



Play Dead

David Rosenfelt

Grover Gardner, Narrator

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New Jersey lawyer Andy Carpenter is having a bad day; in the brief time since he's become involved with convicted murderer Richard Evans' appeal for a new trial, he's "been shot at by two hoods, one of whom was supposed to be dead, and had my phone tapped by a government agency."

Life is never mundane for the Paterson-based lawyer, a wry, humorous, dog-loving man who takes clients only when it suits him. While pursuing the case of a golden retriever about to be put down for biting its owner, he stumbles onto talkative Karen Evans, who convinces Carpenter to re-examine her brother's conviction five years earlier for killing his fiancée during a botched murder-suicide attempt.

This is Rosenfelt's sixth novel in six years starring the funny and very likeable Carpenter. "He has a warped perspective of life," says the author, "which I happen to share." The Mystery Writers of America nominated his *Open and Shut* for an Edgar Allen Poe Award in 2003 for best first novel. Rosenfelt is an NYU graduate, who previously worked as marketing president for Tri-Star Pictures.

He's populated this book with familiar characters—Carpenter's crossword puzzle-addicted and work-avoiding secretary Edna, his ever-dependable but slightly hypochondriac investigator Kevin, and accountant/movie-quoting computer whiz Sam. There's also Marcus Clark, another of his key investigators, so physically imposing that when the usually bubbly Karen first sees him, her quiet response is: "Oh, my God...Is he on our side?"

Rounding out the lawyer's circle of friends is Laurie Collins, the love of his life who's currently police chief of Findley, Wisconsin. Their long-distance relationship hovers at the edge of Carpenter's search for justice for Evans, which brings him into contact with—among other shady people—Dominic Petrone, head of organized crime in New Jersey.

Rosenfelt's wonderful way with words makes this a fast-moving listen. For example, Carpenter describes his initial meeting with a U.S. customs inspector: "He looks as though he's pushing 40, pushing 5'10", and has already pushed past 240 pounds. I wouldn't want to try to sneak any contraband chocolate cupcakes or potato chips into the country with this guy around."

Renowned voice actor Grover Gardner narrates the sardonic lawyer with just the right amount of self-deprecation. It's a testament to Gardner's talent that the listener can hear subtle differences among the various—including numerous female—characters. He has respectable fun with some of the stereotypical accents, especially those of Sam and the crime don.

Rosenfelt has created a memorable protagonist in Carpenter, who readily admits he trusts his canine companions more than his fellow man: "They are what they are, while very often humans are what they aren't."

ROBIN FARRELL EDMUNDS (August 9, 2007)

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