ForeWord Reviews

Mommy Deadest: A Meg Darcy Mystery
Jean Marcy
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Like a good detective, the latest Meg Darcy mystery hits the ground running and barely takes time to look back. In the first scene, the tough but lovable Darcy is frolicking in bed with her kind-of-girlfriend, Sarah Lindstrom: "She reached out with her right hand and pulled me to her. Her kiss suggested she meant business." With this new addition to the Meg Darcy collection, the authors also mean business, fleshing out their character in a way they'd previously skipped .

Jean Marcy is the pen name for Jean Hutchison and Marcy Jacobs, life partners and writing teammates. Their creation, a lesbian private investigator who slips up occasionally and pines to melt the heart of ice queen cop Lindstrom, is a sweetly flawed addition to the genre. In their two previous books, Cemetery Murders and Dead and Blonde, Darcy stumbled into cases involving first a serial killer who murders homeless women, then a homicidal predator who brutally kills Lindstrom's ex-girlfriend. After two books of pursuit, Darcy finally weaves through Lindstrom's mixed messages to achieve at least a beginning of a relationship. In the midst of her romantic feelings, a case involving a murdered school principal (nicknamed "Mom") seems almost minor, then moves to become the centerpiece of the book.

Just as her skill at love has changed, so too has her sleuthing ability. Hired by the aunt of a boy accused of the murder, Darcy artfully navigates between the law and the emotions of those involved. Watching her piece together what really happened gives the reader a feeling of satisfaction and delight at the small epiphanies scattered throughout the book. The authors are spare in their prose, preferring dialogue to description, and using it well.

The natural rhythm and pace of the investigation is nicely paralleled by the writing, and the ending has a spicy kick that caps the book beautifully, leaving both Darcy and the reader slightly breathless.

Elizabeth Millard