



CAROLYN HAINES

Ham Bones

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Carolyn Haines's Southern Belle mysteries kick sleuthing up a notch with Sarah Booth Delaney, the sassiest heroine this side of the Mississippi. . .

Displaced from its New Orleans venue, a red-hot touring production of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is opening right in the heart of Zinnia, and featuring hunky star Graf Mileau! Sarah Booth, who had her own brief stint with Mileau himself, is less than thrilled. Graf is now linked with his costar, Renata Troviola, a dyed-in-the-wool diva who plans to ride Graf's coattails all the way to Hollywood. But Renata's trip to the top comes to a screeching halt on the play's second night when someone laces her lipstick with cyanide.

It seems Renata was stirring up plenty of drama behind the scenes, making enemies galore: her long-suffering makeup artist, an extremely harsh critic, an angry audience member. . . even boy toy Graf had a motive. But the most damning evidence points to Sarah. Now, to save her reputation, Sarah reckons she'll have to bring the curtain down on a mystery with more twists and turns than the Old Muddy. . .

Ham Bones Details

Date : Published June 1st 2008 by Kensington Books (first published July 2007)

ISBN :

Author : Carolyn Haines

Format : Kindle Edition 305 pages

Genre : Mystery, Cozy Mystery, Fiction

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From Reader Review Ham Bones for online ebook

Kris Meyer says

#7 in series of a delta area private investigator, and the shenanigans she gets embroiled in while solving murder mysteries. Hilarious cast of characters

Susan Corey says

I like this series. It is not nail biting but the stories are good and they are fun mysteries.

Mary says

New Chapter for Sarah Booth Delaney

In this book we find out more about Sarah's past life in New York and her desire to make it as an actress. When some of her former cast members come to Zinna, Sarah finds herself in the middle of the investigation as the primary suspect.

Candace says

Sarah Booth Delaney this time is understudy in her own home town of Zinnia, MS for Renata Travaioli just as she was in New York. But unlike NY, Sarah Booth goes on because Renata has been murdered. But Sarah Booth has been charged with murder and now she and Tinkie have to solve the murder to clear her name.

I have read another of Sarah Booth's adventures and I am coming to enjoy all the characters who live in Zinnia.

Yvonne Ramirez says

Loving this book!!! Her characters should be in a series or a movie. They are funny, warm, adventurous and witty!!! Carolyn Haines is one of my favorites!!!

I just finished this book. I have never, ever cried over a book. This was great. I love these characters and the way they are so real. The twist at the end is worth it and even though you want it to end a certain way, it keeps your heart pumping and you waiting for another book!!!!

Again, I could not put the book down!!

Karyn Niedert says

I won't go into detail about this book other than to say that the relationship between Sarah Booth and Coleman, which was starting to wear thin in the last book, reached eipc heights of "give me a break" in this segment of the book series. The first three or four books had me utterly charmed by Sarah Booth and her independance. The ties to her past, and the losses she suffered were something I could relate to. "Ham Bones", which is book #7 in the series, has me wanting to see more growth. Tinkie has grown and developed, the other characters have evolved. Although the past couple books have made mention of how Sarah Booth has grown, I don't really see it happening. Just saying a person has changed doesn't necessarily make it so. Other than riskier choices being made while detecting, I don't see a great deal of motion within the main character. It might just be me, but she also seems to be getting whinier. I'm taking a brief break from Ms. Haines, and will attempt book #8 shortly. If it is as mired in self-pity and poor choices as this book was, I'm going to have to call it quits.

DJ says

terrible

Sara says

Enjoy this series, but figured out the ending far too early to rate this higher than a 2 star.

Jennifer says

Small town Mississippi resident and aspiring actress, private investigator Sarah Booth Delaney, has been charged with murder by no other than her would be boyfriend, Sheriff Coleman Peters, which has put quite a damper on their relationship. Sarah's got a good group of close friends to see her through this, though, especially her best friend and investigative partner, Tinkie, and they have no plans to let Sarah be sent off to jail.

This book contains a good mix of humor, heartache and mystery with a good cast of characters.

Jan says

Sarah Booth Delaney has a chance to live out her dream of stardom when a road show of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" gets diverted to her hometown Zinnia following a hurricane that destroyed the original venue. Sarah Booth gets reacquainted with old flame, leading man Graf and leading lady, Renata. Sarah Booth had understudied Renata in New York so it was only natural that she is asked to do the same for this production. She is not too concerned, everyone knows Renata would rather die than miss a performance. Which is exactly what she does, die. Now Sarah Booth is the leading lady and the leading suspect in the murder.

I have really enjoyed this series, but this outing takes on a definitely darker tone. Of course it is a first person narrative and Sarah Booth is a suspect for murder, but she has definitely lost some of her humor and optimism in this book. I found myself wanting to give her a good shake.

All and all, pretty good with an interesting ending.

Emily Von pfahl says

Highly disappointing. The main character, Sarah Booth, has always been a bit of a drag, moping and worrying, but with each book she seemed to get a bit better. However, her attitude was practically unbearable in this installment. Spoiled, selfish, whiny, bitter, and needlessly repetitive in her lamentations. Additionally, having Coleman continue to stay with his manipulative bitch of a wife was a disgusting affront to both common sense and self preservation. It ceases to be nobility and just becomes tired masochism.

All of these things might have been easier to overlook (but not much because really, I ceased caring about the characters around page forty) if the mystery had been solid. But it wasn't. I had it figured out way before it was solved in the book, just not the exact detail of which dread disease. All in all a very sorry effort from a series that I had been enjoying.

Patty says

I love this series! Don't judge the book by its cover. This series is full of mystery, emotion, and humor.

Tori says

It's a good thing this wasn't the first book in the series because it made me dislike Sarah Booth quite intensely. I've thought since the beginning that she acts a bit like a 16 year old when it comes to men, but we're supposed to believe she gives up Coleman so soon after the thing with Hamilton? I'm not even sure I want to read the next book in the series.

Dorothy says

Feeling the urge for some popcorn for the brain - or, since it is summer, perhaps a shaved ice for the brain - I turned to one of Carolyn Haines' Southern Belle Mysteries. This is the seventh one in the series. I had read the other six and found some of them diverting and others less so. There was at least a fifty percent chance that this one would entertain me.

I don't give up on books. If I choose to start reading one, I'm going to finish it, even if I don't like it. Many, maybe most, readers can't really understand this, feeling that life is too short to waste any of it on a bad book, and they have no hesitation in tossing one aside if it doesn't appeal to them. But I have this sense that I've made a contract with the writer by picking up his/her book and I need to fulfill my contract.

All that being said, I came about as close as I have in recent memory to giving up on a book after about fifty

pages of *Ham Bones*. Although it didn't get any better after that, sadly, but true to my philosophy, I persevered. Those are hours of my life that I will never get back.

So, what was wrong with the book? Well, the plot was implausible and the characters unbelievable. Moreover, the main character, who in the earlier books exhibited a kind of quirky charm, has become whiny and bitter, constantly complaining about her state in life, although most people would probably consider her state in life to be pretty privileged. After all, she is the owner of her ancestral estate, partner in an at least semi-successful private investigation business, and surrounded by scores of friends, who, for no good reason that I can see, think she is wonderful. She just comes off as spoiled and self-centered, not someone the reader can readily root for.

As for the writing, perhaps the less said the better. It is slapdash and careless at best. One example may suffice.

Early in the book, our heroine, Sarah Booth Delaney (who is always referred to as Sarah Booth, never just Sarah) is sent on an errand from her Mississippi Delta hometown of Zinnia to Memphis. As she starts home again, we get this sentence:

As I crossed the mighty Mississippi, my cell phone rang.

Carolyn Haines grew up in Mississippi, as indeed I did, and she now lives in Alabama, so she must surely be aware that Memphis and Mississippi are on the *same side* of the river. One would not cross the "mighty Mississippi" to go home again from Memphis.

And that pretty much exemplifies the quality of the writing.

The plot, briefly, is this: A Broadway touring company comes to Zinnia to do a week-long run of performances of Tennessee Williams' *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. The company just happens to comprise a number of actors whom Sarah Booth had worked with during her brief stint of trying to make it as an actress in New York. One of them is her former lover. Another is a woman who hated her. Sarah Booth is drafted to be an understudy to the star of the show (the woman who hates her) and in the middle of their first performance, the star is found lying dead on her dressing room floor. Turns out she was poisoned.

But the show must go on and it does, with Sarah Booth in the role. She is a great success, winning rave reviews and no one is the least bit sorry that a woman is dead, because everybody disliked her.

There is the little matter that the woman appears to have been murdered and the person who seems to have gained most from her death is Sarah Booth. Soon the county sheriff who loves her and who she loves is knocking on the door of the old plantation home to arrest Sarah Booth for murder.

Accck!!! I can't go on. Suffice to say that it all works out in the end and it is crystal clear long before the end just what had happened. No real mystery here. Except the mystery of why I read this book all the way to the end.

I have one more book in this series, #8, in my reading queue and, at some point, when the bad taste of this experience has dissipated, I'll probably read it. But unless the quality of it dramatically improves, it will be my last experience with the Southern Belle series.

Janet says

I'd actually give this two and a half stars. I didn't like it that much-I guess if you haven't read reality-based crime thrillers, this book would be good, but I found it hard to believe that Sarah Booth could get away with leaving the county after being told to stay inside the county limits or lose her bail, for one thing, and for another, that she, as the chief suspect, could get away with talking to witnesses. I guess Sunflower County doesn't have a prosecutor, since if they did, Sarah Booth would be cooling her heels in jail for most of the book.

I can see why some reviewers think that Sarah Booth is self-centered; I got that impression too, I couldn't decide whether she's driven by self-preservation because she has no family or husband to have her back and has to rely on friends-good friends, yes, but Sarah Booth has pride like anyone else, and I can see where she'd prefer to run down her own answers rather than sit around twiddling her thumbs while other people hunt down the answers. As far as her relationship with Coleman, I think she didn't treat him fairly regarding his arresting her for the murder-she must have known that he had to do it. His reasons at the end of the book make sense, but I guess she was too hurt to accept it right away. I can't really blame her for her confused feelings since he runs back and forth to his (soon to be) ex-wife's side. Anyway, this wasn't the best one I've read so far but it wasn't so bad I wanted to throw the book across the room.
