



Murder on the Mound

David Feldman

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Filled with salacious intrigue and procedural details, Murder on the Mound is a fascinating murder mystery.

In David Feldman's mystery novel *Murder on the Mound*, a major league baseball player is accused of murder; his college teammate turned lawyer is tasked with proving his innocence.

Scott and Doug were college teammates, best friends, and dating twin sisters when they were recruited by teams on opposite sides of the country. A partier and womanizer, Doug is signed by the Padres, marries Jackie, and refuses to change his ways. He receives a threatening letter from the fiancé of a woman whom he seduced and abandoned.

A short time later, Pete, Doug's friend and mentor, is found murdered; all evidence, including the revelation that Pete was having an affair with Jackie, points to Doug. Married to Debbie, Jackie's twin sister, and having been forced into retirement from baseball due to an injury after years with the Red Sox, Scott is hired to prove Doug's innocence. It's a difficult case, considering Doug's past, his tenuous, open relationship with his wife, and his obvious jealousy over her affairs.

As Scott investigates the crime, a host of characters, each with their own possible motives, is revealed. Some of these additions to the cast, including Lou, the former police chief turned private investigator, serve the story well; others, including a dismissed juror, are placeholders. A subplot involving Lester, a computer hardware entrepreneur and client of Scott's prior to Pete's murder, at first seems to contribute little; it is later revealed to have greater implications for the courtroom drama, connecting several loose ends. Regardless of their function, each character is introduced with a complete backstory; in many cases, these are so involved that they detract from the growing suspense of the main story.

As the mystery builds, short interjections narrating the killer's thoughts and actions after the crime eliminate possible suspects, including Doug, though prematurely; they cast suspicion on the most likely culprit. These interjections shadow, and in some ways undermine, Scott's diligent work.

The details of Scott's defense are interesting. Scott is a methodical lawyer; the steps that he and his team, including Lou, take result in a fascinating blueprint of a palpable murder defense. Scenes that take place at the crime scene, in the forensics lab, and in the courtroom itself are educational, despite the melodramatic situations they sometimes involve.

Murder on the Mound is a fascinating mystery in which two former teammates team up again to beat a murder rap.

JASON MILLER (June 8, 2020)

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