



## Inspector Paws and the Wonders of Europe

**Rosemary Budd**

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Ernie is dead. Paws, his pet cat, believes it was murder. From his hiding place in Ernie's duffel bag, Paws hears people at the funeral talking about the terrible tragedy. Poor Ernie had a heart attack and was unable to get to his medication in time, but Paws is certain that someone made it impossible for Ernie to reach his pills; he can just feel it in his whiskers.

Here begins the tale of *Inspector Paws and the Wonders of Europe*, a charming mystery by Rosemary Budd aimed at young readers.

After a bumpy transatlantic flight with Ernie's wife, Stella, Paws uses his feline intuition and keen powers of observation to figure out who wanted Ernie dead. With help from Boyd, a young man they meet on a bus trip, Stella and Paws work to uncover their beloved Ernie's murderer.

Paws is loyal to a fault, and even though much of his jaunt to Europe involves indignities that would dissuade any other cat, he works valiantly to solve the mystery and communicate the identity of the culprit to Stella. The human characters—all props for Paws's detective work—are not fleshed out quite so well.

The plot is linear and coherent, and the book contains very few grammatical errors. The reader is treated to a European vacation, from bike tours in Amsterdam to St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna. After Stella's children travel to Europe to convince her to return home, the plot becomes filled up with too many characters, including the people on the bus tour. Along with Ernie's murder, the story also deals with thefts that Paws must solve. Less-skilled readers may struggle with the expanding cast and multiple plots.

Stylistically, talking animals can be tricky. They are, in essence, reporters only, but we are privy to their thoughts and feelings. Budd does a good job at getting Paws into places and situations where a cat may not be allowed to go. Unfortunately, Paws uses certain phrases too often. "Suffering swordfish" sometimes appears on several pages in a row, moving the readers' attention from the story to the word choice.

*Inspector Paws and the Wonders of Europe* is great for middle-grade readers looking for a standard mystery. Cat lovers will also be attracted to Paws's feline charm.

LYNN EVARTS (June 25, 2013)

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