

Dead Wreckoning Book Reviews

Sidra Smart, divorced from her controlling husband of thirty years and present owner of the Third Eye Detective Agency, temporarily keeps her office at her Aunt Annie's house, where she lives with her aunt and dog Slider. Sidra is reluctant to take on the case of Boo Murphy, a woman accused of murdering her neighbor. Sidra isn't too sure Boo's all there, as Boo claims to have seen an 18th century pirate schooner in the Texas swamp, and Boo doesn't have the means to pay an investigator. But when Sidra sees the schooner for herself, she is intrigued and begins to look into the case, only to be warned off by her mentor and assaulted by unknown assailants. With the aid of her dog Slider, Sidra pursues her investigation, which leads her into the past, to the days of pirate Jean Lafitte and Mary Anne Radcliff, Lafitte's partner and Boo's ancestor.

Smith adds plenty of action and adventure to this installment of the Third Eye mystery series, with an interesting dose of piratical history and ghosts. Sidra Smart is an engaging character, a woman fiercely committed to her independence. She is beginning to find her place in life and isn't afraid to stand up for herself, even against the bad guys. She's smart and likeable, and many women will identify with her. Sidra's dog Slider plays an important part, and Smith nicely weaves his abusive past into the story. This page turner will hold readers' attention throughout as they follow Sidra's growth as a woman and investigator.

July 7, 2009

Reviewed by Christy Tillery French "reviewer and author" (Powell, TN)

Sidra Smart has finally received what she wanted---her private investigator license. Approved and fully licensed by the state of Texas, she is now free to investigate anything she wants at anytime and without supervision. The last part is especially important to her as she continues to move on from her former life as a pastor's wife. At 52, she is relishing her new life and now with her license she has extra incentive to get her office rebuilt. After all, "The Third Eye: Intuitive Investigations" can't be run out of Annie's house forever - no matter what Annie thinks.

It's early June in Southeast Texas and Durwood, one of her first clients back when she was being mentored by George Le'ger comes to see her. Durwood's friend, Boo Murphy needs help and Durwood wants Sidra's professional expertise. According to Durwood, Boo goes squirrel hunting in the swamp every day. Supposedly, one day she saw a pirate ship out there in the swamp somewhere. But, that isn't why the Sheriff is going after her. No, the investigation is for murder.

Boo's second cousin, twice removed, and neighbor is Sasha. Sasha had a husband named Zeke who recently made Boo so mad, she fired her gun over his head. She was plenty angry, wanted to scare him, and let loose with her gun. She didn't think any more about it as it wasn't that big a deal. That was until Boo took Sasha out where she said saw the

pirate ship and instead they found a very dead Zeke with a shirt of Boo's wrapped around his neck. Obviously, somebody else killed him. Boo is convinced that what she saw out there was the schooner "Hot Spur" one of Jean Lafitte's pirate ships. If she wanted to kill Zeke, she would have, but she didn't and that is all there is to it as far as she is concerned.

But, others don't see it that way. Not only do some think Boo killed Zeke, some folks also think that she found the treasure that legend says was on board the pirate ship. Not only does Sidra need to find that elusive schooner, she also needs to find evidence to clear her client despite the various forces against her. Especially since somebody has taken offense to her interest and keeps trying to kill Sidra.

This third novel in the series picks up quickly after the last one left off with the engaging Sidra Smart. A little more graphic in terms of language and description with each book, Sidra Smart is evolving and shedding more and more of her pastor wife past. While aware of her past mistakes, she is also fully aware of her effect on her new boyfriend and uses all her assets when she wants to. Along with enjoying all the possibilities of her new life, she is a pretty good investigator.

Creating a modern day mystery tale with elements from the colorful history of Texas, recurring characters, plenty of local flavor, Author Sylvia Dickey Smith has penned another very good book in the series. As this is a series with evolving characters, those inclined to read the book should begin with the first novel, "Dance On His Grave" before moving on to the previous book, "Deadly Sins-Deadly Secrets."

June 11, 2009

Reviewed by Kevin Tipple (Plano, Texas)

A Suspense Thriller!

Dead Wreckoning is the third book in a series written by Sylvia Dickie Smith. The book held my interest right up to the last page. If you like suspense, then this book is perfect for you to read. It holds your interest, and you can't wait to see the outcome.

June 6, 2009

Reviewed by Fred W. Russell (Edison, NJ USA)

A kooky, homespun whodunit rich in Southern wit and charm!

A swashbuckling murder investigation plunges an outspoken Texas private eye into hot water. In Smith's third book (Deadly Sins, Deadly Secrets, 2007, etc.) featuring plucky wannabe detective Sidra Smart, her heroine learns that she's passed her Texas state board exam and is now a full-fledged investigator at The Third Eye agency, a business she

inherited from her dead brother. It's been a long road since Sidra abandoned her stagnant, 30-year marriage to a misogynistic preacher to embark on a treacherous, if liberated, life of a sleuth. Her first case involves Boo Murphy, a poor, backwoods woman accused of murdering her second cousin Sasha's husband, Zeke, after returning from examining the remains of a historic schooner nestled in the murky waters of her backyard swamp. Sidra is unsure whether to take on Boo's case, but after she discovers that George, a private investigator who mentored her, is involved in both the theft of a museum-quality crystal collection and plans to steal the pirate ship's sunken treasure, she immerses herself in the case. While boating on the water searching for the elusive schooner, the smart female detective sees the vision of "pirate-queen" Mary Anne Radcliff materializing on the bow of a boat. Later, another pirate ghost, Jean Lafitte, appears to guide the daring detective to success. A psychic, a few smuggling plots, long-buried family secrets and a host of snoops all conspire to keep Sidra from getting Boo free from her jail cell. The dogged detective has her hands full sorting out whether the mystery ship is real, along with keeping her wedding engagement to boyfriend Ben intact. An early subplot involving a kidnapped and raped woman is left dangling and isn't weaved into the main narrative with any clarity, but Smith offers a tidy conclusion, rife with good-natured ghostly humor to round out the innocuous frivolity. Fans of Smith's spicy Cajun mysteries surely haven't seen the last of Sidra Smart.

June 5, 2009

Reviewed by Sylvia D. Smith

Pirates, smugglers, and murder in Texas!

Texas has swamps and bayous? Who knew? Kind of goes against my image of dusty, dry Texas, with the tumbling, tumbling weeds. But I suppose along the coast you would find swamps and bayous. Author Sylvia Dickey Smith has made the area come vividly alive for me, complete with mosquitoes, crocodiles or is it alligators, and Spanish moss.

DEAD WRECKONING is an unusual mystery combining the paranormal, a dog, and an older female sleuth, but Sid Smart is no Miss Marple. She is plagued by doubts and insecurities. She left her abusive husband, and the confining world of being a minister's wife, to build a new life as a private detective. Insecure in her new romantic relationship with Ben and unsure of her abilities as a newly licensed PI, she struggles to save her client from being convicted of murder. Boo, an old woman claims to have found Jean Lafitte's schooner, Hotspur, out in the bayou, but when she and her cousin, Sasha, return the next day the schooner is gone. Instead they find Sasha's husband's body. Since Boo shot at Zeke the day before, Sasha blames Boo and she is arrested. Sid is on the case, uncovering old pirates, modern smugglers, and ruthless treasure hunters. Visiting the scene of the crime she sees a ghost ship, with a beautiful and buxom lady pirate. Later a gentleman out of the 19th century visits her with a cryptic message. Are they ghosts? Real or just illusions? Sid isn't sure and neither are we.

I really liked Sid Smart and all her baggage as she struggles to break free of the old confining church life where her husband demanded that she be the perfect minister's wife. As a former minister's wife myself, I could relate to her hang-ups and. And her relationship with her dog, almost supernatural. Then there are all the colorful, and I do mean colorful, characters. The writing is good, descriptions vivid. It is well edited, grammar and spelling, but I found myself having to re-read passages to comprehend them a few times.

The solution to why Sasha's husband was killed was rather obvious, and surprisingly Sid nor the cops never seemed to consider it as a possibility. But the unraveling of the mystery moved along nicely, going in some interesting directions, and coming to a rousing conclusion. DEAD WRECKONING is a delightful mystery, well worth your time and attention, if you like mysteries with a touch of Southern charm. I certainly hope Sid Smart gets her detective agency rebuilt and there will be many more cases in the future.

May 13, 2009
Reviewed by Linda Suzane (www.midnightblood.com)

A job well done!

Sylvia Dickey Smith has done it again! Just when you thought she had given you her very best, she surprises and delights readers with DEAD WRECKONING. The book shows not only her skills as a storyteller, but the growth of her main character shows that we all have room to improve on our personal greatness.

April 29, 2009
Reviewed by C. A. Webb "Conversations Book Club" (Jackson, MS)

Dead Wreckoning is dead on the money!

Ms. Smith has turned out another wondrous story! It was great fun to follow the high adventures and sometimes slap-happy personal life of the book's heroine, rookie private eye Sidra Smart. Her bold excursions into the haunting swampland of Orange, Texas left me feeling that whenever I again visit there I will be on the lookout for a beautiful swashbuckling lady on the deck of a sleek pirate schooner.

April 26, 2009
Reviewed by John T. Browning

Standing in the shadow of your curl!

I went down to Orange Texas this week to again visit with Sidra. I hadn't seen her for awhile and was curious to know what she'd been up to--and she was in one of her usual pickles, of course--that's par for her. Interesting, too, how many "characters" can live in a town of roughly 19000; really makes for unusual happenings. Reminds me to look at and see the people around me in a different light--to try to see what hides behind their façades. Suffice it to say, Sylvia Dickey Smith has once again generously and captivatingly given life to her alter-ego. A VERY good read. If you haven't yet, wrangle yourself an introduction to Sidra and join the fun.

April 14, 2009

Reviewed by Carol M. Menchu "Thirdgate" (Texas)

This is one smart lady!

Sidra Smart is at it again in the third book of her series. Divorced after thirty years as a preacher's wife, Sidra is running The Third Eye Detective Agency which she inherited from her brother. Sidra is engaged, but taking it slowly. Sidra and Slider, her dog, live with Aunt Annie, in a haunted house. Sidra is currently operating her business out of the house because her private-eye office has been firebombed and needs to be rebuilt.

In "Dead Wreckoning," Sidra takes on the case of an older woman who has been accused of murdering her neighbor's husband. Sidra is determined to prove her innocence. While investigating the case, she also finds herself searching for a pirate ship, which seems to make an occasional appearance. Sidra discovers a connection between the murder, the pirate ship and strange happenings in the town.

Sidra begins to suspect that there are people close to her that she cannot trust. Enlisting the aid of a hooker, she is able to get some inside information. When she sees the ship, she discovers that it is not all there and that there is a redheaded ghost aboard. Knowing the history of the ghost and the ship, Sidra becomes more intrigued. She also learns that there are a lot of people in town who are related to each other, that also might be involved with some shady dealings. Things really heat up when Sidra herself becomes endangered.

"Dead Wreckoning" is a blast to read. Adding ghostly touches to a great mystery makes the book quite an adventure. Sidra is also a delightful soul who is regaining her sense of self after thirty years of a controlling marriage. I think that most women will be able to relate to her character. The other characters in the book are just as entertaining. I also loved that there are two dogs in the story that have important roles, especially Sidra's.

"Dead Wreckoning" by Sylvia Dickey Smith is a must read for mystery fans, especially if you enjoy a touch of the paranormal and lots of humor.

April 8, 2009

Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views "www.readerviews.com" (Austin, Texas)

Thrilling, Compelling Story-Within-A-Story!

Sidra Smart is looking to start over...fresh from divorcing her husband of thirty years, she inherits a detective agency from her late brother, Warren, and begins life anew as a private investigator. Over the course of her ensuing cases, she gets exposed to her fair share of danger - but nothing can prepare her for the daunting mystery soon to become the focus of her entire world...

When she agrees to help the diminutive, elderly Boo Murphy as a favor for a friend, what begins as a simple case of alleged murder evolves into a twisted, complex scheme of daring heists, shady characters leading double lives - and, on top of all else, a not-so-secret legacy of pirate smuggling. As Sida wends her way through the multi-layered mystery, she is forced to depend on her own wits, as well as the assistance of the unlikeliest of allies - her dead brother - as she strives to stay one step ahead of the nefarious characters behind the sinister plot - not to mention friends who aren't quite as innocent they appear...

Calling *Dead Wreckoning* an action-packed suspense thriller is making a huge understatement. Sylvia Dickey Smith's compelling tale of drama and intrigue pulls you in from the first few pages and keeps you spellbound as she weaves the tapestry of her tantalizing tale in masterful fashion. Her characters are full-blooded and three-dimensional, and she does an excellent job of preserving the mystery of the storyline, ensuring that you remain transfixed from one chapter to the next.

Moreover, *Dead Wreckoning* succeeds at pulling off the difficult feat of telling a story within a story, specifically by treating the reader to a little-known fact of history while still maintaining its mystery/suspense thriller edge. For readers who don't know much about the prominent role that some women played in the piracy trade, Smith's tale will come as an enlightening, edifying treat.

Taut and engaging, *Dead Wreckoning* takes its rightful place among the ranks of other truly outstanding contemporary mystery thrillers.

Highly recommended!

April 7, 2009

Reviewed by Renee Washburn at Apex Reviews (Durham, NC USA)
