An exciting novel of passion, murder, small-town secrets, and scandal brought to light.

Shy, studious Irene Stenson and wild, privileged Pamela Webb had been the best of friends for one short high school summer. Their friendship ended the night Pamela dropped Irene off at home and Irene walked in to discover her parents bodies on the kitchen floor. It was ruled a murder-suicide, and Irene fled the northern California town of Dunsley. But seventeen years later, when Pamela sends a cryptic e-mail asking for help, Irene returns to her hometown to find her old friend has died suddenly, leaving behind a lot of ugly, unanswered questions.

Caught up in a firestorm of desperate deceit and long-buried secrets, Irene knows it would probably be smarter to just pack up and leave Dunsley behind again, but her reporters instinct—and her own hunger to know the truth—compel her to extend her stay at the local lodge. Even more compelling is the man who runs the place—a hazel-eyed ex-Marine who's used to giving orders as Irene is to ignoring them. Luke Danner can see the terror beneath Irene Stenson's confident exterior—and he is intent on protecting her. But he is also driven by passions of his own, and together they will risk far more than local gossip to sort out what happened to Pamela Webb, and what really happened on that long-ago summer night.

My Personal Review:
It was an excellent and fun read. It is the development of a romantic relationship set within a murder mystery with some added suspense and a generous use of humor. I loved Lukes character. Many of his lines were gems. He was a gruff retired marine who bought a third-rate motel, which I
will call the Lodge. He intimidates and yells at paying customers as if they were marine recruits, as he informs them of motel rules and enforces the rules. He also puts out the no vacancy sign when he does not want to be disturbed. Irene, his love interest heroine, also has some good lines. This book was full of wonderfully creative dialogue. The characters and conversations caused me to laugh out loud many times. It is dry wit. I will quote a couple of examples here, but I fear they may not be as funny to the reader of this review, since the reader does not have the full flavor of the characters and the context for the lines. But, I’m hoping to provide a glimpse of the type of humor. On page 46, Lukes assistant Maxine complained that Luke did not put out donuts in the morning since the Lodge had a guest. Maxine said All of the better-class hotels and inns do it. Luke said I like to think that the Lodge is in a class by itself. On page 87, he has one guest Irene staying at the Lodge. As Irene is driving away, he runs to the drive and stops in front of her car, forcing her to stop. He says Where are you headed? She says You know, Ive stayed in a wide variety of lodging establishments in my life, but this is the first time Ive had to account for my comings and goings to the proprietor. He said We do things a little differently here at the Lodge. His motive for this, of course, is that hes interested in her, attracted to her and concerned for her safety. I love this kind of writing.


For a list of my reviews of other books by this author, see my 4 star review of Sizzle and Burn posted 2-09-08.

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