



Murderously Incorrect

Henry F. Mazel

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Detective Alex Rada never had a high-class clientele until Dr. Katherine Raines, a political science professor from N.Y.U., entered his office and hired him to locate her missing graduate assistant, Susan Blake. Problems arise, however, when Rada finds Blake gruesomely murdered in an upscale apartment where he also locates Raines' missing watch. As political consultant to Delaney Lynch's senatorial campaign, Raines explains her true connection with the murdered girl to Rada and offers him \$25,000 to find the killer—and keep the lid on her involvement until after the election. Rada knows something else is not quite right, having been “warned off” in certain ways, but agrees to continue on the case. Things get messy as Rada enters both the seedy side and the upscale political world of New York to look not only for the murderer, but the motive as well. Suspects line Rada's path: Brian, the foul-mouthed ex-boyfriend; Jimmy Doyle, masochistic chauffeur and security man for the Lynches; Alfred Lynch, attorney and husband of senatorial candidate Delaney Lynch; and even a macaw named Griffin.

Several times it seems as if the solution is so clear, one wants to literally jump into the story, slap Detective Rada and yell, “Look, it's solved already, just get the evidence and arrest ‘em!” But that's the beauty of it: just when the slap seems appropriate, Mazel masterfully twists the plot a turn or two—and gives yet another shade of meaning to the title; the true meaning of which is artfully revealed in the final encounter scene. Despite Alex Rada being cut from the stereotypical detective cloth—tragedy in his past, doing work out of a seedy office, the innuendoes with a beautiful female fantasy-come-to-life client—this mystery novel rises well above its almost too cliché background and delivers a witty and superbly written story. Mazel's first step into a new genre of writing finds him planted firmly on solid ground.

NELLY HEITMAN (January / February 1999)

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