



Burp Gun Bandit: The Dudley Files Book II

Cary Robinson

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Robinson has a talent for natural-sounding dialogue in this humorous crime caper.

Careless isn't exactly an ideal name for a private detective, but when the sleuth has Dudley the hound as a sidekick, it's certain that crime-solving awaits. With *Burp Gun Bandit*, his second Dudley Files comic crime caper, Cary Robinson proves his talent for natural-sounding dialogue and keen observation of human foibles, which makes for great lighthearted entertainment for genre fans.

Careless works in his family's steel pipe business, a Houston, Texas, enterprise owned by his grandfather and now run by his father. Nevertheless, Careless would rather be a detective. Having made an ill-fated trip to Mexico in pursuit of a lovely lady who has stolen his heart, Careless meets Karly and Carl on his flight home. Though Carl is the primary heir, his black-sheep aunt has locked up his grandfather's estate. Careless rides to the rescue, helped by friend and good ol' boy Birk; the sometimes stoned, book-lover Sarge; and E.D., Careless's beautiful blond neighbor at the Big Rock Lofts.

Robinson's caper is built around a simple plot—finding a missing will—highlighted by page upon page of funny observations. Wordplay—*pension* for *penchant* and *Buttox* for *Botox*—and Careless's unremitting love for his rescue hound, Dudley, are constants. Every character arrives in the narrative fully formed. The action motors from one end of Houston to another, with first-hand familiarity about good food and good neighborhoods. There is a brief side trip into Texas Hill Country so that Careless, Dudley, and E.D. can rescue a lost donkey for a rancher friend. This thread seems unrelated to the primary narrative and may be present to flesh out the novel.

Since the missing will belongs to a decorated veteran, Robinson opens with a prologue about the exploits of the 90th Infantry Division in WWII. History buffs will notice minor factual misstatements, but those errors detract neither from the soldier's heroism nor the book itself.

The bad guys are entirely credible in means and motive. It's all sneaky good fun, with only one potential violent conflict. The answer to whodunit is evident immediately. Conversely, how Careless foils the plot is intuitive rather than logical, but doesn't spoil the excitement. While constant banter and sardonic observations can wear, the major problem is repetition. For example, Robinson repeatedly details the recipe for Careless Coffee—cold-brewed Katz brand ice coffee, ice cubes, and Jack Daniels.

In this first-person narrative, Careless is serious only about his love for Dudley and his quest to bed E.D. All else is sometimes puerile humorous observations about "Cowboy Cadillacs"—four-wheel-drive pickups—and repeated parenthetical "not that there's anything wrong with that" observations after remarks about sexual preferences, gender references, and other politically correct matters. However juvenile that might be, Robinson has a talent for natural-sounding dialogue, making for easy reading.

With references to everything from Cozumel scuba diving to Texas songwriter Kinky Friedman, Robinson's crime

caper is perfect for lighthearted summer reading.

GARY PRESLEY (March 7, 2014)

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