



Car Full of Death: A Shelf & Chloe Barker Mystery (Shelf & Chloe Barker Mysteries) (Volume 1)

Laura Harrison McBride

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Lurch through East Anglia, UK, with the most lovable D.I. (Driving Instructor) in history ever to become a P.I. (Private Investigator), and plunk his bum on a stool in Brooklyn, NY, eating Junior's Cheesecake—real New York cheesecake. Go with him as he attends a Mafia funeral to rival a royal wedding. And then worry and scold like a Yiddishe mama as he risks life and limb to solve a murder best described as a dripper. Driving instruction? Oh, yes. He does some of that, and his driving students are, well, unusual. Some won't drive. Some won't stop. Some kill things along the way to driving competence. Like author Jonathan Gash's Lovejoy, the antiques-dealer-turned-sleuth, Shelf Barker is an encyclopedia of oddness, but a lot less snarky. But he is non-politically correct--or maybe a better way to say it is omni-ethnic--about it all. So how DOES a mild-mannered Brit go from giving driving lessons to the great British public of terrified driving students to solving a double murder? He has help. Like Janet Evanovich's almost helpless Stephanie Plum, Shelf works under the watchful eyes of two able helpers. One's an Italian beauty who can barely boil pasta, and the other is one of his ex-wives whom he fondly compares to a deadly snake. Not exactly Stephanie Plum's Ranger and Joe Morelli. More interesting. He labours under myriad delusions, Shelf does, not least of which is that as a former university professor (his slide from grace has been bumpy), he knows everything about everything. Including English. When he chides his wife about her mistakes in English, she assures him her university studies taught her proper English. "I always add 'proper AMERICAN English'," he replies, "and that always gets me a fine Italian phrase in return, a sneer and sometimes a familiar hand gesture." She probably learned the gesture from her Mafia forebears. Go figure. Poor Shelf has to grapple with US idioms, suffer through the vagaries of British jurisprudence, and keep his astonishment hidden through an Italian funeral where bodies surf along Brooklyn roads and demented mafiosi retirees give the game away. To top it off, a central African warlord who sounds like Eddie Murphy in *Coming to America* plays a central role. Still, Barker knows who he is, and isn't embarrassed to tell. "I might once have been a world-class anthropologist....I might have. But I wasn't. Just an ordinary bloke, educated beyond where it is wise to educate a member of the proletariat, trying to make a living." Barker is not a dab hand at handling a gun, but he can handle concepts just fine. And he has a fan-thing going for Lorena Bobbitt and her shorn husband, John. Remember them? Twenty years ago, Lorena trimmed her husband's private parts a bit too close. "A fiction writer couldn't come up with a better name for an egomaniacal American who fancied himself a matinee idol and who was shorn where it hurts—bobbed, you might say—than John Wayne Bobbitt," Shelf notes. Shelf has fun, he really does. See for yourself. He samples the best New York Cheesecake. He spends some quality time with the local constabulary. He falls in love. Again. And again? Maybe. Click LOOK INSIDE and immerse yourself for a minute in the very funny world of Shelf Barker as he graduates from D.I. to P.I. in one juicy murder.

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