

Lotty Enters the Building

Louise Embling

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A flighty investigator distracts herself with the prospect of love in the lighthearted mystery novel Lotty Enters the Building.

Louise Embling's cozy British mystery novel *Lotty Enters the Building* stars an inept but lovable criminal forensics expert and a lisping policeman.

Cursed with chronic flatulence and perpetually single, forty-three-year-old Lotty bumbles through her personal life. At work, she is an efficient, knowledgeable forensics expert at the top of her game, who doesn't mind wading through a few feet of pig excrement to find the clues that will solve a murder.

When a celebrity gossip columnist is found dead at Lotty's uncle's party, Lotty is thrust into a complex investigation. And while murders and meet-cutes don't mix, she develops a sweet attraction to a detective with a persistent lisp, Mason. As their flaws bring them closer, they partner up to unmask the columnist's killer.

Lotty, more clown than heroine, suffers humiliations galore in the novel, from accidental tampon reveals to wardrobe malfunctions to a luscious, ever-growing mustache. She's often seen injuring herself, scooting away from unsuitable men, or dirtying herself with a crime scene's refuse. Her accident-prone pratfalls are amusing and are counterbalanced by her professional wins. Still, she stumbles her way into success at best. And the rest of the cast, from Mason to Lotty's sex-crazed best friend, Teresa, are also constructed in consistent, if not dimensional, terms. Throughout the book: no one faces significant challenges, or changes much. Quirks stand in as substitutes for backstories; questions of motive are relegated to the murder plot.

The book is lighthearted in spite of its grisly content. It includes descriptions of murder scenes that are effective, but that obscure the ickier details. Lotty's perspective as a forensic scientist adds an interesting clinical angle; in one scene, as the dead columnist is subjected to an autopsy, each step of the procedure is described, down to the scent of the morgue and the reason for propping the corpse's torso on a foam brick.

Lotty's story is a flat and steady one, though. Rather than unpack her deep grief over two family losses or her feelings of romantic insecurity, she barrels through the investigation, distracting herself; introspection isn't one of her gifts. Even the mystery itself becomes a fun, if fluffy, diversion.

A bumbling detective and a gifted investigator lead *Lotty Enters the Building*, a lighthearted mystery novel whose movements are prompted by a society murder.

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