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FOREWORD REVIEW ♥♥♥♥♥ MYSTERY

Assault with a Deadly Glue Gun

Lois Winston
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Anastasia Pollack crafts for a living, for a “second-rate general women’s magazine sold at supermarket check-out lines.” Petite but pear-shaped, she has a comfortable middle-class life with her “still-a-hunk” husband Karl, two sons, a cat, and a very educated bird that quotes Shakespeare. But the gorgeous Karl has dropped dead in a Vegas casino, after paupering the family and stealing $50,000 from a minor mobster, and Anastasia is left holding the bag—er, old bag: Karl’s Communist mother and her dog Manifesto (Anastasia calls him Mephisto, after his personality), who have been staying with the Pollacks since Lucille’s own apartment went up in flames.

While still trying to cope with Karl’s absence, Lucille’s presence, and an empty bank account, Anastasia gets a call from said mobster, asking for Karl. She informs him Karl is dead; he demands *she* return the $50,000. Knowing to the penny the balance of the joint account she and Karl formerly shared, she, of course, refuses, telling him she’s broke. The mobster, of course, replies with threats.

What follows is a comic tour de force of misanthropy, misdirection, and misdeeds. Anastasia is framed for the murder of a particularly nasty coworker, who is done in in Anastasia’s own office, with Anastasia’s own glue gun, and stripped of some particularly stunning Cartier diamonds. The cops on the scene, an intrepid pair named Batswin and Robbins, finger Anastasia as the most likely suspect even as she protests her innocence. But since the murder victim has been glued into Anastasia’s chair, the circumstantial evidence is pretty damning, even though there are a host of others who might have hated the victim enough to kill.

Anastasia tries to find the murderer and piece together the puzzle, much as she would assemble one of her crafts for the magazine. The book, by the way, contains directions for several craft projects. Meanwhile, her own repeatedly widowed mother comes to stay after yet another spouse dies (of natural causes); her home is burgled not once but three times; an attractive single man moves into the garage apartment that used to be her studio; and she herself is taken for a ride that very nearly proves fatal.

Lovers of funny mysteries, outrageous puns, self-deprecating humor, and light romance will all find something here as Anastasia progresses through repeated misadventures to emerge triumphant in the end.
MARLENE Y. SATTER (January / February 2011)

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