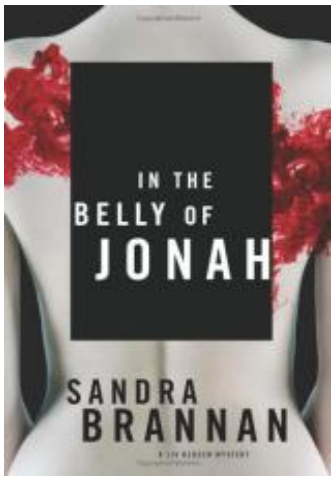
In the Belly of Jonah

by Sandra Brannan



About the Book

Liv ?Boots? Bergen is shocked when the body of a stunning college intern working in her Colorado limestone quarry is found on the shores of a nearby reservoir. Clues are scarce except that the crime scene appears to be a macabre, intricately staged tableau.

Soon after, Liv gets a call from a former classmate who?s become an FBI profiler. Lisa Henry explains that the murder is not the first of its kind. Driven by her need to find the man who could commit such a depraved act, the headstrong Liv becomes caught up in the pursuit of a madman with a perverse, unquenchable appetite both for women and for surrealistic art.

As she assists her profiler friend and another FBI agent, Streeter Pierce, legendary for his crime-solving skill and striking good looks, Liv discovers she may have her own knack for outwitting and tracking down the most brutal murderer Colorado has ever seen. But in doing so, she will put her friends, her family, and her own safety at risk. How many bodies will pile up before the so-called Venus de Milo murderer is caught?

The first in the Liv Bergen Mystery series, **In the Belly of Jonah** is an engrossing story with a memorable protagonist that will have readers eagerly awaiting Sandra Brannan?s next book.

Discussion Guide

1. Serial killers make up a fraction of the population in reality. Publishers seldom favor books about serial killings, yet when crafted properly can be captivating. How does the Venus de Milo compare to the all-time most notorious fictional serial killers? Speculate on what made this book about serial killing the exception, particularly considering the first time novelist earned a nod by the booksellers for the Indie Next Pick Notable for September 2010.

2. Although some enjoy the details, Sandra Brannan left much to the reader?s imagination as she described the brutal murders by Venus de Milo. Do you think detailed descriptions of murders in mysteries are necessary or gratuitous? Which books have you read that either lacked the necessary graphic details or restraint from too much detail that would have improved the story?

3. Art imitates life. The Venus de Milo decided that life imitates art. How does Liv Bergen?s profession of being a miner, the reclamation process, and the final location on the highwall relate to art? What examples do you notice in contemporary society where life imitates art?

4. Venus de Milo was both charming and chilling. Would you be as compliant as Jill Brannigan or Liv Bergen if someone like de Milo threatened to harm or kill someone you love if you didn?t obey?

5. Titles of books are often selected for marketing purposes. Sandra Brannan has created the entire Liv Bergen series around morphed biblical titles. How successful did the title tie to the story? Do you believe in the saying to never judge a book by its title? How would you judge In The Belly Of Jonah, both cover and content?

6. Stephen King wrote an entire story about an obsessive reader demanding a change to an ending. Do you think it was necessary for Lisa Henry to die, despite her popularity with readers as a main character? Do you think popular characters in series should be off limits as candidates for murder?

7. Readers have only so much patience for humor in mysteries, particularly with non-cozy mysteries. Do you think the FBI or even managers, like Liv Bergen, can be successful in their jobs using humor? Can you think of books or authors where your patience ran thin with humor?

8. Series versus standalone is a dilemma many authors debate. Do you believe Liv Bergen has what it takes to hold your interest as a reader to buy future releases? How important is the unrequited love interest between Liv Bergen and FBI Agent Streeter Pierce to a successful series?

9. The college campus was critical in pulling in the elements of the arts. How important was art to you as a student at various ages? Do you think public schools should cut programs like art, music, sports to accommodate shrinking budgets? What would the outcome be if all schools focused on reading, writing and arithmetic as the base for education?

10. The critical mistake Venus de Milo made was to underestimate both Liv Bergen and Streeter Pierce. Do you perform best when you are underestimated, over estimated, or accurately assessed? Does it differ amongst work, home, and other settings?

Author Bio

After living in Wyoming, Washington, D.C., Washington state, and Colorado, Sandra Brannan returned to her hometown in South Dakota, where she is surrounded by a tribe of family. She enjoys working with relatives in the mining business; living in the Black Hills with her husband, Joel; smiling with pride over the journeys taken by her four sons; doting over her three grandchildren; and appreciating all of life?s blessings, too many to count. Sandra?s Liv Bergen mystery series include **In The Belly Of Jonah**, 2010, **Lot?s Return to Sodom**, 2011, **Widow?s Might**, 2012, and forthcoming title **Noah?s Rainy Day**.

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