



Dead Water

Victoria Houston

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While out kayaking, Paul Osborne discovers the grisly remains of a woman -- whose shoulders bear mysterious bite marks. And just as Lew begins her investigation, another body turns up . . . The second victim was a successful businesswoman from Kansas City, and the evidence indicates she was in Loon Lake for a rendezvous with an ex-lover -- a con man who had tried to get his hands on her money. Now, Lew's got two confusing cases -- and a killer who may be more elusive than any fish . . .

Dead Water Details

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From Reader Review Dead Water for online ebook

IslandRiverScribe says

For once, our main protagonist does not discover the body in this third entry of the Loon Lake series. However, he is just around the bend in the creek when he hears the screams of the woman who has discovered the body. As a part-time deputy for the Loon Lake police department, Paul Osborne secures the scene then rows his kayak back to phone it in.

The situation he relates to Lew Ferris is a grisly one: a young woman is half-nude and tangled upside down in a hedge, having apparently been tossed off an old railroad trestle into the creek. A small bullet hole is in the back of her head, but her face has been blown away as a result of the bullet's exit. Then there are the bite marks on her shoulders, four sets of marks by four distinctly different sets of teeth. Paul also notices that the way her blood has pooled in her body is counter to the position of her body, indicating that she has been killed elsewhere and dumped here.

Before Paul and Lew, the Chief of Police, can finish examining the crime scene and get a CSI team in place, a second body is reported. Again, the victim is a young woman. Again, there is the bullet to the back of the head, the blown-out face, the four bite marks and the inconsistent blood pooling. Apparently, Loon Lake has a serial killer in current residence.

Even without complete facial structures, tentative identification of the bodies comes quickly. The first woman Paul identifies by her dental structure as a former patient of his, Sandy Herre. The second body is identified, based on her clothing, by the owner of a B&B near where the body was found. Ashley Olson has been a guest at that B&B for several days, coming in from Kansas City. Sandy had been a struggling entrepreneur, just getting her accounting service started. Ashley had been an established entrepreneur, owning a highly successful marketing firm and worth millions at her death.

Then a third body shows up, but this one is alive and undamaged, at least not physically. Sixteen-year-old Nick (no last name provided) has just found out that his mother is really his aunt. He has learned that his biological mother, a prominent figure who escaped Loon Lake in her teenage years, does not want him in her life until after she has secured her next husband. And he has just been told that Ray Pradt is his father and that he has to live with Ray for the summer. Coincidentally, Ray Pradt didn't know any of this either.

The final body shows up in the form of Gina Palmer, an investigative reporter from Kansas City and Ashley's best friend. Like Nick, Gina is also alive and kicking and has been expecting something like this to happen to Ashley for several months. It is her intimate knowledge of Ashley's background and recent circumstances that enables Paul and Lew to focus the direction of their investigation into both deaths, even though the victims are seemingly unrelated personally or professionally.

And while we're talking about Gina, you will want to pay attention to her personality, particularly in the scenes where she first encounters Paul and Lew. You might want to pay even closer attention to the way in which she describes her job and the concealed weapon she carries. Because, later in the book, you will witness one of the most realistic transformations I have ever seen an author craft, when Gina's ego and bravado come face to face with another person holding a gun, a person who not only craves the hunt but who lives for the kill.

Unfortunately, the author telegraphs the identity of the killer before Paul and Lew have even finished their

examination of the second murder scene. Any experienced mystery reader, whether their favorite genre is cozy, hardboiled, romantic suspense or detective-based, will be able to spot the tell. It is subtle and not the result of the killer exposing himself or herself through an internal monologue. Since the book is told from Paul's POV, we only know what Paul sees, hears and thinks. And something he observes provides the reader with the identity. Paul is just too inexperienced as an investigator to understand what he has seen.

Therefore, the reader spends 90% of the book watching and waiting while the team puts the clues together and navigates the red herrings thrown in their path. They are good red herrings, too, so the read goes quickly.

After having read the first three books in the Loon Lake series now, I can say one thing about this author's style. Victoria Houston really knows how to craft an exciting, tension-filled denouement. You know the main characters survive because there are seven more books currently in the series, but you are certainly on the proverbial pins and needles wondering how they will be able to do it without the author succumbing to an illogical save. But, in the end, she manages the scene realistically and in keeping with the personalities and skills of the characters involved.

My only real complaint with this book (the early knowledge of the killer's identity could be deliberate on the author's part) is that Victoria Houston seemed to forget her own biography of Ray Pradt. For two books previously, he has been 6 feet 6 inches tall and about 36 years old. In this book, however, she repeatedly – and I do mean repeatedly – reports his height as one inch shorter and he has lost about three years in age.

It's bad enough that the author doesn't remember her own characters or doesn't refresh her memory by re-reading her previous novel before writing the next. But, quite frankly, her editor and her beta readers should have caught the discrepancies immediately. If they are that obvious to the casual reader, they should practically jump out at a professional. And, by the way, Houston has reinvented the wheel with Lew Ferris also, as the physical description of Lew has significantly changed since the first novel.

But, on a good note, before the novel is over, Houston actually steps up the romance between Paul and Lew. The advance wouldn't even rate a 0.5 on the Richter Scale, but it is touching and telling nevertheless. And it also sets the hook for the next book.

Jennifer says

The third book in the Loon Lake Fishing Mystery Series.

This book was a little more predictable than the first two books - but it introduced more characters and I got a sense that Victoria Houston was building a little background for further adventures (aka - books) so it's understandable. This one again features Chief of Police Lew Ferris, retired dentist Paul Osbourne and his fishing friend and good neighbor Ray. It also introduces Gina - an investigative reporter - who I can see adding a lot to this series in the future. As with all small town mysteries - you eventually need to bring in resources from bigger towns. Gina was a good addition.

I have read several of these books while at a cabin in Northern Wisconsin - and later in Minnesota. They are the perfect book to read in that setting.

Elizabeth says

The 3rd book in the Loon Lake Mystery series has chief of police Lew Ferris with a double murder on her hands. The two dead women seem to have no connection but do they? Both have identical bite marks on their shoulders. She again finds herself deputizing retired dentist Paul Osborne and his neighbor, fishing guide Ray Pradt in order to get the cases solved. They manage to get some fishing in during the evenings, this time it's the elusive muskies they are fishing.

I don't fish but I find it interesting how this series, in addition to having a good mystery in each book, provides a lot of information about fishing. I've spent plenty of time in a boat or canoe with my now ex-husband while he musky fishes, too bad I didn't know some of the tips in this book back then.

Helen says

Another excellent read from a good author, although I may have to downgrade it to 3 1/2 stars as I worked out who the villain was fairly early in the story. The back story was good as were the newly introduced characters.

Eileen Lynx says

Reads like a beautiful travelogue with a fun mystery attached.

Gerri R. says

Best in the series so far. Getting to like the characters a whole lot!

Janell says

The premise for this mystery was definitely intriguing, however, the murderer was glaringly obvious *really* early on. Made the main characters seem a little dense for taking so long to pick up on the clues, and since they're portrayed as being very intelligent, that made it feel a little unbelievable. I really enjoy this series, however. The mysteries are interesting but are light enough to avoid that gruesome thriller genre. Plus, the main characters are quite appealing. And no cooking or needlework, which is nice for a change. :-)

Chuck says

Another good Northwoods mystery, on to #4

Annie says

A most excellent 5 star read! still loving the series and the people of Loon Lake

Jodi says

This is the third in the Chief Lewellyn Ferris series set in fictional Loon Lake, Wisconsin near Rhinelander. Lew loves to fly fish and has developed a relationship with retired dentist Doc Osborne who she often deputizes along with Ray Pradt (a hunting and fishing guide, grave digger and neighbor to Doc Osborne who wears a large stuffed trout on his hat) to help on cases. In this case, the bodies of two women are found within hours of each other, seemingly not connected in that one is a local and the other from Missouri, yet they have the same bite marks on their shoulders and both were shot. These stories are wonderful for their setting and characters. It is simply a pleasure to spend time with them. In this outing, MILD SPOILER...

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SPOILER

SPOILER

the murderer is rather predictable.

Julie says

Another great Loon Lake mystery. Dr. Paul Osborne--retired dentist--is out kayaking and runs into a woman paddling out with her son who tells him she saw some horrific remains. He investigates then goes to find Lew--the police chief. Pretty soon after, another body is found who turns out to be of a woman who was searching for a con man she had been engaged to.

Everytime I want a relaxing and enjoyable mystery, I read one of these. I know that the mystery will be good, but also that the small town feel will come through and I love the characters--especially Chief Lewellyn, Dr. Osborne and Ray. In this one, we also meet Gina--someone who will appear in later novels from time to time.

the novel is told from Dr. Osborne's point of view. There are a few times when his thoughts about Lew (a woman) go a bit far in description, but not as openly as other books.

Joan says

Another good book in an interesting series. It surprises me that I enjoy books that are so heavy on fishing, but the Loon Lake series always has an interesting plot and are an entertaining departure from the usual cozy mystery.

In this book, Ray has a teenager dropped on him that he is told is his son.

Gina is a journalist who came north to find the man she is convinced has killed her friend. She falls fast and hard for the area, and possibly for Ray. She purchases a run down cottage on Loon Lake.

Renee says

Poignant entry in the series. Another enjoyable visit to Loon Lake.

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Marie (UK) says

It was Ok but nothing exceptional. An easy read with a believable plot and characters

Norma says

Dead Water is a fun easy read. I figured out the murderer early on, but the path to solving the murder kept me reading. Born and raised in the northwoods of Wisconsin, Victoria Houston has the ability to weave colorful real life scenarios into a murder plot. The fictional Loon Lake is the perfect setting and you can almost feel the fishing pole in your hands. Dead Water is one of many in the Loon Lake murder mysteries and I will be reading more.
