

Prescription for Murder

E. E. Smith

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Prescription for Murder is a delightfully fast-paced mystery convincingly set in the 1940s with a sleuth that readers cannot help but like.

In *Prescription for Murder*, private detective Alexis J. Smith faces marriage, murder, and the mafia with equal parts moxie and style. This latest installment in E. E. Smith's murder mystery series is certain to entertain.

While on holiday in Majorca with her friend Harry Hawkins, Alexis receives a telegram stating that her mother is ill. Intrigued because her mother has been dead for years, Alexis rushes back to the United States to discover the telegram's source. On arriving in Sacramento, Alexis learns that a friend from her youth has been accused of murdering a US congressman. While attempting to prove her friend's innocence, Alexis attracts the attention of the Irish mafia, who kidnaps Alexis's sister to force Alexis to retrieve a young woman from Ireland. All the while, Harry Hawkins waits impatiently in the wings in London.

Smith grabs attention from the first paragraph by quoting the newspaper announcement of Alexis's marriage on Majorca. Is Alexis really married? While providing the backstory to answer that question, the telegram announcing Alexis's deceased mother's illness arrives. From there, the action does not slow, smoothly moving from one tangle to the next and pausing only briefly for trans-Atlantic flights.

Told from Alexis's point of view, *Prescription for Murder* reveals the world of a twenty-seven-year-old female private detective and war widow in 1947 Sacramento and London. In that world, Alexis's sister considers Alexis an old maid, even though she's still in her twenties. As a female investigator, Alexis regularly faces opposition to her choice of profession. Although she would prefer to be treated like "one of the boys," Alexis admits unapologetically that she occasionally relies on charm to receive help from men in positions of authority. As Alexis correctly reasons, "the deck is stacked against [a girl gumshoe] in the first place." At the same time, she is anything but frivolous about love, having lost both her true love and her husband in the war while in her early twenties. These details combine to create a fun but relatable main character.

Smith also writes a solid mystery. If Alexis's friend didn't kill the congressman, how did the cyanide arrive in his champagne, and why? How will Alexis save her sister from the repulsive Irish mobster with a maniacal penchant for knives if she cannot convince the woman he has deemed his future bride to return from Ireland? When those mysteries are resolved, Smith has still more surprises in store.

Prescription for Murder is a delightfully fast-paced mystery convincingly set in the 1940s with a sleuth that readers cannot help but like. Smith has written a winner that should not be missed.

ANNIE PETERS (August 1, 2014)

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