ForeWord Reviews

Lawyered to Death: A Karen Hayes Mystery
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Sexual harassment and murder charges embroil the administrator of a large hospital. It's bad enough when a beautiful hospital staff worker accuses him of sexually harassing her, but when his wife, who was a patient at the hospital following a domestic disturbance at their home, dies under suspicious circumstances, the administrator's troubles explode.

Karen Hayes, the hospital's "in-house" attorney, conducts an investigation into the allegations. She suspects that the sexual harassment charges are bogus, but since that case can likely be settled for less than a hundred thousand dollars, she focuses her attention on the death of the administrator's wife. The injuries for which she was hospitalized were not life-threatening, but she had a fatal allergic reaction to medication. Curiously, her MedicAlert bracelet, which would have alerted the attending physician to the allergy, is missing.

Karen comes to believe that the MedicAlert bracelet was removed before the victim died, and that she had been deliberately poisoned. The police investigator comes to the same conclusion, and arrests the hospital administrator for murdering his wife. Convinced of the suspect's innocence, Karen accepts a job with the large firm representing the accused. She and a dynamic criminal defense attorney with her new firm must solve the mystery, or else their client may be tried for first-degree murder.

As the investigation proceeds, Karen is presented with other intriguing leads. A doctor in the hospital has an unusually high number of patients who die in the hospital. A psychiatric patient, with axes to grind against the hospital, escapes from confinement. The victim's teenage daughter is hooked on Ecstasy and was heard arguing loudly with her mother shortly before she died. When Karen's car is tampered with and she is pursued through a desolate area by a sinister man, she realizes that learning the answers to these questions may be placing her life in grave danger.

The author intimately knows his subject: he is a Harvard Law School graduate and an attorney at a fifteen-city law firm, where he was a founding partner of the firm's health-law practice, the largest in the country. His first Karen Hayes novel, *Doctored Evidence*, was published last year. He constructs dialog and action sequences exceedingly well, and his major characters are multidimensional, with problems and issues that affect them in realistic ways. For

example, Karen has a baby and a jazz musician husband who works nights, and she must balance her family's needs with the urgency of her investigation and the demands of her new job. The new firm's expectations and pressures create unexpected ethical issues. Not all is as it seems in the high-priced world of avaricious lawyers and egotistical physicians, Karen learns to her regret.

Fans of John Grisham and Scott Turow will savor this well-crafted mystery, will want to rush out and buy *Doctored Evidence*, and will eagerly await the next Karen Hayes mystery.

Alan J. Couture