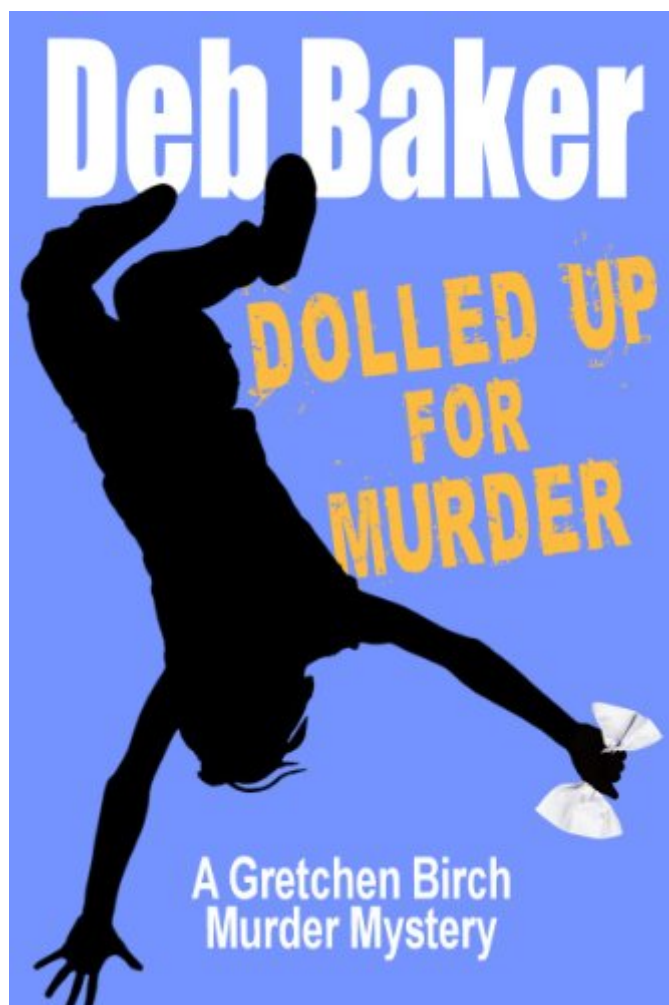


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Dolled Up For Murder (A Gretchen Birch Murder Mystery Book 1)



Synopsis

"Caroline Birch. Put her away." The message was clutched in the fist of a destitute former doll collector found dead at the bottom of a cliff with a valuable French doll's parasol in her pocket. And the person seen fleeing the crime scene fits Caroline's description. But Gretchen Birch knows her mother is innocent. The problem is, Caroline has disappeared and she's left an urgent warning that Gretchen is in danger, too.

What The Critics Are Saying
"A trio of smart, independent women...the peek into this world is fascinating" ~ Romantic Times
"Quick-paced...engaging characters" ~ Armchair Interviews
"A puzzling mystery filled with charm as well as suspense" ~ Who Dunit
"Sharp and entertaining" ~ Curled Up With a Good Book
"Fun, frantic and thoroughly engaging" ~ Sandra Balzo, author of Brewed Crude Tattooed

Book Information

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Culinary

Customer Reviews

I enjoyed reading this book, and the author kept me guessing through to the very end as to who did the murder, but I must admit I found the sheer number of characters involved a little difficult to keep straight in my head. It didn't help that I was reading over the space of a few weeks, with reasonable size gaps between picking up the book due to other commitments, but I still tend to think that the sheer number of characters (the majority of whom are members of a doll collector group) meant that they were easy to confuse. There were some minor editing errors, but nothing that couldn't be overlooked. The main character was entertaining and well-rounded, but I would have liked her to stand up a little more for herself in the relationship she had with her fiancée - despite having invested seven years in their relationship - Gretchen seemed bright enough to figure out that the guy was a loser and I did find her inability to dump him to the curb was a bit annoying.

This is the first book in the Gretchen Birch mysteries by Deb Baker, and sees Gretchen return to Phoenix after her Aunt Nina calls her and advises that her mom is missing. She lands in Phoenix and discovers more than just the mystery of her mother's disappearance. Someone has killed homeless Martha, and her mother is the prime suspect. Being a doll collector I was really interested in seeing what this series was all about. I loved the mention of all the different kinds of dolls, and life as a doll collector and doll repairs and sales. The mystery wrapped me up quickly and I was trying to guess why Gretchen's mom, Caroline, was missing and also who wanted Martha dead. The author shows the mystery from not just Gretchen's point of view, but also from Caroline. I liked the way Deb Baker did this because you don't usually see the different point of views like that. I think this series will highly appeal to doll collectors but non-collectors will find it a fun series as well.

Dolled Up for Murder offers an engrossing puzzle, a clever and balanced use of the world of doll collection to create the plot, parallel action juxtaposed between Gretchen Birch and her mother - all set in the extreme heat and monsoons of Arizona. I urge Kindle readers who love cozy mysteries to persevere and read this well-written mystery despite the off-setting formatting issues (and I encourage the author to re-format and re-submit.) The author advances the mystery chapter by chapter, and provides a series of clues that could enable us to guess whodunnit. As a mystery aficionado, I pride myself on my ability to identify the bad guy, and I kicked myself when I realized I had missed it. The author uses her characters to assign idiosyncrasies- some engaging and some annoying - that draw us into the mystery and help create the clues. She builds suspense also through the use of parallel settings and actions of Gretchen and her mother. She uses the monsoons common to Phoenix to compound the problems confronting Gretchen as she tries to

solve the murder for which her mother is being blamed. I truly appreciated this mystery and its puzzle pieces that the author offered us. I look forward to reading more of the Gretchen Birch mysteries.

Gretchen Birch receives a frantic phone call in the early hours of the morning from her aunt in Arizona. She is told that her mother, Caroline, has gone missing and one of the neighbours has been found dead on the hill behind her mother's house. Thinking that her aunt Nina's tendency to exaggerate and be dramatic might be at the bottom of this "crisis" she heads to Arizona anyway, to find out why her aunt is so worried. When she gets to her mother's house, Gretchen soon realises something is really wrong, especially when she finds that the only thing missing out of all of Caroline's personal belongings appears to be her car - even her toothbrush is still in the bathroom. What follows is a race to find out what really happened to the neighbour, Martha, who police now believe was murdered and as Caroline has become the chief suspect due to what appears to be an incriminating note found in Martha's hand, time is running out. This story is really interesting in many ways. It takes the reader on a journey into the world of the Doll Trade and provides some great insight into the restoration, buying, selling and collecting of antique dolls of all kinds. The murder victim was obsessed with dolls which were like children to her. She once had a extensive and highly valuable collection, but, due to her inability to stop buying more and more expensive pieces, she got in trouble with the bank and lost her home, her collection and ultimately became an alcoholic vagrant living on the streets with other people down on their luck. Really, I should rate this book 3 1/2 stars. In spite of the story being quite suspenseful and there being several possible suspects, it lost a lot of ground with me because of the numerous spelling and grammar mistakes throughout. It would have really benefitted from another edit. As far as the quality of the mystery goes, I had the culprit figured out about 60% of the way through but it was an interesting read, none-the-less. If you like a fairly decent murder mystery and are interested or would like to know more about the world of dolls, then this is the book for you.

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