ForeWord Reviews

MYSTERY

**Jump**
Tim Maleeny
Poisoned Pen Press
978-1-4587-1821-1

This is one hilarious yarn even though bloodshed begins with the first sentence. The initial spurt of gore emanates from Ed Lowry a loathsome San Francisco landlord who has either fallen or been pushed from the top of the building that houses one of the most bizarre collection of tenants since *One Flew Over The Cuckoos Nest*. The “straightest” of these oddballs is Sam McGowan a recently retired cop still mourning his wifes death from cancer and trying to decide if he should get mixed up in investigating the landlords demise. He does of course and soon discovers that virtually every one of his fellow residents had reasons for wishing the landlord dead.

McGowans neighbors are a marvelously comic lot. They include the mindbendingly gorgeous Tamara and Shayla a medical and a law student respectively who support themselves and their studies by posing *en deshabille* for webcam voyeurs; Walter a prostate-challenged producer of B movies and blackmail schemes; Mrs. Muddridge (“Call me Gail”) a tireless baker and dispenser of cookies and gossip; and Jill a comely worldly-wise jazz singer.

But the funniest and most volatile of the apartment dwellers are the Siegel brothers Larry and Jerome whove parlayed a sandwich delivery service into a thriving dope-on-demand franchise. Watching this mismatched pair trying to do business together without getting caught or exterminated is like watching a three-legged race being run by hip-replacement patients. “Larry was wondering if he could stab his brother under the table without anyone noticing” the author says by way of introducing the two. “It was only a passing thought a spur-of-the-moment plan but it kept him calm just thinking about it.”

Maleenys non-resident villains are just as entertaining although a bit more cartoonishly drawn. Chief among these is Zorro a drug overlord who makes life difficult for the hapless brothers not least by snacking on sheep eyeballs each time he grants them an audience. In less agile hands such a rich array of characters would interfere with the storyline. But not here. Since all the principals actually live at what appears to be a crime scene each new revelation about them returns the reader to the original mystery. Maleeny has a winning formula with this one. At minimum Tamara and Shayla and Jerome and Larry have earned a return appearance.