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Live Ammo

Lynda Fitzgerald

Crystal Dreams Publishing (2012)

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Reviewed by Olivera Baumgartner-Jackson for Reader Views (2/12)

I've read a couple of Lynda Fitzgerald's books before, so I knew better than to start this one on a workday. Her books are best kept for a Friday or Saturday afternoon, but only if one is sure that one would not have to get up early the next morning. So I made sure everything was ready - the cat fed, the chores finished, my car parked in the backyard out of view, the shades pulled and a pitcher of iced tea brewed...

"Live Ammo" is the second in the "Live" series, following "Live Ringer," published a few years ago. It brings back quite a few of the characters, and does a great job of further developing them and making them even livelier. Allie Grainger is still dealing with the aftershocks of her divorce, and her best friend Sheryl still likes to enter her house unannounced, and possibly armed. Spook, the perennially scared dog Allie shares her life with, is still scared. Marc still loves Allie, and she is still not ready to make a real commitment. So things are pretty much the same, with the exception of land developers developing land right next to Allie's house, so maybe Allie's Florida would also turn into one of those scary "condolands." The biggest news in town? The death of the sheriff's wife, ruled a suicide, yet hotly contested by her son Rand. Rand is convinced that his mother was actually killed by his father, Sheriff Cord Arbutten. Since both men were at the scene within minutes of the fatal gunshot, there's plenty of blame to go around. Allie gets involved after a plea from her best friend, Sheryl, who works for the Sheriff. Will she be able to uncover the truth or will her curiosity get her killed?

Once again I had to admire Ms. Fitzgerald's exquisite sense of place. Her description of Florida, even when it is simply implied, was downright astonishingly accurate, and reminded me so much of the Florida I've discovered during my many trips there in the past. Her characters were amazingly well fleshed out; the good ones had enough flaws to make them life-like and likeable, and the bad ones were revealed for the villains they truly were by skillfully peeling off their layers of deceit and pretense. I certainly met a few new favorites in this one, particularly Frenchie and Libby. Those gals kept surprising and delighting me, and I hope they will appear again in the future books in the series. The plot presented enough twist and turns (and detours) to keep the reader fully engaged, and it was interesting without being too farfetched to believe.

Ms. Fitzgerald never disappoints, and "Live Ammo" was no exception to that rule. I'd highly recommend it to any lover of good contemporary fiction, and even more so to anybody who happens to love the old-fashioned Florida. For all we know, the next book in the series might have Allie's house demolished for more condo development and Allie move away...