ForeWord Reviews

A Deadly Dozen: Tales of Murder from Los Angeles
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Uglytown
978-0-9663473-2-6
(May 2000)

Call it fate, call it chance—either way, it'll change your life.

Thus acclaimed mystery writer Kris Neri opens this gripping collection of twelve tales crafted by members of the Los Angeles Chapter of Sisters in Crime, a national network of authors engaged in the art of the mystery. Each one of these tales presents the reader with an opportunity to delight in the clue, the breathless moment, the blanched knuckles, the heady discoveries that are so much a part of the murder mystery.

Indeed, in the very first story, "Sentence Imposed," Neri holds the reader in her hand. The ending to this tale of a professional triathlete sprinting headlong into justice is skillfully seeded throughout, yet the reader still had the thrill of the "Aha!" when the conclusion is reached and the curtain descends.

"Wifely Duties," by Cory Newman, surprises the reader with a murder-turned-on-its-ear that would make Rod Serling proud. Then Nathan Walpow offers his spare, direct prose in "Push Comes to Shove," a story that immerses the reader in the shadowy world of pro wrestling. Walpow thrusts the story forward in a no-holds-barred momentum that does not let up until the final slam at the end.

Ekaterine Nikas delivers crisp, calculated murder in "Fatal Tears," a story of battling siblings. In this tale, the twist one usually expects at the end of a mystery becomes a spiral and keeps the reader in a spin. The next story, "Miss Parker and the Cutter-Sanborn Tables," by Gay Toltl Kinman gives the reader an off-center, quirky romp through the halls of graduate school, peppered with Library of Congress clues.

Jamie Wallace's "Driven to Kill" teases with what seems, at first, a relationship-gone-awry tale but proffers an ending that leaves the reader chuckling. With "Touch of a Vanish'd Hand" author Phil Mann creates a detective reminiscent of Hercule Poirot. Kate Thornton dishes up a gourmet private investigator, "flayed maguro," and murder in the sushi bar tale "AI

Witness.” Lisa Seidman has the reader looking “Over My Shoulder” in her eerie tale of obsession and paranoia.

“The Cats and Jammer,” by Gayle McGary gyrates with the energy of its sixteen-year-old scriptwriter/bungalow court manager, hot to solve a murder committed just a few feet from his front door. Joan Meyers ensures that the reader will never be able to look at a pot roast in the same way again in the tale “Copycat.” Finally, “Midnight” by Dorothy Rellas takes the reader to Amsterdam for a high technology caper ending in, of course, a dead body.

It’s all murder, all the time in these twelve tales. A perfect book for curling up in an overstuffed chair before a crackling fire, iron poker close at hand, just in case…

Carol Lynn Stewart