

V.M. BURNS

First in a
new series!



In The **DOG**
HOUSE

 A Dog Club Mystery 

In the Dog House

V.M. Burns

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A killer wants Lilly Echosby to roll over and play dead . . .

Lilly may be losing a husband but she's gaining a toy poodle. That could be seen as a win-win, since her new adopted pooch Aggie (named after Agatha Christie) is cute and adorable, and Lilly's dirty dog of a spouse is cheating on her with a blond bimbo—except for one problem: Albert Echosby's just been murdered, and Lilly is the number-one suspect.

With the cops barking up the wrong tree, it's a good thing her best friend Scarlett "Dixie" Jefferson from Chattanooga, Tennessee, decided to take a break from the dog club circuit to pay a visit, along with her own prize pair of poodles. With help from Dixie, her defense attorney daughter, and a blue-eyed man in blue with a K-9 partner, Lilly is determined to collar the real killer. But when a second murder occurs, it's clear they're dealing with one sick puppy . . .

In the Dog House Details

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From Reader Review In the Dog House for online ebook

Linda says

I love cozies, poodles, and strong, capable female characters, so I definitely loved this debut book! Protagonist, Lilly Anne's hubby of 25 years is divorcing her, and their daughter, Stephanie, is her lawyer while Albert lawyers up with high-powered attorney, Charles Nelson. Let the fun begin! Lilly's longtime friend, Dixie (Scarlett Johnson), arrives to visit with 3 poodles along. One is a black toy poodle, Aggie, who absolutely stole my heart and Lilly Anne's, too! Now, these two girl friends are going to have fun together and the dogs are going to help them! Before you can say 'woof!', however, somebody offs Albert! The books at the car dealership they owned look suspicious. Lilly Anne can't believe Albert was so stupid and left her such a mess to decipher.

Humor scenes galore kept me giggling throughout this entertaining storyline. The poor old man in the wheelchair—bless his heart—I loved his connection to Lilly Anne. I really liked Officer Joe and his K-9 dog, Turbo. Reading this new cozy mystery was a treat! I look forward to the next book in the Dog Club series.

I reviewed an arc provided by NetGalley and Kensington Lyrical. Thank you.

Barbara Tobey says

Loved it! A delightfully amusing read. Dogs, Italians, Southern sass, divorce, death, romance, scones, bimbo, and so much more. I am eager to read more of Lilly's adventures. Dixie and the dogs are sure to add to the fun. The publisher provided a copy via NetGalley.

Mary Brown says

In The Dog House
Dog Club Mystery, Book #1
V.M. Burns
5+ Stars

Synopsis:

Recently divorced Lilly Echosby finds a community of new friends at a Tennessee dog club, never guessing she'd be groomed to solve a murder close to home . . .

Sure, Lilly Echosby's husband dumped her after thirty years of marriage, but there's an upside, too. She's recharging her CPA career, trading brutal Michigan winters for the sunny south, and best of all, she can finally get a puppy. Enrolling her new toy poodle, Agatha Christie, at the Eastern Tennessee Dog Club also comes with a new best friend: club trainer and southern belle, Scarlet "Dixie" Jefferson. Unfortunately, not everything in Lilly's life is quite so cuddly. Her neighbor, Bradley Hurston, is a cantankerous, growling, poodle-hating blowhard. For Lilly, snapping back at him in public wasn't exactly the best revenge. The next

day Bradley is murdered in the community pool and Lilly becomes number one suspect. Now the fur is really going to fly . . .

On the scent to find the real culprit, Lilly and Dixie discover that Bradley's bad-neighbor policy was blocks long. So is the list of suspects. But is aggressive behavior a motive to kill? Lilly and Dixie think there's more to Bradley's past. Something more sinister. And they have every reason to fear that Bradley won't be the last in the community to be put down. (Goodreads)

Review:

This is the first book in the Dog Club Mystery series and I thought it was excellent. The characters were great, the mystery was well plotted and there was a lot of humor in this book.

The characters are well developed and well rounded. Lilly is a smart, strong caring woman who was betrayed by her husband in the worse way. She is a mom with two grown children with whom she is very close to. And she has an old friend named Dixie that she is excited to reconnect with. So when her husband is killed and she is the prime suspect, she has friends and family standing beside her. She knows she has to find the real killer before she is put away for life.

I really liked the fact that Lilly was an older protagonist with a family. I also liked the fact that she did not stumble upon a dead body like in so many of the cozies that I read. Another thing that I liked was the fact that Lilly did not have any type of love connection with the detective working on the case. I thought all of these things gave this cozy a unique perspective.

The writing style flows smoothly and defined the characters very clearly by their actions and words. It was a quick easy book to read and kept me swiping pages as fast as I could. Her descriptive writing pulled me into the story right from the start and took me on a wonderful journey. And there was plenty of humor that kept me laughing throughout the book.

The mystery was well plotted and fast paced. There were enough suspects to consider and clues to sift through and was not easy to solve, which is how I like my mysteries.

I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoys a well crafted cozy. This is the first book in this series and I cannot wait to read the next book. And I am going to have to check out this authors other series, she is very good at her craft.

I voluntarily reviewed an ARC of this book provided by the publisher, Kensington Books, and NetGalley, which I greatly appreciate.

Karen says

I was pleasantly surprised by this book. I was not expecting to enjoy it as I felt the whole premise had been done to death (no pun intended).

However, I found the characters entertaining and the whodunit was top notch.

I would certainly read the next in the series.

I voluntarily reviewed an advance reader copy of the book.

JoAn says

In the Dog House by V.M. Burns was a great beginning to a new series (I hope). I've enjoyed her Mystery Bookshop series; and I couldn't pass up the opportunity to read this new series.

Lilly Echosby and Dixie Jefferson are best friends and women who I would love to know in person. Ms. Burns' descriptive writing painted a clear picture for me of Lilly, her daughter and son, Dixie and Lilly's ex-husband and his family. As in her other series, Ms. Burns included dogs, 3 poodles who stole each scene when they appeared. The plot moved swiftly with twists and red herrings that kept me turning the pages to find out more. I confess that I did have an inkling of who the culprits might be before the reveal; but I was greatly surprised by how much more was involved than just murder. A well-crafted mystery that kept me totally intrigued until the last page. I want the next one in this series now!

I voluntarily reviewed an Advance Reader Copy of this book from Lyrical Underground via NetGalley. All of the above opinions are my own.

Kathy says

Really a cute cozy that had me giggling out loud which was fine at home but people thought it was odd on the bus:)

This involves some of your normal cozy things, a cheating husband with a dancer named Bambi Love no less, and a divorce. It also has that handsome blue-eyed, necessary in a cozy type of cop for someone to fall in love with. He has a canine companion named Turbo that you'll fall in love with. There are gorgeous poodles brought to visit by Lily's best friend Dixie and a teensy mini rescue poodle for Lily to cuddle. What better to cuddle than a sweet little puppy when you have a cheating husband. While Lily might be smart about dogs, she is a pushover about husbands and agrees to give a birthday party for the cheater husband's grandmother. The cheater tells his family Lily is a lesbian because he needs a reason to have Bambi at the party of course. This all leads up to exactly what you're thinking. It's the cheater that gets murdered. Seems like V.M. Burns sure picked the most deserving person for her murder. I mean you have to have a murder in a cozy, don't you?

To be perfectly honest, if you are a fan of Berenson's Melanie Travis series, I think the beginning of this book will seem as if that's what you are reading. Lily's best friend brings her standard-sized poodles and is full of talk about showing them at dog shows. However, as it turned out it was a very different storyline and Burns gives her characters their own unique personalities. In fact, Burns made her characters real, funny, and enjoyable. Even the bad guys or girls were entertaining.

This is Book 1 in a series titled "Dog Club Mystery". It's a great one and I'm anxious for Book 2. However, Burns has two other series and they have great reviews as well. Check them out.

***This book was provided to me free of charge by NetGalley and all opinions are definitely my own.

Jeanie says

This LOL cozy mystery is first in the new Dog Club Mystery series. It is outrageously funny and well-written, and I can almost see the author thinking “what else can possibly happen to Lilly this week?” The characters, in particular Lilly and her Dolly-Parton-haired friend Dixie, are designed for maximum impact. We get a tiny glimpse into the world of dog competitions. Underneath it all is the pervasive murder mystery awaiting resolution, so Lilly won’t have to find out if a well-bred Catholic girl can survive in prison.

Lilly’s divorce from the man whose business she helped build in the early years of their marriage is almost complete. Albert has taken up with a sweet young thing who is younger than their children. Bambi’s assets are there for all to see, especially when he has the audacity to bring her to his and Lilly’s home for the 95th birthday party of his grandmother. Almost as irritating is that he told his family that Lilly is gay...that Dixie, the college friend she recently reconnected with is her partner. (NOT!) Lilly’s plan to pack up and move to Tennessee near Dixie, while made in less time than one can learn to spell Chattanooga, is a sound one. Both of her children are grown and living away from home. Their daughter is a very successful attorney and their son a highly acclaimed stage actor.

The morning after the birthday party, the police come to advise Lilly that Albert is dead, shot when confronting a would-be thief in his and Bambi’s apartment. While Lilly doesn’t care a lot about what Albert does any more, she does care that he was murdered, and makes the funeral arrangements for the family. Bimbo...um...Bambi keeps calling with stuff like she needs money and she was shut out of Albert’s bank account. The corvette Albert gave her was stolen, and did Lilly take it.

Things only go downhill from there. For several reasons, including that she would inherit the car dealership and Albert was found to have \$1 million stashed in an offshore account, Lilly is accused of his murder. Before she has to find out how to pack for prison, she and Dixie team up for a slightly older version of Nancy Drew. Lilly’s son and daughter get in on the action, as well as Dixie’s elegant, well-trained standard poodles and Lilly’s new toy poodle, Aggie.

Lilly is a fabulous new protagonist in the cozy mystery world! She has a wicked sense of humor evidenced throughout. I felt as if I got to know her well over the course of the novel. Other characters are as well-defined as fitting their roles, most are 3-D in HD color. I like Lilly and Dixie best, and am happy these college roommates have been able to reconnect.

This cozy mystery has almost everything I love in the genre. It drew me in from the first page, the first sentence. It is at times serious, such as when Lilly is going to be arrested. There is also a great deal of humor, necessary to survive a really nasty divorce and murder allegations. The characters are unique, and there are pets that contribute to the story. The murder is complex, a challenge to solve. I was only partially right in picking the killer, completely missing the motives. There are several plot twists as well as a second murder and a couple red herrings that kept me turning pages. The ending brought some surprises, and all loose ends were tied up. I highly recommend this fun-tastic new series!

From a grateful heart: I won a copy of this through a Goodreads First contest and was not required to post a review.

Betty says

The first book of a new series. I found a well-written plot that is funny at times. The MC's are developed. The descriptions of the are good.

Lilly Echosby is angry and upset after husband, Albert told Lilly that he wanted a divorce. He planned to marry his girlfriend. Lilly's friend Dixie Jefferson is visiting from Tennessee. Dixie had been to a dog show. She brought her poodles with her and a rescue poodle who needs a home. Lilly named the poodle Aggie. That night her husband is MURDER in an apparent robbery. The police decided Lilly is the main suspect. In order to clear herself. Dixie and Lilly become involved in the investigation. Was Albert's murder an accident? Why did Albert send a new will to Lilly? What is going at the auto dealership? I am looking forward to the next book. I highly recommend this book.

Disclosure: Many thanks to Kensington Books for a review copy. The opinions expressed are my own.

RO G'ma says

In the Dog House is the first book in V.M. Burns' A Dog Club Mystery series. The storyline is well plotted and the well-developed characters are affable. The story flows at a steady pace, with humorous moments, and an interesting mystery with enough twists and red herrings to keep the reader engaged and guessing. I'm looking forward to reading the next book in this series.

Lilly and Albert Echosby have been married for twenty-five years and have two adult children, Stephanie (a lawyer) and David (an actor), but Albert cheated on Lilly and they're getting a divorce. After an unsettling meeting with her soon to be ex-husband and his young stripper girlfriend, Bambi Love, in their daughter's Chicago law office, Lilly took the train back to their home in Lighthouse Dunes, Indiana. While on the train, she met Miss Florrie, who listened to her problems and gave her sage advice. Following Miss Florrie's advice, Lilly decides to find her happy place and contacts her friend and college roommate, Scarlet "Dixie" Jefferson, who lives in Chattanooga, Tennessee. They reconnect, Lilly falls in love with a toy poodle rescue Dixie had with her along with her two champion standard poodles, and Lilly starts planning to move to Chattanooga. Lilly reluctantly agrees to host a birthday party for Albert's grandmother, he brings Bambi, tells his family he's divorcing Lilly because she's a lesbian rather than tell them he broke his marriage vows, and they get into an argument. The next day, police officers show up at Lilly's door to inform her that Albert is dead. Stephanie calls her grandmother and learns that Bambi said they surprised a burglar and Albert was shot. It doesn't take long for the authorities to start taking a hard look at Lilly. The books at their car dealership look suspicious and Albert had a million dollars in an offshore bank. When the murder weapon shows up in one of the family cars, Lilly, Dixie, Stephanie, and David believe she's being set up. Her attorney, Christopher Williams, arranges for her to turn herself in, but before she can, her wheelchair bound neighbor is murdered and the police place her under arrest.

I received an Advance Reader Copy of this book from NetGalley and voluntarily reviewed it.

Kristin Cochran Schadler says

Awesome book. Started reading this one day, got 40% of the way through it without even realizing it, finished it the next time I picked it up. Very hard to put down. Loved the dogs, the mystery, the whole family dynamic. Can't wait to read more in this series.

Linda says

Dogs rule in this charming new cozy by VM Burns! One day Lilly Echosby is a spurned spouse, and the next she's a suspect in her ex-husband's death. Sure, Lilly had plenty of motive to want her cheating ex out of her life, but she didn't expect to be charged with his murder. With her best friends--both human and canine--and loyal family members heeling at her side, Lilly sheds the cloak of suspicion and sets out to deliver some ruff justice to a killer. This fast-paced cozy kept me racing through the pages until the final reveal. I'm anxious to read the second installment in this promising new series!

Kristina says

In the Dog House by V.M. Burns is the debut novel in A Dog Club Mystery series. Lily Echosby is getting a divorce after being married for twenty-five years. Her husband, Albert cheated on her with Bambi Love (I am betting that is not her real name). After a disastrous divorce meeting, Lily meets Miss Florrie on the train home who gives her some excellent advice. Lily reconnects with her old friend, Scarlett "Dixie" Jefferson from Chattanooga, Tennessee. Upon hearing what Lily has been going through, Dixie arrives the next morning in her RV with her two Standard Poodles and an adorable toy poodle in need of a home. Lily promptly adopts the endearing puppy and calls her Aggie (short for Agatha Christie). The morning after a disastrous party to celebrate Albert's grandmothers ninety-fifth birthday, Lily is surprised to find police on her doorstep. Albert was shot by someone who broke into his residence during the night and he did not survive. Since Lily's alibi will not hold up in court (Aggie), she is the number one suspect. Lily with the help of Dixie, Stephanie (her daughter), and David (her son) set out to find Albert's killer. When Lily's next door neighbor is murdered, it leads to her being collared. Can this foursome prove Lily's innocence and keep her out of prison? Orange is not Lily's best color.

In the Dog House is a light-hearted, humorous cozy mystery. I thought the story had a steady pace and I found it easy to read. I wish, though, that the author had taken the time to develop her characters. Since it is the first book in the series, I wanted more information on Lily (not just her immediate background). It also would have been nice to have details on the town where Lily lived (I missed the small town feel). A lot of time is spent on the day-to-day activities. I do not need to know every little detail about Lily's life (cooking, laundry, getting dressed, doing dishes, walking dogs). The mystery is uncomplicated, and the solution was handed to readers on a silver platter. There are limited number of suspects and the pointed clues make solving the crime a cinch. There are cute dog antics and Aggie sounded adorable (I wanted her). I liked that Lily used creative curse words (instead of real ones that offend me), but the same could not be said for Bambi Love. There was a stakeout scene that included dogs that I found amusing. In the Dog House is for the cozy mystery reader who prefers a light mystery with comical antics.

Fred says

In The Dog House is the first book in the A Dog Club Mystery series.

I love this wonderful new series from V. M. Burns.

Lilly Anne has been married for twenty-five years and the marriage has provided two adult children, Stephanie and David. The story begins with Lily Anne shouting at her soon-to-be ex-husband, Albert: You Two-Timing Low Life Weasel. Words that she might wish she hadn't said out loud. Well directed words at her soon-to-be ex as he had the nerve to bring his bimbo, Bambi Love to divorce settlement meeting.

The day after the disaster at lawyers office Lily Anne contacts her college friend, Scarlett "Dixie" Jefferson asking for help in finding a place to live in Chattanooga. Two days later she arrives in her RV, along with her two Standard Poodle show dogs and an equally adorable rescue miniature poodle. The next morning they are awoken by some serious barking of the dogs. They find Albert backed up to the door by the dogs. When things are settled down Albert has the gall to remind Lily that "they" are hosting his grandmother's 95th birthday. The evening at the party Albert informs his family that they are divorcing because Lily is a lesbian. Needless to say, the party went downhill from there. The next morning the police arrive at Lily's door to inform her that Albert has been murdered. As the police's investigation progresses Lily soon becomes a prime suspect.

With this news, Lily, Dixie, and Stephanie set out to find Albert's name and clear Lily's name. Albert had claimed that sales were down severely at his used car lot, but there seems to be a good selection of inventory. Plus, they need to find out where all the money that is in an off-shore bank came from.

The story is well-plotted and told story with an enjoyable cast of well-developed cast of believable characters. Also enjoyable was reading about the Standard Poodles and help they provided in tracking down the murderer.

I'm looking forward to the next book in this fabulous new series to see if Lily follows through with her move to Chattanooga.

Jeanie Jackson says

In the Dog House by M.M. Burns, is a clearly outstanding light mystery and I want the next book NOW! As a fan of her Mystery Bookshop, I wasn't surprised to discover that I love the new series, but I was surprised to love it even more than the first series. Both books have a great balance of plot versus character with a slight lean towards the development of the characters, and great characters they are. The distinction may just be that I often favor the book I finished most recently or it may have a bit more character interaction, which I love. The difference is the difference between a 5 star and a 5.25 star rating. Readers of either series will come out the winner. The plot in every one of her books that I have read has been excellent and intriguing and has drawn me in from the beginning. V.M. Burns makes me care what happens in her novels and that is besides the wonders dogs who people her books.

Tari says

Oh my goodness, this is such a great beginning for this new series! I absolutely loved this book. And those adorable dogs just added to how much I loved it, especially little Aggie! I hope there's another one coming up soon!

Lilly Echosby had just found out her husband wanted a divorce. He was leaving her for a dumb bimbo named Bambi. The next minute he was found shot, found by said bimbo. Lilly of course was the obvious suspect. With her two grown kids in town for their dad's funeral and her bestie Dixie by her side, they were determined they were going to find the real killer and clear Lilly's name. When a second body turned up and she was blamed for that, she only became more determined to tie those two killings together. With the help of a K-9 officer named Joe and his dog Turbo, they cracked the case open and even got the mastermind of it.

This was a really exciting mystery since there was more than the murder going on. Lilly being a CPA had discovered the car dealership her husband had owned had something hinky going on. Officer Joe said he'd help, which I thought was good because he did genuinely want to clear her name, but he could also keep the civilians somewhat safe. I loved reading about the SING self-defense method. I had only read one other book where it was used to take down a bad guy. It was pretty important in nailing someone in this story.

I haven't despised a character as much as I loathed Bambi in forever. There have only been a handful of characters throughout the books I've read that I have literally hated or was hoping they'd become the next victim. The author must have a special gift for being able to instill that, just as she has a gift for describing and telling about adorable dogs. In one scene, I literally had leaky eyes reading about something that happened to little Aggie, the toy poodle Lilly was adopting.

I liked Officer Joe an awful lot and almost hate to think about Lilly possibly leaving town. I hope that her pal Dixie stays in the story, she's such a hoot, I love her to pieces! Lilly's grown kids, Stephanie and David were amazing. They had a great relationship with their mom, but were able to show their dad the respect he needed when it was time for the funeral. I hope they make an appearance in future books too! The dogs were definitely stars as well. Poodles may not be attack dogs but just the scene of a grown man being scared when one had taken him down was so comical. What awesomely trained dogs!

If you couldn't already tell, I'm very anxious for the next book in the series! I volunteered to read this one early via NetGalley and the publisher. Release date is August 21.
