

Cape Comedy: A Novel

Marc Weingarten

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Manic comedic enthusiasm bolsters the fun—even in dark moments—on every page of this debut.

Peek behind the curtain at a world-famous comedy club, and what do you find? If the venue is Cape Comedy and your host is Marc Weingarten, you find murder-mystery mayhem. After all, comedy is equal parts pain and pleasure, a combination Weingarten enthusiastically embraces in his debut novel, a quirky thriller that draws on the author's extensive experience as a comedy writer, performer, and producer. In *Cape Comedy*, Weingarten weaves a winding path to a killer's door by following unexpected trails through the absurdities of life with a manic energy suggestive of Robin Williams or Jim Carrey.

Weingarten sets the stage for farce early on, giving his comedy club family names like Ricky Boy and Lily Dash. Ricky Boy doesn't last long, and the ensuing story centers on the peculiar will he leaves behind, which imposes some unusual conditions on his heirs. If they are to receive any of his \$275 million estate, for instance, his ex-wife must fall in love and his son must learn to pursue his own passions. To complicate matters, the theatrical reading of the will is filmed by a man who soon turns up dead himself.

The chaotic beginning of *Cape Comedy* promises a wild ride, and Weingarten delivers, taking his characters on a journey to Mexico that includes a visit to the Roy Orbison Festival, and an intense consultation with a donkey diviner, Senor Chardash (aka "the ass whisperer"). The story is loosely held together by Weingarten's plainspoken narrator, "Mr. Sweeps." Sweeps is the janitor back at Cape Comedy, and as such, he's heard every story told backstage. Weingarten gives him a particular speech pattern—lots of drinkin' and wonderin' and reckonin'—that is jarring at first but eventually becomes one more thing to laugh at as the absurdity unrolls.

Character development is fairly light, and the murder mystery temporarily fades into the background, but these things matter little when you're swept up in the motley crew's quest for meaning, or at least for \$275 million. Playful dialogue throughout develops the relationships and fuels the action, making this a quick, entertaining read.

Marc Weingarten's comic chops are evident on every page, as he pursues frivolity at a breakneck speed, racing toward the surprising solution to the murder at the center of things. *Cape Comedy* lets us in on the comic's mind-set, allowing us to experience humor in even the darkest moments.

SHEILA M. TRASK (Fall 2014)

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