the societal issue of bullying isn’t important, but we actually find ourselves reading a primer on how both parents and the victimized child can deal with the issue psychologically, physically and legally. The advice Houston presents on the topic is excellent, but it uses up so many pages. And it only relates to the mystery portion of the story because Mason is rescued at one point by, coincidentally, the wife of the finance company CEO, who is, coincidentally, moving in just down the street.

The final downturn to the story is Houston’s refusal to believe that “the devil is in the details.” Book after book, she seems to have an insatiable and driving need to bend the fabric of time and space in a setting that is neither paranormal nor sci-fi in genre.

Ten books ago, at the start of the series, Doc had already been retired for over two years. Since then, Nick has finished his last two years of high school and a year of college. Erin has started and finished law school, attending only part time for several years, has passed the bar and has started working for Legal Aid. The books have spanned several winters, several summers and several birthdays since the series started.

But somehow, since the last book, Ray Pradt and Cody, Doc’s grandson, have lost at least two years on their ages. And Doc is back to being retired for barely two years, which doesn’t account for the death of his wife or his time in alcohol rehab, all of which happened before the start of the first book but are referenced in this

text. I swear, sometimes a Houston book is worse than a trip in Dr. Who's Tardis!

Overall, this “cozy” is really more dull and boring than cozy. The second murder and its aftereffects are different from any that Houston has created before. However, the majority of its solution just drops into Doc’s and Lew’s laps. All they have to do, essentially, is pick up the body parts and file a report.

Yes, there is an action scene or two with gunplay and a speedboat attack, but, for the most part, this book is just an essay on the effects of bullying. One bully is just learning the skill and the second is a sociopath with many years of successful manipulation under his belt. And the third is a full-fledged psychopath, honed in his craft by one parent who was physically and psychologically abusive and by the other parent who tacitly allowed it to happen.

Essentially, Houston tries to put too much into too few pages. The result is a book that jumps all over the place and, thus, never does justice to any of the myriad plot lines. Too bad, because Houston has her characterizations fully fleshed out and she has created people who feel like friends. And for that reason only do I continue to read her books.

Ann says

Not as good as previous books in the series. I liked the main characters, and the northern Wisconsin setting, but there were way too many subplots going on. There were a couple murders, of course, but the author also touched on domestic abuse, a series of burglaries, financial scamming of the elderly, sibling rivalry, sexual molestation and bullying, all jammed into a shorter than usual book, skimmed over, then quickly wrapped up neatly in the last few pages.

Joan says

Doc finds body parts inside an old rolled up carpet in an antique store while helping his daughter Erin reclaim a dental cabinet that her client's deceased husband had left on consignment.

The owner of a financial company is cheating seniors and abusing his wife, C.J. Local businesses are being robbed by thieves who saw holes in the roof.

karen davis says

Dead Renegade

I love these tales of murder with their fishing thrown in for relief. The characters make it a fun read though this antagonist was so nasty. Such a good story and wrapped up neatly with no loose ends. I never want them to end.

Teri Pre says

This is the first book in this series that disappointed me. It seemed as if Ms. Houston wasn't sure which direction to go in, so she didn't go in any. I really hope #11 is better.

Alex says

Nicely written, but I'm not quite as charmed by the characters as I would need to be to keep going with this series. Knowing that this is the shortest of them does not compel me to want to read the author again. 3.5/5.0

Patricia says

While searching the basement of Bart Nystrom's antique store with his daughter, Erin and her client Catherine Higgins, Doc Osborne unrolls an old carpet and finds a body. The corpse has evidently been hidden in the old carpet for years. The search is for an item belonging to Catherine Higgins and the last thing the group expected to find was a body. Doc immediately puts in a call to Police Chief Lew Harris and the antique store is temporarily closed.

Doc welcomes the chance to call Lew since he is feeling a little uneasy about their relationship. Lew has a class reunion coming up and she hasn't invited Doc. The two have been very close since Doc has worked as Lew's deputy and he is feeling uneasy about the reunion and an old classmate coming to town.

Both the cold case murder and Lew's coming reunion are forced to the back burner when Mason, Lew's granddaughter, has experienced something that has frightened her but she is not talking. Doc is concerned and anxious to find the underlying cause of Mason's problem.

C. J. Calverson has brought an upset Mason home. C. J. found Mason hiding in their garage. The Calverson's have just moved to town. Curt Calverson, C. J.'s husband, is the CEO of Calverson Finance. C. J. is very friendly and invites Doc and Ray Pradt to join the couple on their boat. Curt is anything but friendly. Not only is he rude to the guests but to C. J. as well.

Soon Lew begins to get reports about Calverson Finance and the fact that the company is taking advantage of elderly residents. Doc and Lew are trying to figure out what to do next about the Calverson Finance problem as well as attempting to solve the mystery of the body in the carpet. A local man has just been released from prison and it seems the recent robberies may have some connection to his return to town.

Solving all of the problems currently facing Loon Lake keep Lew and Doc busy and Ray Pradt also lends a hand. Ray is always on hand to help Lew in her investigations and first in line to charm the ladies.

There is a lot going on in this 10th book in the Loon Lake series. Dead Renegade can be read as a stand-alone but each book in the series is well worth reading.

Norma says

Family, money, revenge creates this Loon Lake Mystery. The Schradtke brothers are always hustling for jobs, money and their mother's favor. When Bobby Schradtke is paroled, trouble is all that Lewellyn Ferris, chief of police, can foresee. Not to mention the new Chicago guy who seems to be swindling the local elderly ladies out of their money with some fast talking shady deal. As usual Doc Osborne and Ray Pradt join in the crime solving. Dead Renegade is full of murderous intrigue and fly fishing fun.

Roxann says

This book was very short compared to the others in the series. Lots of little things going on in the story. Everything was ended by the conclusion of the book. The main characters remained strong, but in this book the new characters were not developed. I didn't feel anything when the character C.J. got a double skull fracture. Not Houston's best book.

Bryan says

Wonderful setting (Loon Lake) and characters (Lew, Doc, and Ray). Always fun reads. Short 187 pages, pricey (both new and used), and hard to find locally. I have one more on the shelf, then I'm done .

Eileen Lynx says

This is a wonderful series.

Renee says

I enjoyed the characters, setting & easy-going pace of this cozy mystery. Fun read. (Mild language, no gratuitous descriptions.)

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Julie says

Dr. Osborne, retired dentist, who helps Lew, the Chief of Police, finds a skull buried in an old rug while helping his daughter with something. Meanwhile, he also sees an ex-con back in town that caused lots of problems in earlier years even something that affected one of his daughters. And then...a rich man is found dead.

Always interesting writing and mystery and Loon Lake characters plus a lot about fishing.

Barb Heart says

This was our book clubs monthly choice. We have read her Loon Lake Series before and liked. She was the author of choice to come to speak at the yearly session that is promoted through the art center. I didn't get to meet her -- but I heard she was delightfully funny. Being a Rhinelander native and knowing some of the details of the wisconsin lakes, law, and medicine/pathology makes her a more interesting author to read. Her characters are all the same -- they have a good plot. A Body is usually found - searches for clues -- etc bring in many aspects. This one was okay but for some reason just didn't seem interesting or enjoyable enough.

Annie says

A most excellent 5 star read! I have "set my hook" for this little town and this little series
