



Hounded To Death

Laurien Berenson

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As the dog days of summer turn to the playful nip of autumn's chill, Melanie Travis is ready for a little relaxation. Her Aunt Peg has the perfect solution--a five-day symposium for dog show judges in Pennsylvania's idyllic Pocono Mountains. While Peg and Melanie's sister-in-law Bertie welcome the opportunity to socialize with the dog world's elite, the very pregnant Melanie embraces the chance to simply unwind.

But when renowned judge Charles Evans delivers a keynote address that irritates many of the attendees, the symposium's agenda takes a deadly turn. For later that evening, Charles is found floating face-down in the outdoor hot tub.

With few clues to go on, the police are baffled. But Melanie decides to take matters into her own hands, suspecting that a cold-blooded murderer may lurk among her fellow dog-lovers. . .

"This canine cozy is absorbing enough to delight even cat lovers."

--*Publishers Weekly*

"The mystery keeps the book rolling along, but it's the entertaining relationships Melanie has with her family that keep the reader involved."

--*Romantic Times*

Hounded To Death Details

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From Reader Review Hounded To Death for online ebook

Jayme(the ghost reader) says

This is the fourteenth book in this series. Melanie Travis is a full time Special Education teacher and a part time sleuth. She shows Standard Poodles with her Aunt Peg in the local dog show circuit. She has married her long time boyfriend and is expecting a baby. With time off for fall break, she accompanies her Aunt Peg and her sister in law Bertie for a dog show conference. Melanie is looking forward to a week of relaxation. The conference has barely started when the keynote speaker is found dead after he gives a controversial speech. Everyone's feathers are ruffled but who was angry enough to kill him? Melanie has another mystery on her hands to figure out and solve.

Kathy says

Not my favorite in the series. However, I still enjoyed it.

Teresa in Ohio says

My commitment to myself is to wrangle control of my series in progress books. Even being gone from this series for a few years it felt like coming back home. They are centered in the dog world of training, raising and showing breeds across mostly the east coast. In this installment the dogd stay home and the girls (Melanie, Bertie and Aunt Peg) head to the Poconos for a dogless convention. It is suppose to be relaxng and educational. After Charles gives a speech that turns this dog world upside down and has people taking sides you know a murder is around the corner. I have learned with cozies that a murder will occur offscene and everyday people will solve it. Even with that this is an enjoyable series just to read enjoy and learn a little about dogs.

Barbara says

Really didn't like this one as much as the others in the series. Even the most recent book (Doggie Day Care Murder?) was more enjoyable. I don't think the main and recurring characters are really acting as we've come to expect them to behave. The motivations seem a bit muddy and indistinct.

Emily Cullen says

Melanie Travis, Aunt Peg and Melanie's sister-in-law are heading for a canine symposium and also hoping to get a little R & R thrown in, but when the key address speaker winds up dead in a hot tub Melanie has to forego the comfort. I really enjoy the "Melanie Travis Canine Mystery" series. Always good stories and characters and I like that Melanie goes through life changes as the series moves forward. I recommend starting from the first book, "A Pedigree to Die For".

Janet says

While I missed Sam, Davey, and the poodle crew, it was nice to see that Melanie and the girls are strong enough characters to stand on their own. And true to form, dogs still play a role in the plot, even in a “no dogs allowed” setting. I was a little confused with the multitude of suspects, but the ending was sharp enough that I didn’t mind the lack of clarity. Another great book with a lovely heroine.

KyBunnies says

Review to come

Julie says

This one felt more slight even than most of these, which is okay with me right now. I'm enjoying the competent fluff! The mystery is pretty lackluster, so this is all about hanging out with old friends.

Mary says

I have enjoyed every Melanie Travis Mystery by Laurien Berenson. Melanie, her sister-n-law Bertie and Aunt Peg go to the Pocono Mountains for a five-day symposium for dog show judges. Aunt Peg is the only dog show judge but the other two decided to go along to hear other speeches. In this book Melanie is pregnant and it brought a different element into the storyline. I was surprised the standard poodles were not in this book only when Melanie called husband Sam. I love standard poodles but was not disappointed. I love all dogs and Aunt Peg managed to rescue a stray German Shepard she named Walter. There was one character in *Hounded To Death* that I disliked in the beginning but as the story went on I loved her tough interior. Florence was an elderly woman whose son was to meet Aunt Peg in person for some dates at the symposium. Florence was very protective and a bit odd to be so protective over her grown son. As the story went on she became my hero and a delightful lady. I did not figure out who the killer was until the author let me know.

Jen says

Melanie Travis accompanies Aunt Peg and sister-in-law Bertie to a five-day symposium for dog show judges in the Pocono Mountains. A few months pregnant, she's looking forward to a little R&R. Meanwhile Aunt Peg hopes to kindle a romance with her online beau Richard Donner with whom she has been corresponding for months.

When judge Charles Evens delivers a controversial keynote address, his career and reputation are jeopardized. Then Melanie finds his lifeless body floating face-down in the hot tub. Her reputation as an amateur sleuth precedes her, and soon the other guests hound her to take the case. Fearing for the safety of

her unborn child, Melanie begs off, but Charles's wife Caroline demands answers, and Margo, the symposiums director won't hear the word, "No". The police are stumped with little evidence to pursue. Who among the guests is a cold-blooded killer? Melanie endeavors to sniff out the truth, but the killer is dogging her movements, waiting for the right moment to pounce, silencing her forever. .

Hounded to Death is the fourteenth book in the Melanie Travis series. It's a quick, light read with Melanie, Peg, and Bertie as the central characters. Although it was cozy, fun, and fluffy, it was not my favorite book in the series. Many of the secondary characters are flat and indistinct. It was hard to invest in them or guess at their potential motives for murder. Richard and Florence Donner stood out because of their unusual mother-son bond, but they did not impress me as characters.

Florence, in particular appears selfish, manipulative, and overprotective of her son. She demonstrates this by sneaking in her dog inside her purse, which shows a disregard for the rules as dogs are not allowed at the symposium. She also tries to come between Peg and Richard by manipulating Melanie and spreading lies about Peg. For these reasons, Florence irritated me for much of the book.

I found Richard to be overly attached to his mother and too quick to pass judgment on a situation without getting all the facts. Although a relationship between Peg and Richard did not work out in this book, I'm hopeful that Berenson will create a good match for peg in a future book.

Walter, the German Shepard that Peg rescues, is a sweetie. Melanie first comes upon the stray in the woods, malnourished and abandoned. Peg begins to feed him, building his trust until she coaxes him inside the hotel; Peg also ignores the rules, although in this case I feel it is justified. Walter's situation is gut-wrenching and the way Peg took him under her wing warmed my heart. After conducting interviews and home visits of perspective owners, Peg places him in a loving home.

There was a different dynamic in this book since Sam, Davy, and the poodles had a very minor role. I missed the atmosphere of the show ring and the antics of Faith and Eve. Davy made me laugh when he suggested Shrek, Scarlet and other outrageous baby names over the phone. Although they didn't get much page time, readers get a sense that the boys are bonding. As much as I love Sam and Davy, it was nice to read a mystery where Melanie, Peg, and Bertie stood on their own without the support of Sam, Davy and additional secondary characters.

The multiple subplots round out the story and create a good pace. This light mystery is a perfect choice for bedtime reading.

Lena Harper says

I really liked the departure from their day-to-day life. Very interesting and very nice setting.

Jewett says

Fun with other breeds at a conference center. Pregnancy becomes a great excuse.

Gillian Kevern says

I think my lack of satisfaction with this book reflects more on me than on the author--I like my amateur sleuths to work a bit harder, and for there to be more clues. For the mystery to unravel because of gossip and a conversation being overheard feels cheap--but this is par for the course in the cozy mystery genre. My favourite character was Button the chihuahua.

Kathy Davie says

Fourteenth in the Melanie Travis mystery series with this story set in the Poconos Mountains for a dog show judging symposium.

The Story

It's October and Melanie is four-months pregnant. And Sam has pushed Melanie out the door to take this week-long vacation with Aunt Peg and Bertie.

The excitement is all about Charles Evans' speech about the Future of Dog Shows. His controversial point is that dog show people are more concerned with breeding dogs to look good in the ring than in how well they function as the breed as they were originally developed.

Ooh, and Aunt Peg has an Internet boyfriend! She's been emailing Richard for months and now she'll be meeting him at the symposium. Unfortunately, he takes exception to Aunt Peg's concern for a stray German shepherd and when Aunt Peg coerces Melanie into helping her round the stray up, they stumble across Evans' dead body in a hot tub. Naked!

Naturally, Melanie's reputation for things going wrong around her and then fixing it is well-known and a number of people put the arm on her to solve his murder. A discovery that becomes more important when Richard's mother, Florence, gets hit on the head and accuses Aunt Peg of the assault.

The Characters

Melanie Travis is a special needs tutor at a private academy in Greenwich, Connecticut who recently eloped with Sam and is now pregnant. She's been in the thick of the dog show world for just under five years.

Sam Driver finally talked Melanie into marrying him. He regained the rights to a video game he created in college, made millions from it and now he can pick and choose what he wants to do. Such as, take time off to be with his family.

Aunt Peg is not actually related by blood but through marriage to Melanie. A former breeder and handler, Aunt Peg now judges dog shows. She also sees herself as neutral Switzerland; Mel sees her more as Mossad. **Bertie** is Melanie's sister-in-law and a professional dog handler—someone hired to show another person's dog(s).

Richard Donner is Aunt Peg's 40+-year-old Internet boyfriend. Who still lives with mom, **Florence** who is a judge on the dog show circuit who carries her Chihuahua, Buttons, everywhere with her inside her purse.

Alana Bennett is a good-time girl who hangs with dog people, a good friend of Bertie's, and not above slanting everything to make her look good.

Charles Evans and his wife have been in the dog show world for years. They may look nice but they're really cold sharks underneath with a very unusual accommodation.

My Take

Melanie's rather self-righteous about Aunt Peg hopping in the hot tub or bed with Richard. What is her problem? Old does not mean dead..!

When they find Charles drowned in the hot tub, why isn't one of them immediately dialing 911? And, my big question, just how is Charles' speech on an over-emphasis on appearance related to the animal activist issues of eliminating pets and ending dog shows???

I suppose I can't expect my queries to be answered by a novel as light and fluffy as *Hounded to Death* and it *was* an enjoyable read.

The Cover

The cover certainly covered the topic in this story with its hot tub under a night sky and Walter peering inside while Button keeps watch at the steps. The title is a bit off. Perhaps it refers to what led to Charles' death??

Joan Skinner says

Another good one!

Being a dog show person myself I always enjoy Laurien Berenson's books. This one did not disappoint! Not a lot of meat but a fun read!
