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Funny Money: A Willows and Parker Mystery
Laurence Gough
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What do a reluctant prostitute, a pregnant police officer, two homicidal street toughs and an ailing crime boss have in common? That's what the reader will find out in the new Willows and Parker Mystery, *Funny Money*, a well-crafted story that takes place in modern day Vancouver.

Carlos and Hector are freelance couriers for a drug lord named Jake Cappalletti. When Jake gets sick, Carlos and Hector are asked to temporarily babysit ten million dollars in fake U.S. currency. One rainy night, these two couriers make the mistake of paying their prostitute, Chantal, some of the counterfeit money. After her pimp boyfriend falls to his death lunging for the money and the police are called in, the prostitute is forced to go into hiding while the other characters are searching either for her or the funny money that everyone thinks she has.

The book's biggest strength lies in the clear characterizations and descriptive detail of everyone involved. Willows and Parker, the police detective lovers, are living a normal blended-family life complete with a handicapped pet: "Tripod, their three-legged marmalade cat, was balanced precariously on the outside sill of the kitchen window." Claire Parker is pregnant with Jack Willows's child, and throughout the book she agonizes over how and when to tell Jack the news.

Carlos and Hector have an altogether different definition of normalcy. When Carlos is insulted by a grocery checkout girl, he decides to stuff all his "Haagen-Dazs ice cream and most of the meat behind several towering rows of toilet paper." Chantal, the prostitute, is not sure she has a life left worth living and at one point considers jumping off a bridge. The reader can feel her desperation: "She let go of the steel post, and spread her arms wide."

The plot is shaped like a funnel with all the different idiosyncratic characters converging at the end when the scrappy yet sympathetic Chantal is forced to defend herself with a kitchen fork. Veteran mystery lovers will enjoy a view of the Vancouver street world, Canadian police procedure, and a satisfying conclusion in which a giant, slobbery, orphaned dog is adopted into a loving home.