Death By Saguaro

by Lorna Soroko

★★★★★

Reviewed by Grant Leishman for Readers' Favorite: Five Stars

Death By Saguaro by Lorna Soroko is a murder mystery set in the blistering summer heat of Tucson, Arizona, with a background in the legal process. Marlo Logan is a young female lawyer who made the big mistake of telling the judge they were a "pea-brained moron"; definitely not a smart move for anyone seeking a future in litigation. Cited for contempt, fined, and temporarily suspended by her firm until she attends an anger management course, Marlo is limited to doing boring paralegal work around the office. One of the firm's senior partners has Marlo's back, though, and gives her the task of investigating the strange death of a local teen. The boy was killed when a massive Saguaro cactus plant toppled onto him. Along with Marlo's passion for illegal street racing in her beloved Alfa Romeo, she always wanted to try investigation work. She has long been haunted by a hit-and-run accident that she witnessed in high school and for which the driver was never charged. She would love to find that driver and finally put her memories behind her.

Death By Saguaro is unique in its basic premise of a cactus killing someone, and it grabs the reader's attention right from the very beginning. Lorna Soroko has created a fascinating story that twists and turns as the clues get unraveled. I loved the idea of two separate investigations running side by side, one a cold case and one the current investigation by Marlo. Marlo is a wonderful character. She is a strong, successful young woman, but she is clearly troubled not just by her anger issues but by the memories of that accident so many years ago. There is a rebellious streak to Marlo, but it is tempered by her loyalty to those who love her and her underlying desire to seek the truth. This plot within a plot gives the story a great depth and lifts it above other stories in its genre. I also appreciated that the author uses the story to educate readers about the importance and majesty of these great cacti that inhabit the deserts of Tucson. By involving the park ranger in her investigation, the author allows readers to better appreciate the sheer beauty of these living sentinels. This is a fascinating and enjoyable read that I highly recommend.