FOREWORD REVIEWS THE INDIE WE LOVE.

Million Dollar Baby
Amy Patricia Meade
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The Depression era of the United States was one of the worst times this country has ever suffered. Yet even in the worst of times there is something valuable to be found—money was scarce, but innocence, kindness, and grace were in abundance, even at the scene of a crime.

In 1935 suburban Connecticut, Marjorie McClelland is scandalously single and in her late twenties, supporting herself as a mystery writer of modest success. Creighton Ashcroft still possesses his fortune, an Englishman airplane heir who lets his father and brother make the family money while he enjoys spending it. Creighton is immediately attracted to Marjorie, who finds him "bedeviling." When the pair unearths a skeleton on the grounds of his new home, Kensington House, they team up with the dashing Detective Robert Jameson to help solve the riddle while gathering grist for a true crime novel. Creighton is confounded by the presence of the movie-star handsome policeman, and the struggle for Marjorie's attentions becomes as intense as the search for the perpetrator.

The skeleton is linked to the suicide of Henry Van Allen, the former owner of Kensington House, and the list of suspects expands exponentially. The trio of sleuths enters the glittery and fabulous world of the few who still luxuriate in richness and wealth.

The author, a cum laude graduate from the New York Institute of Technology, is a wiz at writing dialogue and uses this mechanism, astutely so, to tell most of the story. Not only does she write it extremely well, it also serves as a highly successful device to keep the story moving at an engaging pace. On its own, the pithy banter is intelligent and delightful.

> *Mr. Schutt chuckled. 'Snow blocked roads meant that people couldn't go to Hartford for a movie, and no electricity meant that people couldn't listen to the radio. In those circumstances, what can one do to entertain oneself, other than read a book?'*

‘There’s always a game of cards,’ Creighton offered helpfully.

‘So you opened the shop,’ Jameson prodded.

‘Yes, I opened the shop and who do you think was the first person to come through the door?’

‘Henry Van Allen,’ Creighton answered.

‘That’s right. You guessed it in one!’

‘And they say guessing games are strictly a sport for children.’

Marjorie looked up at him and grinned. ‘And you’ve disproved that theory how, exactly?’

Creighton bared his teeth in a mock snarl.

Million Dollar Baby ends as well as it begins, with a nice job of misdirection and some real jaw-dropping twists. It’s smoothly written and easy to read, light and delicious enough to bite off big pieces in a short time. Like a Katharine Hepburn—Spencer Tracy movie on the page, it’s a little corny, as those times were, but sweetly so.

Donna Russo Morin