



## Broken Dishes

*Earlene Fowler*

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## **Broken Dishes** Earlene Fowler

Benni's friend and her husband have opened a dude ranch that's about to go belly-up. So Benni helps out, tempting vacationers with a Western extravagnza. Soon, she's cooking and quilting with a slew of tenderfoots. But the fun truns sour when a dog finds a human bone on the property and Benni uncovers the remains of a man murdered outlawstyle.

## **Broken Dishes Details**

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Author : Earlene Fowler

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## From Reader Review Broken Dishes for online ebook

### Kieraanne says

I think I liked this book better the second time around. The mystery is pretty tame with no immediate danger to anyone (well aside from the fire I guess) and we get to see Hud again which was nice. I liked seeing him and Gabe butt heads at the dinner table. I really liked the ending when Benni imagines what could have happened had she met Hud first... This is also the first book after their marriage where Benni and Gabe don't do it...at all...for the entire book. In fact I think there are only two kisses that happen and that was it. Does this mean they're getting to be a boring old married couple that they didn't sneak off somewhere for a quickie at some point? I did like how Gabe came to the ranch the very next day after hearing Hud was there. I also think Benni must take that old axiom "idle hands are the devil's playthings" to heart. She is ALWAYS busy. She wasn't busy enough helping and trying to solve an old murder but she also had to volunteer quite unsolicited to make a scrap book for the ranch? I mean that's very nice, but does she ever just relax? Again this makes me picture how completely different her life would be if she were able to have children. Maybe she's trying to find something to fill the void? As a mother myself I know I wouldn't have time to do even a quarter of the things she does, committees, festivals, quilting groups, volunteer organizations, plus crime fighting on top of all that.

I really love these books. I think I like them even better reading them back to back now then waiting the year or more in between novels when I first read them. They have the mystery of the murder or whatever is happening, the ever changing and growing romance between Benni and her husband, her interaction with family and friends and her ever present faith in God. I like the religious overtones of the novels, whereas that often annoys me in other books I've read. These were written in such a way that the scripture and reference to prayer and sermons learned in Sunday school fits right into the story without sounding too preachy. Of course I go to Sunday school and pray too, so maybe that's just me.

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### Judy says

Book Flap Synopsis: When Benni Harper's friend passes away, he leaves his Broken DIS ranch to his daughter Shawna and her husband. Instead of raising cattle, the couple decides to turn it into a dude ranch. And while their intentions maybe good, business is not. Leave it to Benni and her family to come to the rescue. Her plan? To tempt vacationers with a quilting and western extravaganza. It works. And soon, Benni and her family are cooking, quilting and horseback riding with a whole slew of western tenderfoots.

Mu thought:

As the story continues, things go from running smoothly to down right scary. One of the ranch dogs finds a human bone on the property, there is a rumor that one of the guests is a nationally know travel writer secretly working on a review, and Benni's old nemesis, Detective Ford "Hud" Hudson is on board. Every once in a while I stop during these stories and say to my self, "really Earlene?". But I continue to read on. The stories are interesting enough to keep my attention, and although Ms Fowler plants all the clues, I rarely figure out "who done it!".

I am reading to finish this whole series. There are 15 in all, and this one is number 11.

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### **Ann says**

I like the Benni Harper series of book with a quilting theme. In this installment, Benni is helping her friend Shawna get her new dude ranch up and running. Shawna and her husband, Johnny, have taken over the ranch after the death of Shawna's father. To get the place running, Benni has scheduled a quilting symposium with a nationally-famous quilter, Victory Simpson, as one of the highlighted speakers. Word soon arrives that a travel columnist is among the guests but no one knows who she or he is. Very shortly, bones are discovered along the riding trail and the mystery begins. Benni is a nosy person but she is kind of lovable. She is pitted against her old nemesis, Hud Ford, the closest detective to the scene. She needs to find out who the body belongs to, who put it there, who is trying to wreck the event, all before the guests start leaving in droves. The mystery is well written and, while you knew the basics, the answers were hidden pretty well. Good book.

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### **Michele says**

This is a great series...each book keeps the characters fresh and the plots interesting. This one takes place outside of San Celinas, Dove, Isaac, Sam, Elvia and Emory are secondary characters. Scout isn't even a major part of the story. He stays home with Benni's dad. With the different location, new characters fit right in...and the main characters to the series have just enough "plot time" to keep the whole story relevant.

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### **Donna says**

Bennie's friends have opened a dude ranch to save their farm from going under. During a two week "quilting vacation", a human bone is discovered. A thirty year murder is uncovered as well as a mystery in the ranchers' past.

Gabe's son is working the ranch. Hud returns to help solve the crime. Of course, Bennie and Gabe lock horns.

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### **Kitty Tomlinson says**

While visiting a friend's Western dude ranch, Benni Harper stumbles upon the remains of a long-dead murder victim buried in a shallow grave and embarks on an investigation to reveal the truth behind the terrible crime.

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### **Sue says**

I became interested in this cozy mystery series because the titles are all based on quilt blocks which are

featured on the covers and their history is explained in opening comments. But quilting is really incidental in this series, which I've come to appreciate for its emphasis on relationships and faith. Benni is always displaying quilts at the museum or finding quilts which have some connection to the investigation, but other than chatting it up with the quilters in the artists' co-op at her museum, she's rarely involved with quilting herself. This book doesn't have her quilting, but there's more quilt stuff in this installment. She goes out to her friend's ranch for two weeks to help put on a quilting retreat in their effort to turn their ranch into a guest ranch with programs. She brings all her friends and relatives to help so they are there when she discovers some decades-old bones buried on the ranch during a trail ride she is leading for the guests. An investigation ensues into the old murder and there are some complications between her and Detective Hudson that drive her husband, Gabe, crazy. There are also comic moments with her crazy cousin, Rita, who is not a cooperative server at mealtimes, and a group of four rich cousins from Georgia who are guests at the ranch. This is another solid mystery tale with these interesting characters.

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### **Judy says**

Amateur sleuth Benni Harper is at it again in this 11th installment in her cozy mystery series. Benni comes to the aid of her friends, Shawna and Johnny Abbott, who are trying to save their financially-troubled guest ranch from the auction block. With the help of Benni and her family and friends, the Abbotts plan a quilt retreat to draw guests to the ranch. While Benni is taking a group of guests on a trail ride, one of the ranch dogs recovers a human bone from an unmarked grave that has been disturbed. This draws the San Celina Sheriff's Department and Benni's old rival, Detective Ford Hudson, into the investigation.

I love this series and look forward to reading the next book.

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### **Emily Cullen says**

Cow-girl Benni Harper goes to the opening of a dude ranch to help her friends but she finds more than cow pies when bones in a shallow grave are unearthed. How old are these bones and who was there owner? Benni helps law enforcement find the answers. I really love the "Benni Harper" cozy mystery series. Great stories and characters plus an interesting developing love triangle!

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### **Kevin Kern says**

Benni is getting smarter about her involvement in incidents; this time it is Sheriff deputy Hud investigating. Gabe is extremely jealous, which lends some more depth to the whole story. Quilts, ranching, horse and a crazy goose all are part of the story.

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### **Carol says**

One of my favorite books is Sarah's Quilt. and this book reminded me in many ways of the charm and joy and trials of that book. Fowler is a very good writer, and I think this is my first or second read of hers. She has adorable character development, and I found myself liking all the people I read about. A good author

does a good job of writing in the bad guys too, as there are a couple of them too. They are doing their best to keep the Broken Dish Ranch afloat, and come across some "skeletons" in the closet, pardon the pun, and how they work through them. Definitely a good read!!! We've heard the expression "don't judge a book by its cover, well I did. It sounded cute and sounded good---I liked the title. I've read a lot of quilting books, so was very surprised when I found this was one. RECOMMEND!!!

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## September says

I am a huge Benni Harper fan. I love these books, and this one was no exception. Throughout the book, as the story was woven, I kept thinking I knew exactly who did what, only to find out I was off base. A quick but enjoyable read.

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## Johnny says

Mysteries with female protagonists who are ostensibly interested in other things (Amish culture, antiques, books, cats, cooking, gardening, or quilts—among others) are often called “cozy mysteries.” The publishers print them primarily to appeal to female readers, but in a reversal of the old soap advertisement about deodorant soap for me where the woman says, “Aye, but I like it, too,” I like them, too. They usually are fast reads and they usually reflect more human emotion. Of course, I do get tired of the male “authority” figures ordering the protagonists to stay out of each mystery because it’s dangerous.

*Broken Dishes*, one of the Benni Harper quilting mysteries, is named after a quilting pattern—one of the simpler patterns in the quilting repertoire. But if you think the simple pattern creates a simple mystery, you’re roping the wrong steer (these stories deal with ranching issues on the Central Coast of California, as well as quilting folklore and tips). One cliché in the sub-genre that I enjoy is the inevitable negative reaction cast toward the protagonist when she finds the body or bodies. The suspicious implication is often that the protagonist has deliberately found the body to upset someone or some powerful group within the community. In this case, Ms. Harper would have preferred to find nothing of the sort; it is directly inconvenient and frustrating for the very people she starts out to help. She can’t help it if a ranch dog digs up a human bone and she has no idea how long it’s been there.

The unraveling of the identity of the body and its relationship to the suspects (even those who might be dead) is rather intriguing, but it is not the most criminal activity that takes place within the pages. As a reader, one mightn’t even expect that incident to occur. Ever hear of a senseless crime? This one is definitely such a crime and the motivation for it rather saddens the reader. And even the background story on the discovered body is heartbreaking when the motive is revealed. There are some dark patterns here which don’t quite fit the quilting cozy sub-genre. For me, this reflects a maturation in the style and the series. And it was ideal reading on a train. It would only have been better to have been on California’s Coast Starlight when I was reading it.

Also, I’d like to offer a kudo for the addition of some very interesting female characters (and a recurring male character or two) in this book. The idea of turning a working ranch into a B&B-style “Guest Ranch” provided numerous opportunities for extra suspects and characteristics. Some of the women have strong personalities, at least one is a victim, and others appear to be shallow, but have an unexpected depth. This quality also added to my satisfaction in *Broken Dishes*.

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## **Lisa says**

I love this series, but there are quite a few editorial problems or choices that should have been corrected, from misplaced commas and modifiers to ungrammatical speech (usually) or other text that makes me wonder if the author or her editor thought, "This isn't standard English, but it's the way people talk." I'm not referring to colloquialisms or the like, but to actual errors, like noun-verb disagreements and dangling participles. Whether some people talk this way or not, it just doesn't work for me in print--it's distracting and makes the characters, author, or editor sound ignorant. As an editor, I plead for authors and editors not to dumb things down, whatever the reason. Assuming they know better. Sigh. On the other hand, Fowler uses Southernisms ("come over here and hug my neck" brings back fond memories) in a manner that warms my Texan heart. If she includes "all hat and no cowboy" in a future installment, I may forgive some tortuous grammar--but only some.

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## **Toni says**

Years ago, I read the first book in the Benni Harper Mystery series by Earlene Fowler. I remember thinking it was a good book and could be an entertaining series to read but there are so many other books that I never got back to the books. Seeing that this book was number 11 in the Benni Harper series, I'm pretty sure it was in a care package from my Grandma. It had been on my bookshelves for a while and when needing something quick to read, I thought this just might be the book that would fit the bill. After the second chapter, I was hooked and then enter Detective Ford Hudson. I loved the tension that was between Benni & Hud. Since this is the 11th book in the Benni Harper series, looks like I will be buying or checking out books 2 – 10 and catching up on Benni, Dove and Hud. I'm really looking forward to the looks with Hud and seeing the first interaction between Benni & Hud.

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