

THE LOSERS' CLUB BY LISE S. BAKER



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From Publishers Weekly

San Francisco PI Cal Brantley is sent to Reno, Nev., by her new employer, Worldwide Investigations, to look into an insurance claim after a small boy dies in a casino escalator accident. Unfortunately, Cal must contend not only with an unreasonable new boss but also with a macho ex-cop, Denny Wickerstaff, for a partner. Although the claim seems straightforward, Cal smells a rat when she learns that, according to witnesses, the boy's mother was completely unemotional about the death and that one of the casino's waitresses was murdered the same night. At the same time, Cal is also trying to locate a former boyfriend, Tony Lazio, who has threatened suicide and fled to Reno. While Baker, a real-life California PI, writes crisp dialogue, the novel suffers from lack of character development. That Cal has old hippie relatives and a missing ex-husband doesn't do much to humanize her. Her friendship with neighbor Laurie Stern seems forced, and her ex-beau Tony is superfluous to the main story. The verbal battles between Cal and her despicable partner generate some wit, but at times these tirades overwhelm the plot. A quick and unlikely death marks the finale to a disappointing debut. Agent, Don Maas.

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From Library Journal

When owners of the San Francisco investigation firm that employs her sell out to a rival, likable heroine California "Cal" Brantley winds up working for an unlikable boss. On top of that, an uninsured illegal alien rear ends her on her way in from a lengthy surveillance. Now, with nagging back pain, Cal and an ex-cop co-worker investigate the accidental death of a small boy in a Reno casino. They turn up more than they bargained for, of course, as plot complications escalate nicely. An attractive protagonist with endearing hang-ups makes this a diverting first novel.

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From Booklist

Here is a first novel starring a female PI and written by a real-life female PI Just as Edna Buchanan, real-life crime reporter, infuses her crime reporter heroine, Britt Montero, with on-the-job knowledge, so Baker brings an extra dose of verisimilitude to her fictional alter ego, saucy Cal Brantley. When the San Francisco PI firm that employs Cal is bought out, the new firm sends her to Reno on a case. Unfortunately, she has a chaperone: an obnoxious former LAPD cop named Denny Wickerstaff. As they investigate the death of a child in a casino, the many sinister elements of the case make even the insolent Denny a little nervous. A superfluous subplot involving one of Cal's former boyfriends occasionally intrudes, but not enough to ruin the suspense of the main plot or our appreciation of the characters. Cal Brantley is definitely a winner, and

Baker has the makings of a good series. Jenny McLarin

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While investigating an insurance assignment involving an accidental death, Cal Brantley turns up clues that lead her down a dangerous path. Teamed up with an ex-LAPD cop for the assignment, Cal also faces an even greater challenge--stopping a friend from committing suicide. From the back alleys and casinos of Reno to the graveyards and ghost town of Virginia City, Cal learns the real meaning of what membership in The Losers' Club entails--and the knowledge could be deadly.

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

The Losers' Club

By Taylor Miller

The Loser's Club, Lise Baker's first award winning mystery novel, is a thrilling page turner from the first page on. Ms. Baker has obviously paid her dues in the trenches as a real life big city private investigator. There is so much exciting realism and colorful technical detail, that this book could actually be used as a training manual for rookie PI's. A thriller from cover to cover, the reader will get a unique view of the underbelly of society that few people outside the world of cops and detectives ever really knew existed. The main character, Cal Brantley, is every detective agency owners' dream. She's the kind of model investigator with the experience and knowledge to tackle a very dangerous assignment. I give it my own two thumbs up. I'm a retired big city cop myself, now operating as a Licensed Private Investigator, and owner of a PI agency in the San Francisco Bay Area. I'm really looking forward to the sequel, as this one is a true WINNER.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Very good first novel

By Roxanne V.

I am an avid mystery reader--Connelly, Crais, LeHane-- and this new novel is right up there. It's rare when I actually laugh out loud in the middle of a page--her dry humor really is appealing to me. Her writing is tight and evocative and Cal Brantley is a great character. I was definitely disappointed, though, in the last 1/4 of the book. Things got predictable and unbelievable, particularly so because the majority of the book was of such a high caliber. I thought there were too many characters in the novel--too many to be well-drawn and some of them (Violetta in particular)came out to be caricatures. The subplot about the ex-boyfriend could definitely have been left out and improved the book overall. But I am very much looking forward to her next book--hope there is one.

2 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Big Winner in Reno

By A Customer

The Loser's Club grabs you from the opening pages when a seemingly innocent casino scene turns bizarre and a child dies. Lise Baker's come up with a fresh locale and a fresh female PI. Cal Brantley's serious but quirky, kind but smart, and ultimately bright without showing off, a perfect sleuth to tackle Baker's formidable foes. Be prepared for down and dirty fights, for comic relief, and for scenes laced with insight and break-your-heart sincerity. Cal pulls forth emotion. But even if Cal Brantley weren't the star of the Loser's Club, Baker has created a host of other characters to entertain even the most jaded mystery readers. Harley, I think I'm in love. Baker had me going with plot, subplot, twists, and turns. Her vivid images stay with you, like the description of the Lucky Motel, "The lights on the neon marquee lit up like white powder on a whore's face." Loser's Club is more than worth the reading.

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