ForeWord Reviews

Saint's Rest
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978-0-8027-3332-0
(January 1999)

In the midst of the Depression, Merlin Richards feels fortunate to have landed a prestigious architectural commission—until a body is found swaying from a rafter of the building he has just designed. It really had been wonderful: being wined and dined by Hobart St. John, meat magnate of Chicago, and his wife, actress Alicia Martinez, had brought him into the high society circle of Chicago. He had met influential politicians, several newspaper editors and Hobart St. John's most trusted associates, right-hand man Donald Kruger and personal assistant Clare Brovik. Now, though, there seems to be a cover-up going on; one seen by Richards because he and Clare were the ones who discovered the body.

The first trace of a cover-up was when Kruger showed up almost when the police did—even though he had to drive across Chicago to get to the crime scene while the police were just around the corner. And Kruger seemed to carry a lot of authority with the police; to the extent of taking over the investigation when he arrived. The second hint was when the police reported the crime to the newspapers as a derelict's suicide. Since when was a well groomed, well-dressed man with a solid gold watch considered a bum? And how does someone commit suicide when their hands are tied behind their back? When Richards? apartment is ransacked and he believes the two events are related, he starts to ask questions, but the Oak Park police stand firm in their conclusions and flatly refuse to listen to Richards? "suppositions." The final hints came from St. John and Kruger telling him to back off—statements that sounded more like threats.

Then there was the dead man's brother who was waiting for Richards in his apartment only a few days after it had been searched. Richards has more to puzzle out, but understands everything better when he finds out that the dead man was an electrician and was on the building site to collect payment for "services rendered" for the previous home. After that, Richards delves into the reason the prime lot on Chicago Avenue was available to be built on and finds some very interesting connections. With help from the only one willing to give aid, Richards finally gets the evidence he needs to solve the murder.

Following the first Merlin Richards novel (Murder in Perspective, 1997), Saint's Rest is a solid effort, but not a riveting mystery, as the culprits are known quite early. And even after reading both books, readers still do not know much about Richards, as memorable descriptions are used more for descriptions of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural masterpieces found in the

Chicago area than for any of the characters. There are also several parts about his girlfriend that contribute nothing to the plot; parts especially out of place when one finds out that Richards is leaving Chicago and the girl behind at the end of the story. Despite these flaws, the story is interesting and is good light reading for those not interested in more complex mysteries.

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